



American Water Works Association
Pacific Northwest Section

May 2, 2024

Operationalizing DE&I in the Water Industry through your Member Organization

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Chair, NYWEA DE&I Committee

TYLin | Greeley and Hansen
Water Solutions

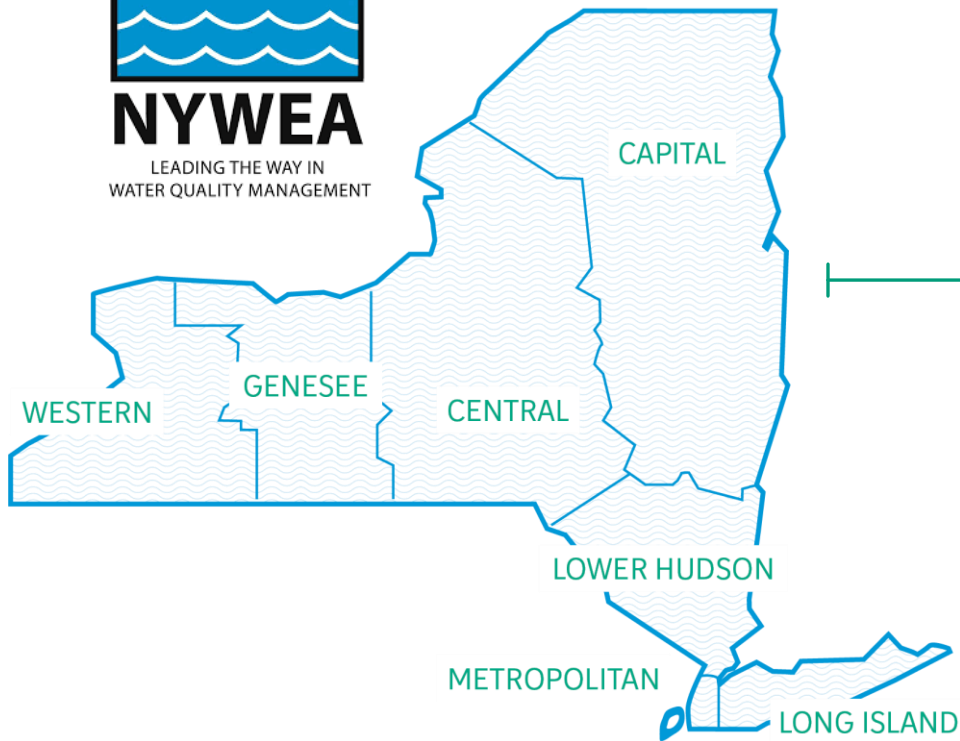


Overview

- DE&I Committee approaches and best practices of development and current progress by the Water Environment Federation’s New York State member association, the **NY Water Environment Association** (NYWEA).
- Context of how this work intersects with other professional spaces.



About NYWEA



NYWEA was founded in 1929, by professionals in the field of water quality as a non-profit, educational organization.

Association members **helped lead the way toward existing state and national clean water programs.**

Today the Association has **over 2,700 members representing diverse backgrounds and specialties**, but all are concerned and involved with protecting and enhancing our precious water resources.

NYWEA is made up of **seven (7) geographic chapters.**

Each chapter has its own Board of Directors, and carry out their own technical and social programs throughout the year.

Timeline



SEPTEMBER 2019

NYWEA Diversity & Inclusion Task Force created

SEPTEMBER 2020

NYWEA D&I Task Force makes recommendation to the Board

OCTOBER 2020

NYWEA D&I Task Force is elevated to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee. Calls for committee sign-up are issued

JANUARY 2021

DE&I Committee meetings commence bi-weekly, through present day

FEBRUARY 2022

Launch of **InFLOW** (Introducing Future Leaders to Opportunities in Water) Program

SPRING 2023

DE&I is a standalone topic for conference abstract submissions





NYWEA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

OCTOBER 2020 – PRESENT

Guiding Vision

The guiding vision of the DE&I Committee is representation to progress toward an equitable future in our communities through the water/wastewater industry, **incorporating and appreciating the unique experiences and challenges we face.**

Mission

The mission of the NYWEA DE&I Committee is to further **opportunities for diverse and multidisciplinary representations in the water/wastewater industry by growing the level of engagement through NYWEA events and programs**, support student and young professional participation, and collaborate with cultural and professional organizations/societies through networking, professional development, education, mentorship and leadership opportunities.

The DE&I Committee also supports **exposure to water quality careers and leadership opportunities to underrepresented populations.**

NYWEA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

OCTOBER 2020 – PRESENT

1

- Foster a **sense of belonging among** all members of the water sector. Work with program committee to ensure there is content for all. Review NYWEA events to ensure that they are truly inclusive for all.

2

- Assume responsibility to make the **InFLOW** program a success. Establish contacts at schools, community orgs, create background materials, form criteria for participants, and develop activities for participants at NYWEA events.

3

- Encourage **operator engagement**. Explore the challenges and seek answers to the general lack of engagement of operators within NYWEA (beyond Ops Challenge).

4

- Encourage engagement and look for **partnerships with other professional organizations** that represent underrepresented populations.

5

- Seek **partnerships with community organizations** in underrepresented neighborhoods and among underrepresented populations (community boards, youth groups, churches, NGOs, etc.)

