



# Diversity & Inclusion Employer Action Guide

*A toolkit to help employers increase diversity and strengthen inclusiveness in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention.*

# Welcome

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# Introduction

## Introduction, Statement of Purpose, & Context

**All Minnesotans need opportunities for sustainable employment.**

The Equity Committee of the Duluth Workforce Development Board has assembled this action guide to help employers in our community and region improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Our purpose in creating this resource is to provide practical tools that will ultimately help move the needle on workforce disparities and provide equitable access to wealth and opportunity. This guide offers concrete practices to build diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces in the areas of recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and retention of staff. Much of the information contained in this guide was crowd-sourced from employers and experts committed to achieving equity outcomes.

### **Context:**

Our country and region has a history of discrimination and persecution leading to systemic and institutional injustices. These injustices have been endured by a diverse many within our community who identify with various nondominant, under-resourced, and underrepresented groups. These are neighbors with diverse abilities, races, sexual orientations, ages, genders, religions, first languages, and more. Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) have faced adversity disproportionate to their white neighbors through many generations. Consequently, we see disparities in educational attainment, employment, income, and wealth.

The murder of George Floyd followed by subsequent national uprisings in response to racism has provided a new catalyst for employers and workplaces to recognize and address the impacts of discrimination and unconscious bias within their organizations.

Within these challenges lie tremendous opportunities and benefits for job seekers, employers, and our community. If all members of our community have access to quality jobs in thriving workplaces that truly represent the diversity of our region, our economy will be stronger. Research has proven that diversity in the workplace creates a workforce that is more innovative and apt to solve problems. And our future is more diverse – projections from the Minnesota State Demographic Center are that Minnesota’s population will be 25% BIPOC by 2035. Locally, 23% of Duluth Public School students currently identify as BIPOC, as compared to 10% in the community at large. Furthermore, from now through 2035, the percentage of Minnesotans of working age will decline from 62 percent to 57 percent, due primarily to the large baby boomer population moving into retirement. An average of 73,417 Minnesotans will be turning 65 every year from now through 2035 according to the state demographer. In order to meet our growing workforce needs, we need to reach untapped and employable people of our



*“My staff are more efficient and happier when they work in an environment that acknowledges and supports their unique differences.”*

# Introduction

community. As our community and workforce grows more diverse, it is imperative and to our advantage that workplaces are welcoming and responsive to these changes.

This year, COVID-19 has dramatically shifted the way in which many employers operate, causing workplaces to reconsider and reassess how they work. Regardless of an employer's sector, size, type, status, or whether it's union or non-union, we have an opportunity to create better systems that are able to recruit, hire, welcome, and retain more effectively. This toolkit provides concrete best practices that employers of all sizes and across all industry sectors can implement to create a diverse and inclusive workplace.

## Equity Statement

In an effort and commitment to address opportunity gaps affecting Northeast Minnesota's workforce, we recognize:

- ❖ Equity is different from equality. Equity is a commitment to justice and fairness, while equality demands sameness.
- ❖ The pursuit of workforce equity acknowledges:
  - The Twin Ports and surrounding communities were established on Indigenous land.
  - The historical conditions and structural and institutional barriers that have withheld opportunity and success for community members based on their race, gender or perceived gender, ability, sexual orientation, age, incomes, and other social conditions.
- ❖ Eliminating those structural and institutional barriers to opportunities requires systemic change that allows for fair distribution of resources, access, information, and other support to let people thrive.

The following pages outline a number of equitable and inclusive best practices. Most are applicable to employers of any size and type, some may be more relevant to larger employers. All employers can benefit from the tools and resources listed here, and are encouraged to share additional resources and best practices with each other and with the Duluth Workforce Development Board.



# Recruiting

## Focus Areas to Implement Equitable & Inclusive Best Practices

### Recruitment

#### End Result:

- ❖ To write and disseminate a job posting that reaches a diverse audience and that is inclusive of the spectrum of gender, abilities, and non-dominant races and cultures.

#### Suggested Metrics:

- ❖ Gather information about the demographics of those who apply. This information must be kept separate from the application and reviewed only after the hire is made. Track demographics of applicants such as gender, race, and geography, as well as source of job referral to monitor impact of recruiting efforts.

