



## DEIA in Volunteer Programming – A List of Actionable Items

*Organizations that embrace Diversity Equity Inclusivity and Accessibility as core cultural values are more innovative, flexible, welcoming and better able to fulfill their missions. Inclusive organizations improve volunteer and staff satisfaction and commitment to the organization as well as decrease workplace conflict.*

### **Key terms:**

BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of Color

DEIA/IDEA – Diversity-Equity- Inclusion-Accessibility

*DEIA work goes far beyond what this list or any list can possibly tackle. This list focuses on translating DEIA into action steps. However, it is critical for overarching issues related to DEIA to be addressed and for trust and transparency at an organizational level to be achieved.*

*Thank you for doing the work.*

## Local Engagement

1. Consider joining or otherwise supporting groups supporting BIPOC and other populations (for example the NAACP).
2. Join or get involved with other direct service nonprofits led by BIPOC (or other) leaders. Don't expect that these organizations will want to partner with you without having any relationship with them. Start a relationship, attend their org/community meetings, show up at their request, and follow their lead.
3. If you are a governmental entity, join GARE – Government Alliance on Race and Equity.
4. Put together a DEIA committee which includes key staff, leadership, board members, clients and volunteers to examine and align practice with values? Many times BIPOC staff or volunteers are asked to lead these committees. It takes enormous emotional labor. Consider ways to compensate their work and/or support them in leadership role. And/or hire someone to steward the team through the process.
5. Educate your organization's team about the communities you serve and their lived experience: get proximate to the community to learn about their perceptions and experiences with the organization.
6. Support businesses, vendors, and consultants who represent diverse communities.

## Organizational Values

7. Take a look at your organization's Mission, Vision, and/or Values – If DEIA is not incorporated, reach out to the decision makers to start a conversation about how to practice DEIA in meaningful ways in the organization. Invite others to do the same.
8. Take a look at your organization's fundraising strategies. One good resource that may be helpful is [Community Centric Fundraising](#).
9. Make sure concepts of DEIA are included in your volunteer program's public Mission, Vision, and/or Values.
10. Create an Inclusivity Statement, separate and distinct from your discrimination policy.
11. Include your Inclusivity Statement on your volunteer webpage and in your volunteer policies.
12. Post your Inclusivity Statement on your walls and talk about it in your orientations/training.
13. If you are in a position to hire staff or onboard volunteers, bring on folks who represent BIPOC and/or are passionate to work towards DEIA.
14. If you are not in a position to hire staff or onboard volunteers, encourage those who are to consider DEIA values in their hiring process.
15. Ensure that discussions about values are aligned with individual and organizational actions.
16. Create a volunteer position or team to research the relationship/history of your mission to BIPOC in your community. What strengths/baggage does your organization carry that influences the community's interest or interaction with them? What information does the current team likely not know?
17. Have that volunteer team determine a thoughtful way to disseminate the information that is respectful to the groups involved and honors the pain/distrust that may have occurred.

## Program Assessment

18. Examine opportunities to improve inclusivity across each program that engages volunteers.
19. Examine and update the job description for your position and make sure it includes language around DEIA.
20. Request that you/your program are evaluated on moving the needle towards increased DEIA.
21. Create a quarterly self-evaluation on your program's success towards increased DEIA.
22. Determine concrete measures for inclusivity evaluation.

## Program Demographics

23. Examine program demographics and retention.
24. Use community or client demographics as a baseline for volunteer demographics.
25. Survey your staff and volunteers about their experiences with inclusivity in your organization and commit to taking transparent action on their feedback.
26. Create a safe/anonymous way for people to express DEIA concerns and respond.
27. Create a safe/respectful/timely process through which to respond to DEIA concerns.
28. Hold staff and volunteers accountable for practicing organizational values and DEIA.

## Language & Communications

29. Define DEIA for your organization and be consistent and transparent in use.
30. Consider using words other than volunteer – Service, Help, Neighbor, etc. Many cultures do not relate to organized “Volunteering” though they support their communities through donations of time and talent consistently.
31. Consider Spanish or other translations of volunteer descriptions.
32. Bring on Spanish speaking volunteers to communicate to and translate documents for Spanish speakers.
33. Consider what would need to change to be welcoming to Spanish speaking volunteers? Are there Spanish speakers already involved as volunteers who might be willing to help the team assess inclusivity? If a volunteer answers a project description in Spanish and shows up to serve, will anyone else at the project be speaking Spanish? Will they feel welcome?
34. Add positive imagery of diverse populations in your marketing materials (Avoid poverty porn).
35. Make sure your website is smart-phone friendly.
36. Make sure your website is easy to navigate and read – consider the accessibility for individuals who are visually / hearing impaired.
37. Ask your volunteers what words they identify with and use those.
38. Add your pronouns after your signature.
39. Use “Adults, 60+” instead of “Seniors.”
40. Use “People with Disabilities” and other people-first language, such as people who are experiencing homelessness or teens who are in foster care.
41. Consider resources to improve technology to reach ADA standards.
42. Use language that celebrates but doesn’t center volunteers (i.e., volunteer as “hero”).