6

- Promote **Equity within Civil Service** (addressing barriers to entry, visibility of announcements, and availability of exam preparation materials)

“Why”

THE VALUE OF DE&I

Different perspectives of solving problems

New and innovative ideas from diversity of lived experiences

Water sector is a pathway to economic opportunity, and a dignified living

Accountability (Intent vs. Impact)

Increases pool of candidates; more opportunities

The water sector is in need. The future water workforce is behind us. We can't do this forever

Culture of Belonging

Purpose in our work

Breakdown down perceptions of what we do

Share experiences

The “Why” is in the charges

Avoid unintended nepotism in Civil Service process

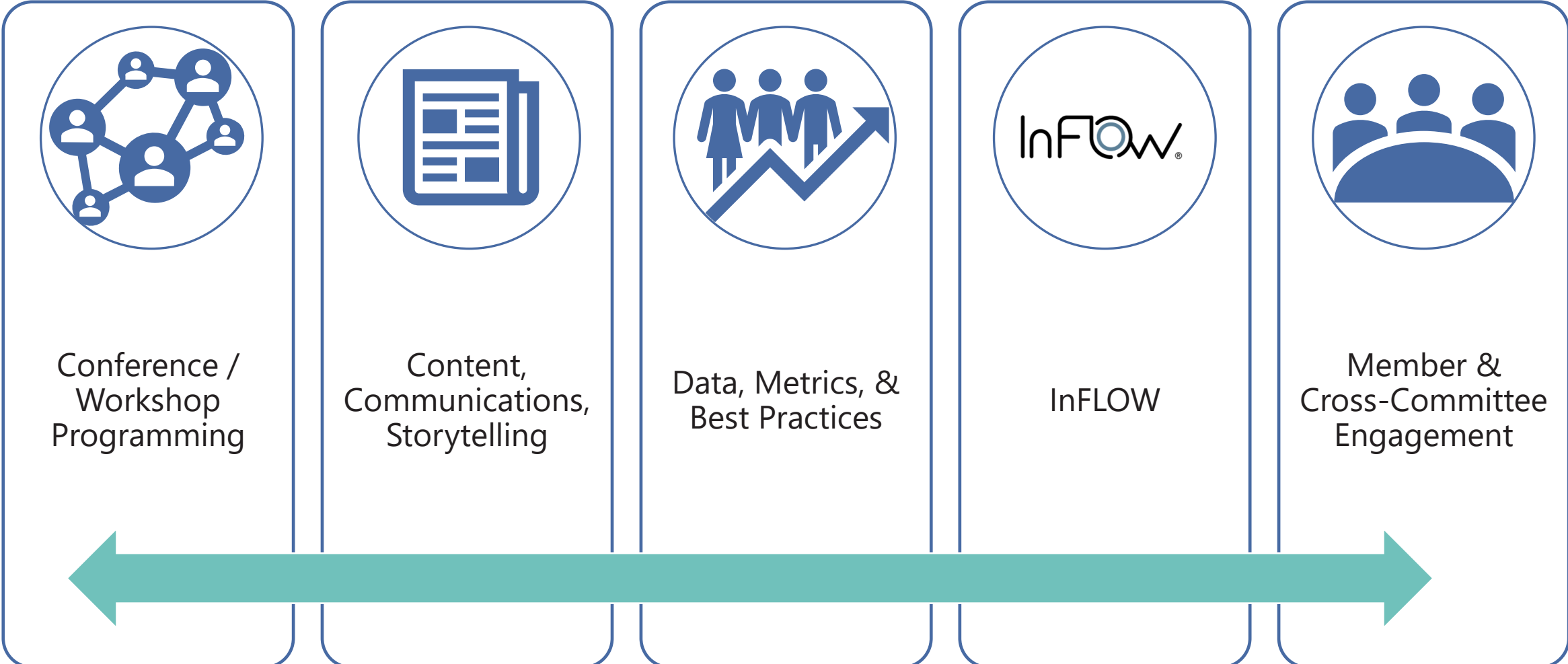
It's the right thing to do, and smart thing to do

Community-centered organization

Add value to our communities

Representation

DE&I Committee: Focus Areas of Action



NYWEA InFLOW



Introducing **F**uture **L**eaders to **O**pportunities in **W**ater is a program to enhance diversity, inclusion, and belonging in the water workforce.

This scholarship opportunity engages participants in WEF programs and events to:

Solidify their interest in working in the water sector.



Increase opportunities for employment and long-term success working in water.

TWO TRACKS

CareerTech

STEMpath

NYWEA InFLOW

STEMPATH FOR STUDENTS

Identifies scholars enrolled in undergraduate/graduate degree programs from historically underrepresented groups

Launched at the NYWEA 2022 Annual Meeting

- Prep – Networking 101
- Assigned mentor from the NYWEA DE&I Committee
- Guide through the Technical Sessions
- Join our water industry network
- Panel Session + Q&A
- One-year NYWEA membership
- Scholarship/stipend
- Tour of Newtown Creek WRRF and Nature Walk
- Community & Visibility

NYWEA InFLOW

CAREERTECH FOR THE WORKPLACE

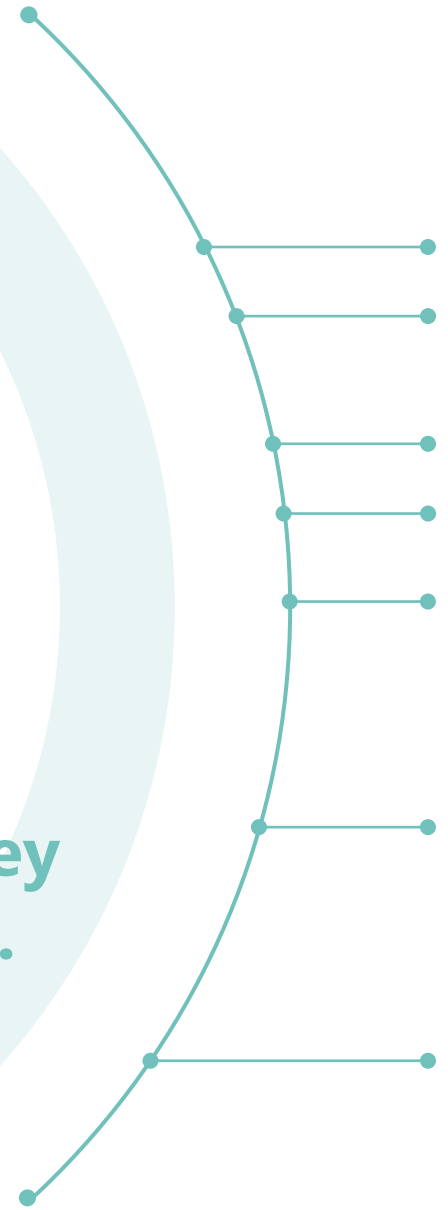
Partners with community-based organizations to expose scholars (age 18+) in job readiness programs to the variety of career possibilities in water quality