#### Best Practices:

##### ❖ Create Inclusive and Equitable Job Descriptions & Postings

- Language
  - ❖ Use language that appeals to everyone
    - Use gender-neutral descriptions (i.e. firefighter vs. fireman).
    - Use [plain language](#) at a reading level accessible to all candidates.
    - Avoid jargon and idioms which can create avoidable language barriers for non-native English speakers and other groups.
  - ❖ Define the expectations of the job using [ADA compliant vocabulary](#). State essential physical demands in the job description and the frequency expected to fulfill them.
- Explicitly state wage rate in job posting. Withholding wage/salary ranges in job postings [disadvantages women and people of color](#), who are less likely to succeed in negotiating salary than white male applicants.
- Include an [Equal Employment Opportunity statement](#).
- Include an [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement Statement](#).
- Assess job requirements for true necessity to the job and clearly state requirements.
  - ❖ Common job requirements that may not be necessary: Driver's license, high school diploma/GED, specific degree or field of study, personal vehicle, physical requirements, etc.
    - Consider using the phrase "access to reliable transportation" over "access to personal vehicle."
    - Carefully consider if a college degree is required for the job. Whenever possible, allow years of work/life or military experience in lieu of a college degree.



# Recruiting

- State in job description whether a drug test, criminal background check, and/or credit check will be conducted as part of the application process.
  - Set clear criteria to determine which criminal offenses would exclude someone from employment.
    - Do not consider arrests - they are not proof of guilt.
    - Do not ask about conviction records and/or commit to carefully evaluating the relevance of criminal convictions.
  - Create a waiver process that would allow an applicant with a criminal background to request special consideration based on defined factors such as enrollment with a community-based partner organization or completion of a recognized program.
  - Highlight your diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies as an introduction to the organization.
    - Post a rainbow flag sticker on the front door/window and on the organization's website to signify a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals.
    - Make sure pictures of employees on your website represent diversity and inclusion.
    - Choose art to hang in the office that represents BIPOC artists and themes.
    - Be thoughtful about whether representations of political positions on the company website and materials support diversity and inclusion.
  - Include a cover letter or summary document in postings or employment sites that talks about workplace culture, particularly as it relates to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

## **Expand Job Posting Locations and Strategy**

- ❖ Post to reach a maximum audience.
  - Broaden your list of where you post jobs to reach a variety of audiences
    - Leverage local networks, such as:
      - [Lake Superior College Career Services](#)
      - [WITC Career Services](#)
      - [Fond du Lac College Career Center](#)
      - [Office of Diversity & Inclusion](#) at UMD
      - [Career Services](#) at the College of St. Scholastica
      - [NAACP Duluth Branch](#)
      - [LOCUS](#)
      - [SOAR Career Solutions](#)
      - [Community Action Duluth](#)
      - [Vocational Rehab Services](#)
      - [Choice Unlimited](#)
      - [UDAC](#)
      - [Mossier](#) – LGBTQ+ hiring events



# Recruiting

- Post on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
- Post on [MinnesotaWorks](#) and [Northforce](#).
- Host a virtual or in-person hiring event at [CareerForce](#).
- Build relationships with community organizations to cast a wider net.
- Accept paper applications or provide ways to access applications through publicly accessible computers.
- Have staff available to support job seekers in completing their application.

## **Create Multiple and Accessible Entry Points**

- ❖ Create or identify entry-level positions that have fewer requirements and/or eliminate barriers to entry.
  - Market these positions as an entry point for your organization with a clear map of opportunities for advancement.
- ❖ Develop “grow your own” programs that integrate [on-the-job training](#) into all positions, especially those at the entry level.
- ❖ [Create internship positions](#) and ensure adequate training and supervision is provided to create a meaningful experience.
- ❖ [Build an apprenticeship program](#) to offer earn-while-you-learn job opportunities and ensure a continuous pipeline of skilled workers.
- ❖ Partner with high school [Career and Technical Education](#) programs to offer job site tours and connection to real-world experience.
- ❖ Partner with [career pathway training](#) programs to connect with trained jobseekers looking for work

## **Tools/Resources:**

- [How to attract diverse and qualified candidates](#) - Career Force
- [Americans with Disabilities Act Compliant Words for Job Descriptions](#)
- [Creating an Inclusive Job Posting](#) - Career Force
- [Disclosing Salary Range](#) - NonProfitAF
- [Federal Plain Language Guide](#)
- [A Guide to Indigenous Land Acknowledgement](#) - Native Governance Center



# Hiring

## Hiring

### End Result:

- ❖ To mitigate and prevent unconscious bias in screening, interviewing, and hiring candidates.