## Volunteer Application & Vetting

43. Consider how welcoming your onboarding process is to those who have never volunteered before, including for those who aren’t your org’s traditional volunteers. Does your website/onboarding information answer questions about what to expect once the application is sent? How long will a response take? What are the next steps? Explain why there is an application and screening process (if there is one).
44. Re-evaluate position requirements like educational and work experiences.
45. Consider including lived experience as a qualification, as appropriate.
46. If you choose to include demographics questions on your application, make it optional and write-in.
47. If you choose to include a gender questions on your application, make it optional and write-in.
48. Include a How-did-you-learn-about-us question on your application so you can target specific audiences in your marketing strategies.
49. Add a question seeking alignment on DEIA values on the application.
50. Include questions in your interviews about DEIA values.
51. Re-examine which volunteer roles require background checks.
52. Examine if and how to engage people who are not legal residents.

53. If volunteering isn't a good fit for the volunteer or the org, invite the prospect to get involved in other ways, as appropriate (follow on social media and help promote events, join the newsletter, participate in a program, drive, or fundraising event).

## Volunteer Recruitment

54. Recruit through communities of worship.
55. Recruit through high schools and local colleges.
56. Table at cultural festivals and gatherings.
57. Post in online community groups for BIPOC and other populations.
58. Do outreach to BIPOC businesses and those owned by other populations.
59. Do outreach to businesses committed to anti-oppression work.
60. Bring on a volunteer to call volunteers without emails.
61. Partner with local libraries which can provide computer access and assistance in emailing.

## Onboarding and Training

62. Offer both in-person and online training. Ensure training content is accessible to those with disabilities and/or who speak another language.
63. Offer onboarding/training during work hours, evenings and weekends.
64. Offer onboarding/training located at community sites and houses of worship.
65. Include your onboarding/training in your volunteer shifts.
66. Include a conversation on how DEIA is put into action at your organization.
67. Educate volunteers about the complexities of your cause and the communities you serve.
68. Challenge staff or volunteers assumptions that are harmful. Use the volunteer experience as a way to reveal and discuss your work so folks leave with a better understanding of the issues than they typically get from headlines, clickbait, etc.

## Volunteer Positions and Shifts

69. Incorporate traditionally informal volunteer efforts into your program like off-site neighbor to neighbor options.
70. Refer people to other organizations, groups and opportunities that offer a continuum of involvement.
71. Develop more one-time volunteer opportunities and include ways to continue involvement beyond the first shift.
72. Develop opportunities that can be signed up for on a flexible basis.
73. Create family friendly opportunities – from Baby to Babba.
74. Create evening and weekend shifts.
75. Create 1-2 hour shifts.
76. Create volunteer-from-home opportunities and provide/deliver the supplies as needed.
77. Create volunteer-from-church opportunities and provide/deliver the supplies as needed.

78. Create volunteer-birthday-parties and provide/deliver the supplies as needed.
79. Create volunteer-with-work-teambuilding events and provide/deliver the supplies as needed.
80. Line up shifts with the closest bus stop route.
81. Set up a ride-share program for your volunteers.
82. Make sure your program sites are to ADA standards.

### Organizational Environment & Culture

83. Take an honest look at the existing organizational culture including who holds power and decision making.
84. What is your organizations relationship with risk, (both true and perceived)? How does that influence volunteer engagement?
85. Who in your organization is accountable for volunteers and their outcome? Are they experts at the tasks at hand and/or experts in people management?
86. Hang imagery of diverse populations on your walls.
87. Highlight diverse days of celebration. Do your research and make sure celebrations are culturally authentic, not Americanized versions (i.e., Cinco de Mayo, St Patrick's Day).
88. Invite/attend, collaborate and build authentic relationships with cultural groups.
89. Hang flags representing the nationalities of all your volunteers and staff.
90. Provide snacks and foods from diverse cultures.
91. Share the history of your local lands and the indigenous people that lived there.

### Volunteer Appreciation & Recognition

92. Invest in useful volunteer gifts and swag.
93. Invest in culturally representative gifts and swag.
94. Purchase gifts and swag from minority-owned businesses and companies committed to anti-oppression work.
95. Create a specific award for anti-oppression and DEIA work for both volunteers and staff.
96. Create a youth award for anti-oppression and DEIA work.
97. Recognize volunteer achievements that are related to your mission, not just the highest number of hours or years.
98. Invite and act on volunteer feedback on program and volunteer strategies. Share how you have incorporated volunteer suggestions and feedback.
99. Share stories about successful volunteer-community or volunteer-staff partnerships

*This list is an ongoing work in progress and is not meant to be prescriptive. Items on this list have been contributed by many individuals in our local volunteer engagement profession and from a variety of online sources. Please use items on this list as they are appropriate to your programs and your needs. Feel free to recommend additional items, suggest amendments if an item feels off-base, or otherwise provide your feedback: [doviacolorado@gmail.com](mailto:doviacolorado@gmail.com).*