Launch at the 2022 Spring Technical Conference with Onondaga Earth Corps

- Assigned mentor from the NYWEA DE&I Committee
- Guide through the Technical Sessions
- Panel Session + Q&A
- Free NYWEA membership
- Scholarship/stipend
- Tour of local WRRF
- Behind the scenes view of the Operators Challenge



Foster a sense of belonging among all members of the water sector. Work with program committee to ensure there is content for all. Review NYWEA events to ensure that they are truly inclusive for all.



- Share our stories!
- Member survey feedback – conduct and belonging
- Equity in the abstract submittal process
- Meet & Greet / Landing platform for groups
- Compelling programming and cases that aims to increase the pipeline of a more diverse students and professionals interested in the water sector and environmental science
- Promote diversity in committee leaders, publications, programming, and conference speakers and support substantive programming to address DE&I/EJ issues
- Instead of trying to fit DEI topics into PE credit under the traditional route, is there room for them as Ethics?

► **Assume responsibility to make the InFLOW program a success. Establish contacts at schools, create background materials, form criteria for participants, and develop schedules and evaluations for participants at NYWEA events.**

Implement for both the Annual Meeting and Spring Meeting

How to reach non-traditional communities to engage in InFLOW

Establishing contacts at the college level, vocational schools, job corps

How do we maintain engagement so that this is not just a one-off conference visit, but a real pathway to a career?

Event series – work with the host university/organization to organize a series of local events: treatment plant tours, green infrastructure tours, introduction to Civil Service workshop, presentations from private firms, etc.

Committee members to be assigned mentors for InFLOW participants. This includes developing relationships before the conference.

▶ **Encourage operator engagement. Explore the challenges and seek answers to the general lack of engagement of operators within NYWEA (beyond Ops Challenge). Focus on historically underrepresented ethnic and racial groups and broader category of historically underrepresented groups**

Perception of Operators – identifying our own biases and checking them at the door

– Operators are leaders, mentors and protectors of environment and public health

Rethink/rebrand how we present NYWEA to operators AND their employers (Utility execs).

Increase awareness of operators to get involved in NYWEA - Many don't know they're NYWEA members under "Utility Memberships"

Retired/experienced operators that want to give back - connect for formal mentorships

Feedback from recent Operator survey: want more content appealing to them; feeling restricted in decision making, leadership opportunities



▶ Encourage engagement and look for partnerships with other professional organizations that represent underrepresented populations.

● **Partnerships with NYWEA Committees and Regional Chapters**

● **NYWEA Committees co-ownership of DE&I Committee Charges**

● Get NYWEA chapters involved in maintaining contact with the local branches/chapters/sections of other organizations; AWWA, NSBE, SHPE, IEEE, unions

► **Seek partnerships with community organizations in underrepresented neighborhoods and among underrepresented populations (community boards, youth groups, churches, etc.)**

Workforce Recruitment

Create educational materials that utilities and local NYWEA chapters will use with community orgs

Potentially a separate sub-group: partnering with community organizations

Which schools to engage and support for public outreach

Partnership goals

- **Job placement/community engagement**
- **Communicating what we do as an industry**
- **Better service communities – what issues do they face**

Community-based EJ organizations to invite to conferences and events – discuss the connectedness of our work

► **Promote Equity with Civil Service (addressing barriers to entry, visibility of announcements, and availability of exam preparation materials)**



Implicit bias in the Civil Service exams.

- An attendee poll from the panel indicated that 50% hear of civil service opportunities through word of mouth/friends & family.
- Civil service access and in general, increase of people heading towards water careers, may overlap with potential community organization outreach
- Underserved and under-resourced populations may not know much about civil service opportunities

Discussed rebranding operator titles and what that would entail

Talk about how conversing with other public outreach efforts of the DE&I committee and other committees in general could help generate a grass roots effort to inform specific sectors of the population of these civil service opportunities.

Frequency of exams being given

Balance traditional vs. equivalent work experience

2020-2022 Accomplishments



Pilot launch of
NYWEA InFLOW
at 2021 Spring
Conference



JEDI Workshop (hybrid)
featuring topics on
Unconscious Bias and
Neurodiversity
(November 2022)



~10-12 active
members



Spring 2022
Clearwater
Mag – Water
Equity theme



Incorporated WEF's DE&I toolkit/fact sheet
resources available on the NYWEA website
(DEI Fundamentals, Bias, LGBTQ+,
Microaggressions, Racism, Inclusive Leadership,
Inclusive Leadership Behaviors)

Winter 2020
Clearwater Mag
– DE&I theme



Maintained bi-weekly
(2x/month) meeting
schedule



InFLOW STEMpath and
CareerTech tracks at the
NYWEA 2022 Winter
and Spring
Conferences



We are one of
the first WEF
MAs to have
executed both a
STEMpath and
CareerTech
InFLOW track!