### Suggested Metrics:

- ❖ Once the hiring process is over, review applicant demographics to document the number of candidates who applied and were interviewed from identified groups.
- ❖ Track data on demographics of those interviewed and ultimately hired with improvement goals for the next hiring period.

### Best Practices:

- ❖ Hiring Team
  - Assure the interview team includes racial and gender diversity and utilizes at least one person from another team, department, or partnering organization.
  - Ensure the hiring team has had training on awareness and prevention of implicit bias.
- ❖ Interview Process
  - Audit the interview process for potential bias.
  - Implement [Blind Hiring](#) techniques.
    - Remove or code the applicant's name, gender, and address prior to team reviewing applications.
  - Utilize a uniform or standard set of criteria for interviewing methods, including asking the same questions of all candidates.
  - Determine whether follow-up questions will be allowed.
    - Evaluate using a consistent scale or rubric to measure interview performance across all candidates.
    - Develop a threshold for permitting grammar and spelling mistakes on resumes/applications, when applicable.
    - Include interview questions about the applicant's experience working with people from diverse backgrounds and examples of demonstrating their commitment to equity/inclusiveness.
    - Allow interviewers to write comments as to why scores were chosen to provide additional qualitative information.
      - Review interview panel comments to assess whether implicit bias may have been a factor in candidate evaluation and follow up with training to avoid in the future.
  - Adequately plan for time.
    - Ensure enough time is allowed for the candidate to ask questions.





# Hiring

- Schedule 15 minutes between each candidate to allow the interview panel time to fully debrief.
- Allow 15-30 minutes before the interview begins for a candidate to review interview questions, the job description, or a summary of key duties.
- Be prepared to talk about your diversity and inclusion activities, initiatives, and/or goals in the interview.
- If appropriate, include a work or skills test/evaluation as part of the interview process. Set clear criteria for how this will be scored and its weight in the hiring process.

## ❖ Post-Interview

- Award points for additional factors such as relevant experience/background, addition of skills currently lacking on the work team, or bringing a unique perspective to the organization.
  - Avoid evaluating subjective factors like “good fit” or “professionalism,” or giving a likeability score in the point system.
- Keep records detailing why candidates were or were not selected.
- Allow candidates the opportunity to request information on why they were not selected to advance to the next stage in the process.
- Solicit candidate feedback on their experience with the interview process.

## ❖ Technology

- Provide candidates with the organization’s remote interview protocol or [best practices](#) in advance, addressing camera, microphone, and operating system requirements, backgrounds, whether the chat box will be open, etc.
- Provide alternative methods of conducting virtual interviews if technology fails or if the candidate does not have computer/internet access.
  - Whenever possible, include a default phone-in option for virtual interviews.
- Consider in-person alternatives to virtual interviews, such as [drive-through application/interview events](#).

## Tools/Resources:

- [Recognizing Hidden Bias in Recruiting and Hiring](#) - CareerForce
- [A Guide to Inclusive Hiring](#) - City of Minneapolis (pg. 4 - “Evaluate Your Current Practice: The Recruiting Cycle”)
- [Equitable Hiring Tool](#) - City of Madison, WI
- [Minnesota Employer’s Fair Chance Hiring Guide](#)
- [Can Blind Hiring Improve Workplace Diversity?](#) - SHRM
- [7 Practical Ways to Reduce Bias in Your Hiring Process](#) - SHRM
- Free [Harvard Implicit Bias Test](#)

## TIPS FOR BLIND HIRING

### **Create a Goal**

For example, your goal might be to increase the number of women in executive positions over the course of a year.

### **Pick what to redact**

In addition to stripping names, consider removing home addresses (a possible proxy for race and income) and dates (which can reveal age.)

### **Train recruiters and hiring managers**

Educate employees on unconscious bias and the value of diversity, and teach them how to ask skills-based interview questions.

### **Start Small**

Introduce blind hiring in small steps and for specific roles so you can fine-tune your methods before applying them company-wide.

### **Measure results**

Gather data on diversity demographics - age, race, gender - and employee retention, and solicit candidate feedback. Pro tip: Host a debrief meeting with your HR staff to discuss results.

***Can Blind Hiring Improve Workplace Diversity? - Society of Human Resource Management***

# Onboarding

## Onboarding

### **End Result:**

- ❖ Establish two-way communication to fulfill the needs of new hires and employers and ensure new hires feel welcomed into an inclusive workplace.