NYWEA DE&I Committee
Introduction and Civil
Service Panel Discussion
at 2021 Spring
Conference

DE&I themed discussion
and activities during
opening session of
NYWEA 2022 Spring
Conference



10 STEMpath
scholars committed
to February 2023
InFLOW





Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Workshop for Water Professionals

Presented by the [New York Water Environment Association](#) and the [Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center](#)

Agenda

November 15, 2022

- 8:45 Light breakfast and coffee available for in-person attendees
- 9:00 **Welcome & Introductions** Khris Dodson, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center
- 9:05 **Working Together Across Differences: A Talk** from Dr. Sim J. Covington, Jr., Chief Diversity Officer at Finger Lakes Community College (FLCC)
- 11:00 **Break**
- 11:15 **Neurodiversity in the Workplace:** Beverli A. Marshall, General Manager, Valley Sanitary District, Indio, CA
- 12:15 **Lunch & Reflection.** Lunch served for in-person attendees. *Remarks from the NYWEA DE&I Committee Chairs Walt Walker, Water Equity Practice Leader, Greeley and Hansen and Michelle Hess, 4A Water Resource Recovery Operator, City of Canandaigua. Reflections and networking encouraged.*

Adjourn at 1pm.

Workplace Neurodiversity: Appreciating the Differences

Dr. Beverli A. Marshall
ICMA-CM, CSDM



"Imagine a bunch of apples met an orange, but instead of just saying it's an orange, they called it an Apple Deficiency Syndrome fruit"
- Wendy Graves



Agenda

- What is **Neurodiversity**
- Recruiting
- Onboarding
- Ongoing Support
- Q & A
- Resources



NYWEA New York Water Environment Association • 1st
Water Environment at NYWEA
1mo •

Thank you to all of the water professionals who participated in today's Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI) Workshop – both in person and virtually, co-hosted by NYWEA's DE&I Committee and the [Syracuse University CSCS / Environmental Finance Center](#). Special thanks also to our guest speakers, Dr. Sim J. Covington, Jr., Chief Diversity Officer at [Finger Lakes Community College](#) and [Beverli A. Marshall, DBA, ICMA-CM](#), General Manager at [Valley Sanitary District](#). We appreciate the valuable discussions held today and look forward to continuing the conversation!

#NYWEA #WEF #SUEFC #FLCC #NYWEAJEDI #DEI #Justice #Equity #Diversity #Inclusion #Operators #Engineers #Utilities #WaterWorkforce #WaterHeroes #OneWater #InclusiveWorkplaces #Neurodiversity #WaterSector #WatersWorthIt



What's ahead for 2024 and beyond

- Finalizing **committee leadership succession planning** process – leaders in waiting, mentorship, preparation
- DE&I Committee Presence at NYWEA Technical Specialty Conferences – **relevancy** of the technical topics to DEI/EJ
- **Emerging Leaders Development Training** – guided roundtable discussions
- Recommendations to NYWEA Leadership:
 - Include relevant WEF DE&I Toolkits in NYWEA moderator, speaker, and committee leadership welcome packets
 - Equity in conference abstract process
 - How do we engage with members & organizations that have not written an abstract or presented before



What's ahead for 2024 and beyond (cont.)

- Collaboration with other MA committees and member groups
- Ideas for further deep dive:
 - Partnership with Membership and/or Programming Committee to welcome first time attendees or members
 - Planning on how to make all DE&I Toolkits an active tool for discussion and learning. How can this be facilitated in the conference space?
 - Develop a full-day water leadership program at one of the main conferences
 - Roundtable affinity/allyship group discussions at NYWEA conference (similar to WEFTEC)



WEF DEI Toolkit/Factsheets

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Statement from NYWEA's Board of Directors (PDF)

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) created a series of downloadable fact sheets in PDF to help frame the DEI conversation and provide additional context and insights into different aspects of DE&I.

- DEI Fundamentals
- Bias
- LGBTQ+
- Microaggressions
- Racism
- Inclusive Leadership
- Inclusive Moderator Guide
- Inclusive Leadership Behaviors

We join WEF in our commitment to creating an organization that acknowledges and celebrates our unique differences including education, career background, age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, ability status, accent, socioeconomic status, cultural heritage and religion, parental status, marital status, veteran, personality type, political perspective, and all other characteristics of DE&I.

<https://www.nywea.org/SitePages/About/default.aspx>

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What is DEI?

Why does WEF need DEI?
The "case" for DEI typically falls into the categories of the business case and the moral imperative.

The business case refers to the positive outcomes in productivity and innovation associated with an increase in diversity. As the demographics of countries change, diversity is growing as a crucial element to better serving customer needs. WEF is no different in that our members expect us to benefit from the greatest diversity of perspectives to solve for water. For WEF, that means making room for newer and different voices and listening better.

The moral imperative for diversity is tied to the concept of equity (see over). It's based on the idea that it is the right thing to do to alleviate some of the long-standing historical injustices that marginalized communities have faced over time. WEF members expect us to respect and value all our members, independent of any dimensions of diversity. (See right).

WEF DEI Member Feedback

In a 2020 WEF DEI member survey we learned that although many of you value your WEF interactions, some of you have experienced the respect you deserve. We are committed to learning and taking action.

People asking for change included engineers, operators, scientists, non-technical professions and engineering professionals as well as those from smaller utilities and contractors. Their top women fed up from proving their credentials, people of color tired of being asked where they "come from" and largely invisible LGBTQ+ members tired of homophobic jokes. We can do better.

You don't need a PE or PhD to be a valued WEF member or volunteer. *Water is for all of us.*

Traditionalist (born before 1945) 13%
Boomer (born 1946-1964) 20%
Millennials (born 1981-1996) 93%
Gen Z (born 1997-2002) 15.9%

2 Adapted from Gardenswain and Rowe's "Four Dimensions of Diversity"
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How to Shift Leadership Behaviors in Support of DEI

Examine your own biases.
To have bias is to be human, but that doesn't mean you have to let bias unconsciously drive your decisions. Take time to familiarize yourself with your own biases. Simply reminding yourself of others about bias can mitigate negative impacts of it. *Sabaia*

My feeling is, "who am I to lecture others about DEI?" so candidly share that I am an enthusiastic advocate and learner about it. But I have had a privileged upbringing and that it is my responsibility to acknowledge this and let others understand that I am aware of it.
— *Diego Basso*, Board of Trustees

I am very intentional about saying "I've got a 'guys' and partner over a gendered descriptor." These are small and inclusive ways to remind people everyone is welcome. It forces my mindset into the right frame for engagements in and outside our work.
— *Steven Drangsholt*, House of Delegates Chair

I am more aware of microaggressions or unconscious bias, again trying not to make assumptions.
— *Janet Harley Carr*, Board of Trustees

Listen to understand.
Includes leaders listening to all the voices in the room in order to understand the concerns and challenges of others. A leader may not agree with everything they hear, but they respect that everyone has a right to have and voice their own opinion.

I have definitely endeavored to be a much more understanding listener. I am more thoughtful in my listening and understand rather than respond and I take time to process rather than providing a primarily emotional instead of thoughtful response.
— *Aimee Killen*, Vice President

**"How do you listen?"
A:
"I'm in silence!"**

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Inclusive Committee Leadership

Why does WEF need inclusive leadership?

- ✓ To facilitate learning from each other
- ✓ To maximize professional development
- ✓ To network outside of your geography and company
- ✓ To drive innovation

Committee Leadership sets the tone for WEF work

Leadership in committees and taskforces sets the tone, and it directs the course of the work. It's a team effort and requires a good mix of people, experience and thought. **As leaders**, we must be willing to support all committee participants' learning styles, facilitate work meetings in which everyone can contribute, and develop group rapport that invites changelers to bring their concerns forward in order to innovate.

Facilitate Inclusive Meetings

Collaboratively develop agreed meeting norms, such as communication, decision-making and application or invitation norms.

Determine how members join the group and make this information public and transparent.

Develop committee agreements that focus on mutual respect, for example:

- Invite diverse perspectives
- Listen before responding
- Raise hands and wait to speak until called
- One person speaks at a time
- "Three before me" or "Two before more" rule of contribution in a meeting
- Post and remind participants of these agreements at the beginning of each meeting
- Consider appointing an "upholder" for agreement accountability
- Ensure in-person attendees are welcoming to newcomers. Consider stationing a greeter at the door and strategically placing leadership at different tables.

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— *Aimee Killen*, WEF Vice President

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Race and Racism

What is race?
Race is a socially constructed categorization rooted in certain physical characteristics. Racial categorization was developed by European scientists as a means to justify colonization. We still center conversations around race because it has an outsized social impact in many countries with colonial histories.

What is racism?
Racism is a system that is built upon a hierarchy of power. Power is the ability to act or have influence over others.

Therefore, we can define racism as:

RACISM = RACIAL PREJUDICE + INSTITUTIONAL POWER

While the idea of race was invented without any real biological basis, over time it has been used to construct systems that subjugate and oppress. **Race was made very real through racism.** These systems continue in many aspects of society.

Misconceptions
There is no such thing as a "diverse" person. Groups can be diverse, not individuals.
Even people who are color blind see light and dark. You can't not see skin color.
Since racism relies on hierarchies of power, reverse racism does not exist by definition.

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LGBTQ+ (or LGBTQIA)

What are all the initials for?

1 in 6 of Gen Z identifies as LGBTQ+ according to Gallup.

Lesbian: women attracted to women
Gay: men attracted to men
Bisexual: people attracted to either men or women
Transgender: people whose gender identity and/or expression does not match their sex assigned at birth
Queer/umbrella term: for people who do not identify as heterosexual or gender binary. Use with caution - originally an insult, now being reclaimed. Youth are more likely to identify as queer than older people.
Interpersonal Racism: occurs between individuals and includes public expression of racism, often involving slurs, biases, hateful words or actions, or exclusion and rejection
Institutional Racism: occurs in organizations via policies and practices that intentionally or unintentionally give unfair advantages to white people of color. These institutional policies often do not mention any racial groups, but the outcomes result in advantages and disadvantages based on one's race.
Structural Racism: is the interplay and compounding impact across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color.
Adapted from: National Museum of African American History and Culture (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/>)

At work: addressing the "DOUBLE STANDARD"
Research by the HRC identified a common issue for LGBTQ+ workers. On the one hand, **80%** of all US workers agree it's normal to get to know each other by chatting about what you did at the weekend, and **80%** of non-LGBTQ workers also agree that their LGBTQ+ coworkers shouldn't have to hide who they are. But **59%** of non-LGBTQ workers think it's unprofessional to talk about sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace. This is a double standard: non-LGBTQ+ workers may not recognize that we all have a sexual orientation and a gender identity.

Additional terms
Two Spirit (2s, or 2): Used by Indigenous LGBTQ+ folk, and has a complex meaning honoring the fluid nature of gender-identity and sexual attraction and embodying both the masculine and feminine spirit.
Nonbinary: a person whose gender identity and/or expression is neither male nor female. Nonbinary individuals may identify as somewhere between male and female or reject a binary categorization of gender altogether. People may also self-identify as genderfluid or genderqueer.
Cisgender, Cis Man, Cis Woman: Refers to a person whose gender identity aligns with the gender and sex assigned at birth, that is, not a transgender man or woman.
Reflection: Does this Monday morning co-worker exercise seem inappropriate to you? If so, who? LGBTQ+ people work to be able to talk about their families just like others.

Meritocracy as a Microaggression
"I believe the most qualified person should get the job."
Implies that job candidates are being ignored to give advantages to workers or people of color. In reality, employment demographics are changing very slowly.

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Microaggressions

Based on work of Dr D. Sue and Dr K. Nadal

Microaggressions are intentional or unintentional everyday slights, indignities, put-downs and insults that members of marginalized or underrepresented groups experience. The name doesn't do justice to the impact, which can be extremely hurtful.

Within our water community
The following examples have all been experienced by WEF members working in our industry. Often these are unintentional. A helpful principle in addressing such behavior is to help aggressors understand they are not under attack for their comments/behaviors, but that change would be welcome.