### **Suggested Metric:**

- ❖ Utilize an onboarding survey after the probation period ends to evaluate effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. Ask employee to evaluate satisfaction with each orientation component/module, completion rate of each module, assessment of organizational culture, and feeling welcomed.
  - Match survey questions to different key components of onboarding plan.
  - Consider ways to conduct survey that will elicit honest feedback without fear of consequences. For example, consider having a neutral third party from Human Resources or another department receive and review responses and generate recommendations.

### **Best Practices:**

#### ❖ Norms and Expectations

- Set clear performance expectations.
- Provide details of the role within the organization and job responsibilities.
- Ensure that the new employee's work space is completely set up prior to the first day and that all work-related needs have been assessed and met.
- Provide a [Request for Accommodations Form](#) or a similar protocol prior to the first day and ensure accommodations are in place.
- Provide new hires with training manuals, employee newsletters, reading material, or other relevant information prior to the employee's first day so they feel prepared coming to work.

#### ❖ Clear and Comprehensive Onboarding Process/Orientation Plan

- Draft a written orientation plan that includes:
  - Human resources paperwork
  - Overview of the organization, including review of the organizational chart
  - Building walk-through
  - Face-to-face introduction to key staff
  - One-on-one conversations with peers/primary coworkers integrating training content
  - Connection to other recent hires
- Eat lunch together at a specific time and location on first day
- Prioritize an inclusion program as part of orientation



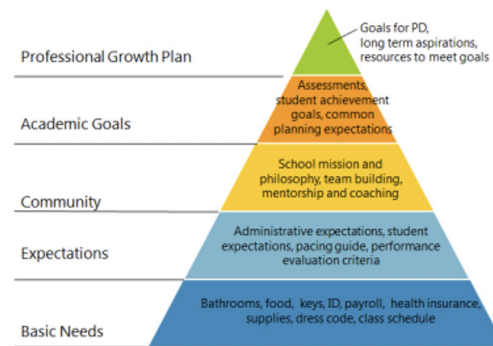
# Onboarding

- Share an Inclusion Statement before or during the first week of employment.
  - Communicate established workplace norms, including ‘unspoken rules.’ Norms often include lunch hour expectations, dress code, tardiness, cell phone usage, perfume use, etc.
  - Send new hires individual welcome communications from leadership.
  - Encourage personal outreach from colleagues during first week of work.
  - Clearly define and share the organization’s approach to conflict management.
    - Provide and review information on how to report discrimination or harassment.
  - Conduct an open conversation during orientation to share communication and learning styles between leadership and new hires.
    - Give everyone the same language for understanding strengths and differences by having everyone on a team or in a department complete the same self-assessment, and make this self- assessment part of orientation.
      - [Strengths Finder](#)
      - [Myers Briggs](#)
      - [Learning Styles Inventory](#)
  - Use a hierarchy of needs to prioritize orientation activities and information shared. ([pg 2-5 of TNTP resource](#))
  - Draft a work plan that includes a specific schedule of meetings, tasks, and deadlines for the first 2-3 weeks of work.
- ❖ **Professional Growth Planning**
- Establish a culture of continued learning and professional development from day one.
    - Have supervisors and new employees work together to create Professional Growth Plans. Review plans at least once a year to revise and note progress.
    - Set aside a budget for professional development with specific guidance on how employees can request support for training.

## Tools/Resources:

- [Virtual Onboarding and Cultivation Guide](#) - TNTP
- [New Employee Onboarding Guide](#) - SHRM
- [Onboarding Tools](#) - Human Resources Today
- [Onboarding Remote Workers](#) - Workable

Leaders can use a hierarchy of needs to prioritize orientation activities and information:



New Teacher Onboarding and Cultivation - TNTP



# Retention

## Retention

### End Result:

- ❖ To retain high-quality and diverse staff and to promote diversity into positions of leadership.

### Suggested Metrics:

- ❖ Conduct an employee satisfaction survey or [Stay Interview](#) to measure qualitative work values like trust, comfort, and feeling valued. Have a protocol in place for following up on responses.
- ❖ Keep data on retention and set a goal for retention rate.
- ❖ Conduct exit interviews with all employees leaving the organization to evaluate areas for improvement.
- ❖ Keep data on diversity in leadership roles. Ensure that any data revealing racial disparities in programs or internal operations is addressed concretely, sufficiently, and in a timely manner.