Age Youth
"They're not old enough / don't have enough experience to serve in that role"
"You wouldn't know anything about this (it's before your time)."
"You're so hardworking (for your age)"
"You'll probably be gone in _____ you know millennials are job hoppers."

Race
"Where are you from?" "No, where are you really from?"
"You don't sound black."
"You're so articulate."
"She's so aggressive" (a woman of color).
"Can I touch your hair?"
"When I look at you, I don't see color." [This denies the very real daily experience of being treated differently.]

Types of Microaggressions
Microinvalidations: Negating the feelings and experiences of others or minimized people.
Microinsults: Rude or discriminatory snubs or actions that can be slightly covert.
Microassaults: Explicit discriminatory comments or actions meant to harm the target.

Why do we have bias?
Our brains create simplicity from chaos. They are constantly processing vast amounts of data, making meaning of people's stimuli so that we can take action. The brain's job is to keep us safe by detecting patterns, avoiding danger and allowing us to thrive in the future. Over time, the brain notices patterns and categorizes these to remember what has kept us safe, and what has caused us pain. These categories become biases.

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Unconscious bias

What is it, why should we care and what can we do about it?

Bias can be explicit in that we are aware when we are expressing them, or implicit, that operates outside of our day-to-day awareness. **Unconscious Bias is another term for implicit bias.**

Jennifer Eberhardt writes that "implicit bias is a kind of distorting lens that's a product of the architecture of our brain and the disparities in our society."

To have bias is to be human

We all have preferences, or biases, based on our life experiences and belief systems. Humans are hardwired to be on the alert for danger, and just as we tend to feel safe around people we sense are familiar, we also tend to feel wary around those we perceive as different.

We might have bias about someone's accent, language or clothing choices. We might trust someone quickly because they remind us of an old friend. We might assume they are competent because they are tall, or incompetent due to their weight.

How can we mitigate against bias?

1. When making decisions about people, choose measurable, consistent criteria and stick to them.
2. Become aware of your own personal biases and acknowledge where you have a preference before making a decision.
3. Talk openly about team bias, ask a group to identify any 'group think' vulnerabilities.
4. Consider a bias-busting prep meeting before important discussions, to remind the team of known biases and be prepared to pause and reflect.

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Moderator Guide

What's my role?

You're in charge! Moderators set the tone for conference sessions. As a thoughtful, skilled moderator, you create an inviting space for engagement, learning, and connection that enhances participants' experience.

Own the Room:
Your confidence will set others at ease
Enthusiasm is infectious: a genuine interest in the speakers and audience will quickly create a positive environment. Don't worry if you don't know too much about the topic, your job is to be a confident and capable host, not the expert.

Be prepared:

- Check out the space early
- Make sure the speakers know where it is!
- Remind speakers to minimize jargon
- Introduce yourself to the Room Monitor

Own your voice: We all have them. Who are you more likely to greet or call out? Who else could you include? What discomfort might you need to move through? How can you be a role model?

Consider power dynamics in the room - are there any experts who might expect to be called upon? How will you manage them, so they don't dominate the Q&A?

Encourage a conversational tone by asking the presenters what excites them about their topic.

Be prepared with a question or two that the speaker would appreciate being asked.

Warm Up the Room:
Create a welcoming environment
As the moderator, it's your job to keep the session flowing. That doesn't mean the loudest people talking from start to finish! Welcome attendees from all backgrounds, technical and non-technical and foster connections by asking questions as the audience is listening.

"Who do we have in the room today?" Any first-time attendees? Students? Emerging Professionals? Operators? Now to the water industry? International?

- Have folks introduce themselves to their neighbors to break the ice - this is effective
- Encourage people to fill the front rows first. It helps speakers engage with the audience.
- Explain the format up front, so that folks know when they can engage with questions

Respectful language:

- It's safer to refer to people by their location in the room or clothing, rather than assuming identities such as gender or race. (e.g. "In the 3rd row, the person in the blue jacket", not "this young woman in row 3". They may not identify as a woman and referring to age is generally demeaning.
- What pronouns do you use?
- If you make a mistake, apologize and move on, don't dwell on it.

Speaker Introduction Essentials
Practice name pronunciation, confirm that pronouns and last what they care about in their bio. Give a few highlights only!

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- Check out the space early
- Make sure the speakers know where it is!
- Remind speakers to minimize jargon
- Introduce yourself to the Room Monitor

Own your biases: we all have them. Who are you more likely to greet or call on? Who else could you include? What discomfort might you need to move through? How can you be a role model?

Consider power dynamics in the room – are there any 'experts' who might expect to be called upon? How will you manage them, so they don't dominate the Q&A?

Encourage a conversational tone by asking the presenters what excites them about their topic.

Be prepared with a question or two that the speaker would appreciate being asked.

Speaker Introduction Essentials

Practice name pronunciation, confirm their pronouns and ask what they care about in their bio. Give a few highlights only!

WEF Member Feedback: Language Matters

In a 2021 WEF DEI member survey we were reminded of the importance of inclusive language in making everyone welcome at our events. As the moderator, please help model respectful language and remind speakers too.

Respectful language:

- It's safer to refer to people by their location in the room or clothing, rather than assuming identities such as gender or race. E.g. **"In the 3rd row, the person in the blue jacket"**, not "the young woman in row 3". They may not identify as a woman and referring to age is generally demeaning.
- What pronouns do you use?
- If you make a mistake, apologize and move on, don't dwell on it.

Warm Up the Room: Create a welcoming environment

As the moderator, it's your job to keep the session flowing. That doesn't mean the loudest people talking from start to finish! Welcome attendees from all backgrounds, technical and non-technical and foster connections by **asking questions as the audience is gathering**.

"Who do we have in the room today?" Any first-time attendees? Students? Emerging Professionals? Operators? New to the water industry? International?

- Have folks introduce themselves to their neighbors to break the ice – this is effective
- Encourage people to fill the front rows first, it helps speakers engage with the audience.
- Explain the format up front, so that folks know when they can engage with questions

Inclusion and Diversity is Good for Your Business



WEF Strategic Goal: Attracting and Creating a Diverse Water Workforce

We are committed to revitalizing the water industry by attracting and developing a more diverse workforce. We believe in integrating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all that we do. Our exhibitors and manufacturer representatives play a crucial role on the WEFTEC exhibit floor by welcoming all respectfully.



We're very respectful – what's the problem?

Prior exhibition attendees *and buyers* told us they do not always feel respected in their interactions. We want to be clear about expectations and provide examples of behaviors that can even unintentionally lead to guests feeling ignored, dismissed or disrespected.



I approached people who were dismissive, or I was ignored. My counterpart went to the exact same people within minutes and had a totally different experience. We have the same ability to purchase/influence purchasing. I left the hall feeling totally disrespected."

Z. English, Strategic Initiatives & Project Delivery Director.

Thank you for exhibiting at WEFTEC

We want you to **gain maximum business value by creating a welcoming and professional environment for all.**

We are providing this extra information because we have received feedback that **not everyone has felt welcome, especially on the exhibit floor.**

TELL ME MORE



Behaviors to avoid

- When a man and a woman approach a booth together, the exhibitor may address the man instead of the woman, even when the man looks much younger or when the woman initiates the conversation.
- When a person of color approaches with a white person, we heard multiple instances of exhibitors addressing only the white person, excluding the person of color.
- When a person of color approaches by themselves, they may find it hard to get any attention at all.
- When someone perceived as a young professional approaches the booth, staff might ignore them as someone who is not an influential decision maker.



What should we do? Best Practices:

- Staff your team with a diverse range of employees, including women, people of color, younger employees, non-technical staff or other under-represented groups in the water industry. Include bi-lingual staff if possible, especially Spanish or French speakers.
- Avoid assuming roles/seniority/experience level, as it might be perceived as judgmental. Instead, focus on seeking to understand guests' needs first.
- Welcome questions from early in career professionals, to create a positive image of the industry.
- Ensure that your booth layout is accessible and accommodating to all.
- When you're busy, establish a line to save people competing to catch someone's eye.
- Remind your team of the importance for professional language at all times.

Lessons Learned / Observations

Intersecting Goals

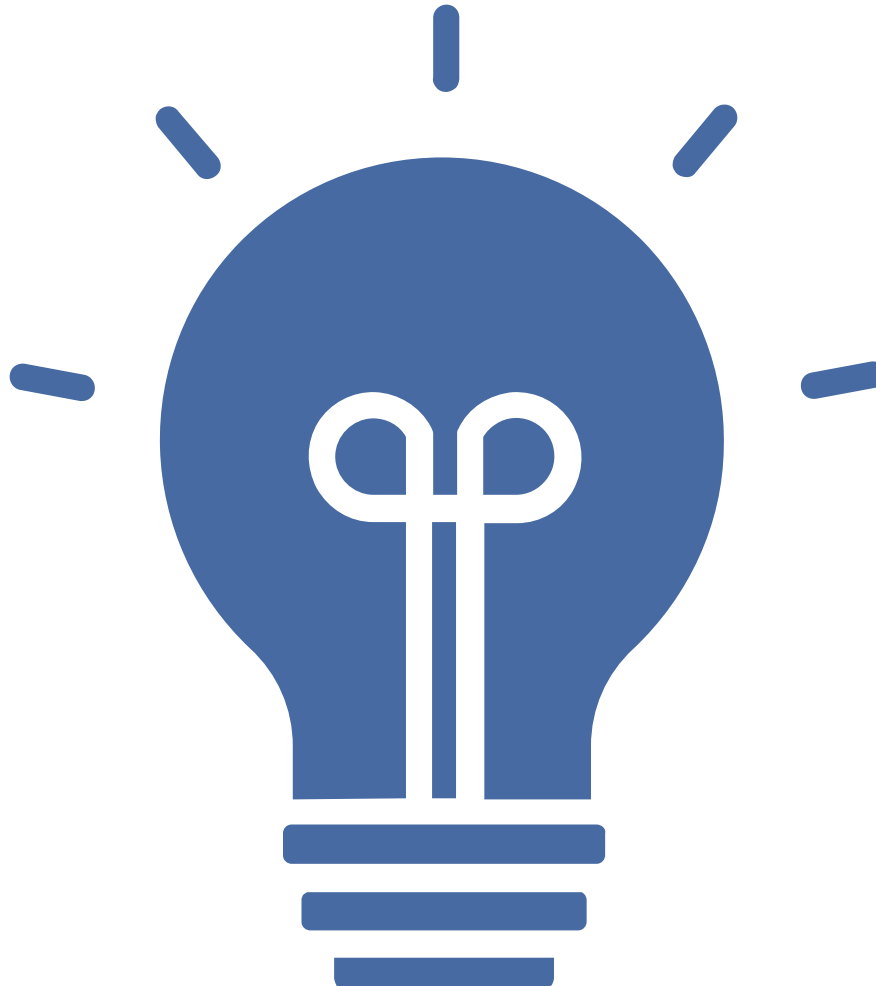
Our committee charges / goals all intersect

Volunteers Have Limited Time

- Flexibility as a committee
- How do we make the most of it?
- Shared goals with other committees

Keywords

- People industry
- Passionate culture
- Core Values and Philosophy
- Allyship
- Accountability
- Courageous Conversations



Unconscious Bias

Policies can have unconscious/implicit bias

Accountability

Hold organizations accountable – DE&I work cannot be siloed

Compelling Storytelling

- Make DE&I / JEDI become personal for you
- Operationalizing equity (internal, as an organization)
- Equity in Infrastructure design / Water Equity Practice

Lessons Learned / Observations *(continued)*

Facilitating Inclusive Meetings

- Collaboratively develop agreed meeting norms
- Develop committee agreements

Plan Meetings that Encourage Participation and Contribution

- Meeting agendas and minutes
- Bi-weekly occurring meetings has worked. Keeps people connected and accountable
- Use breakouts for collaborative problem solving and strategizing
- Elevate diverse voices

Actively Facilitate the Meeting

- Develop norms for acknowledging contribution
- Manage the room
- Periodically stop to check-in with member



How to Shift Leadership Behaviors in Support of DEI



Understand your position and relative power dynamics.