### Best Practices:

#### ❖ Relationships and Welcoming Environment

- Check in and tend to the emotional, personal, and professional needs of coworkers/employees (especially during/ after major events).
  - Understand and respect that different people will need different kinds of support.
- At the team level, humanize the workplace with more meaningful one-on-one and team interactions.
- Encourage self-care and work-life balance.
- Facilitate formation of employee affinity groups (new parents' groups, culture or ethnic specific groups, LGBTQ employee groups).
- Create opportunities for relationship building and team building in addition to day-to-day operations.
- Reward and recognize employees who have made positive contributions to the team and organization.
  - Recognition doesn't have to be formal or public. Show appreciation when someone goes above and beyond and acknowledge extra effort
  - Recognize small successes and accomplishments.
- Have systems in place to allow employees to submit feedback and report problems in the workplace. Follow up on complaints or issues that are raised and communicate any actions taken to resolve the issue.

#### ❖ Mentorship & Promotion

- Create and encourage responsive avenues for employees to receive relevant mentorship.
- Mentorship does not always have to be internal. Help match employees with mentors either within or outside the organization.
- Build a diverse leadership team by promoting and hiring diverse employees into senior level positions.



# Retention

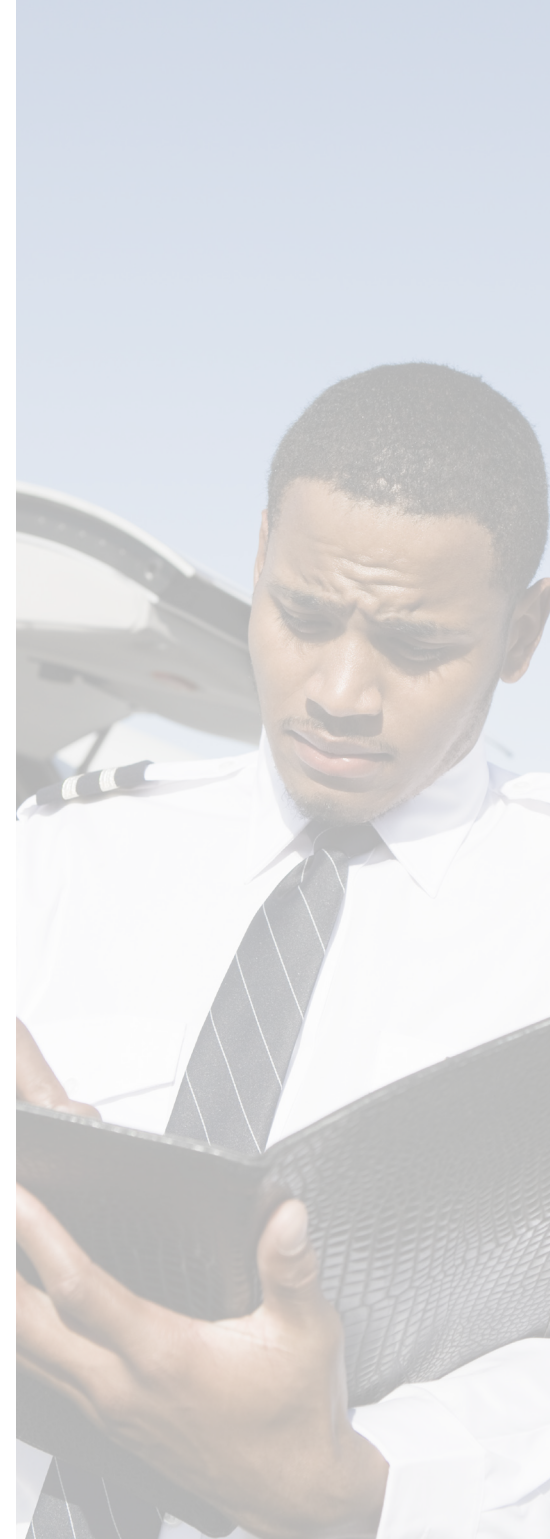
- Consciously and proactively mentor employees with leadership potential to prepare them for taking on leadership roles within the organization.
- Be clear and consistent on promotion processes and timelines.
- Create opportunities for employees to practice leadership by leading team or department meetings, chairing committees, or serving on boards and commissions.
- Conduct [Stay Interviews](#) to understand what is important to employees (must establish trusted two-way communication).