Every interaction with another person or group of people creates relative power dynamics. Be aware of what your position and power is in any given situation. Use these dynamics to address DEI in the way you lead.



Examine your own biases.

To have bias is to be human, but that doesn't mean you have to let bias unconsciously drive your decisions. Take time to familiarize yourself with your own biases. Simply reminding yourself and others about bias can mitigate negative impacts of it.



Act as an upholder – a facilitator and an example of inclusive behaviors

As a leader, it's important to be outspoken about what you do and why in your role. Down processes to hear from more people, or taking time to do quality outreach in order to build a diversified work group or team.



Listen to understand.

Inclusive leaders listen to all the voices in the room in order to understand the concerns and challenges of others. A leader may not agree with everything they hear, but they respect that everyone has a right to have and voice their own opinion.



Act as a challenger, dissenter from traditional behaviors.

There is both a moral imperative and a business case for DEI at WEF—"water is life" for all of us. WEF leadership has made the commitment to challenge the status quo.



Integrate new practices.

and behaviors into all aspects of your work. Incorporate DEI values into your personal approach. Examine written policy, protocols, agreements through a DEI lens. Are they adequate, or should adjustments be made?



Invite Engagement - No one is the expert all the time.

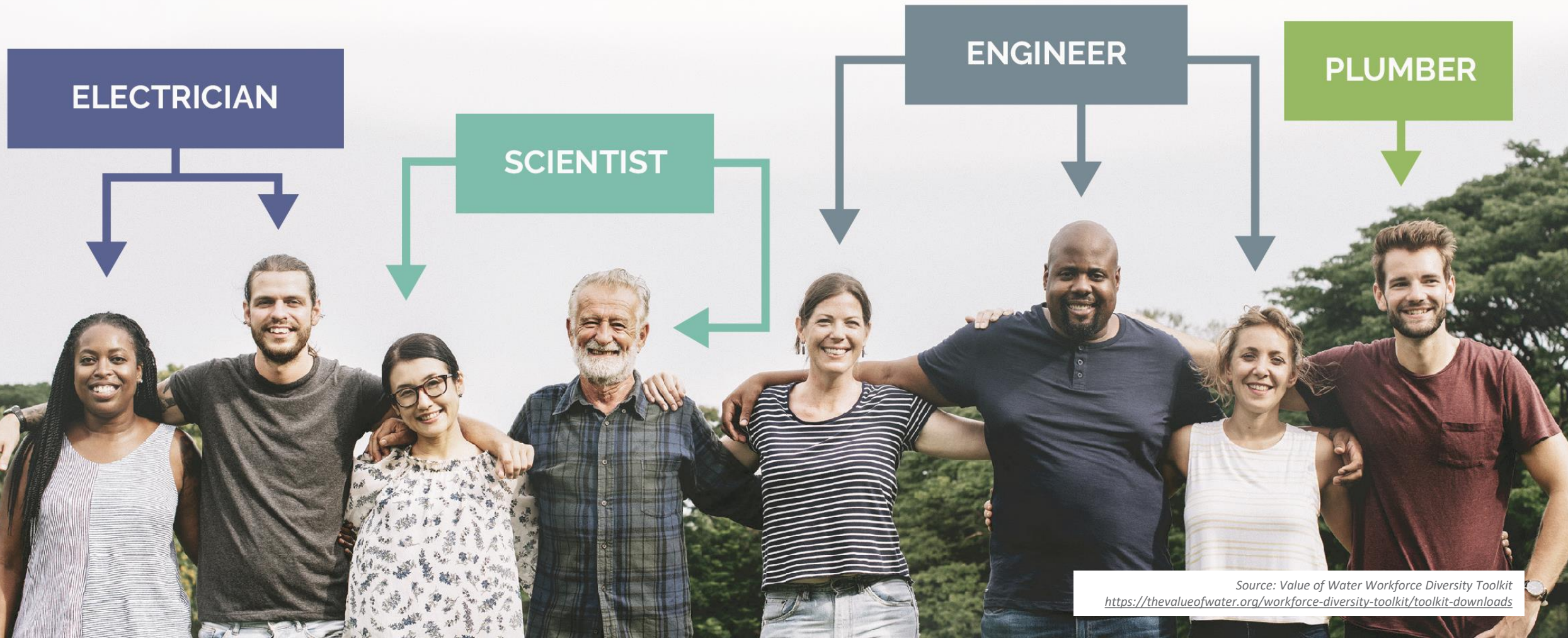
Continually speak to the value of incorporating a diversity of thought and voices, and act on it. Whether the meetings you're participating in or hosting are virtual or in-person, plan in ways to invite engagement from the largest number of participants. Host group breakout sessions virtually or in person. Develop online polls to get a quick read of a large virtual room.

Call to Action



- Drive DE&I and Environmental Justice in Your Areas
 - Creating your own DE&I / EJ committee or practice within your chapter, member organization, or utility
 - Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Employee Impact Groups (EIGs), Affinity Groups
- Storytelling and exercises
→ Compelling for others to be an advocate

You belong here.



Q&A / Discussion



What is the change you want to see in the industry, workplace, professional association?



If I receive pushback from creating a DE&I committee, how do I respond?



What are the tools I need to develop an MA in my state/region, EIG/ERG, Equity/EJ Practice at my organization?



What keywords from the presentations in this session speak to you?



What are Challenges/Opportunities in this space?

Get in Touch!

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