## ❖ Professional Development

- Create intentional spaces for ongoing reflection and self-assessment through regular (annual) diversity training.
  - Encourage all staff to actively continue working to understand and alter the unconscious bias that instinctively emerges into stereotypes and attitudes toward 'other' groups of people by allowing time spent at work for reading, watching films, participating in discussion groups, or attending diverse cultural events.
  - Offer training courses at both the staff and leadership level on anti-bias, handling conflict, effective communication, and cultural competency.
  - Identify internal career pathways and [make them visible to staff](#).
  - Allow opportunities for entry level staff to participate in committees, especially outside of their realm of responsibilities.

## ❖ Inclusivity

- Use [inclusive language](#).
- Create a [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#).
  - Have a process for employees to request accommodations.
  - Budget for providing workplace accommodations.
- Make an effort to ensure voices, especially those of underrepresented demographics, are included and empowered at all levels of decision making.
- Create intentional spaces to uncover the experiences, sentiments, and needs of employees of color.
- Create an expectation that all employees challenge biased, racist, and xenophobic behaviors [in the moment](#), especially in team settings.
- Be strategic in planning for internal gatherings.
  - Ensure location, time of day, and food and beverage choices are accessible for all staff.
    - Remember that some staff may have family commitments that make it difficult to attend events outside of work hours.
  - Make events that include consumption of alcohol optional, and always provide non-alcoholic options.
    - Make sure all employees have a plan for transportation if a meeting/event takes place in a different location.



# Retention

- Explicitly invite staff of non-dominant cultures to create and contribute to organizational culture and norms, such as holiday parties, recognized holidays, and social events.
- Have an [open door policy](#) for managers.
- Include frontline staff in decision making when appropriate.
- Implement a [360 Review](#) for leadership staff.

## ❖ Diversity

- Work with diversity and inclusion experts in your area to provide consultations and/or trainings.
- Provide supervisors with diversity management training so they feel confident in their ability to manage people who are different from them.
- Have all staff and managers participate in an [Intercultural Development Inventory](#).

## ❖ Equity

- Compare pay of BIPOC employees with that of white employees to ensure pay equity.
- Audit the diversity and equity implications of all talent decisions (i.e. promotions, layoffs, furloughs, pay cuts).
- Create flexible work schedules and/or remote work policies and allow for asynchronous work schedules if applicable.

## **Tools/Resources:**

- [Fostering an Inclusive Workplace](#) Equity Toolkit for Restaurant Employers - race forward
- [Hidden Bias: Retention Strategies](#) - CareerForce
- [Sustaining an Inclusive Workplace](#) - CareerForce
- [Words Matter: Guidelines on using inclusive language in the workplace](#) - British Columbia Public Service
- [How Orgs Can Respond to Racism](#) - Team Dynamics
- [A-Z of Disabilities and Accommodations](#) - Job Accommodation Network
- [Beyond Diversity: A Roadmap to Building an Inclusive Organization](#) - Green 2.0



# Support

## Systems of Support

### ❖ **Local Champions/Resources**

- One Roof - Jeff Corey (audit internal processes and procedures) [One Roof Community Housing – Purchase or renovation, we’ve got it all under One Roof \(1roofhousing.org\)](#)
- Northland Foundation - Tony Sertich (remote work policy, public statements) [Northland Foundation | Duluth MN | 218-723-4040 \(northlandfdn.org\)](#)
- UMD - Susana Pelayo-Woodward (DEI within the workplace) [Susana Pelayo-Woodward | Office of Diversity & Inclusion | UMN Duluth](#)
- Claire Farmer-Lies - RSI (Crafting DEI statements) [Homepage - Residential Services Inc.](#)
- Tony Cuneo - Zeitgeist (Job description language) [Zeitgeist | Duluth, Minnesota \(zeitgeiststarts.com\)](#)
- Emily Edison - SOAR Career Solutions (Stay Interviews) [SOAR Career Solutions](#)
- Duane Hill - Minnesota Department of Transportation (Employee engagement discussion or individual development plan) [About - Northeast Minnesota District 1 \(state.mn.us\)](#)

### ❖ **Background & Contextual Information**

- [Employer Resources to Build an Inclusive Workplace](#) - Career Force
- [Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgement](#) - US Dept. Arts & Culture
- [BEHAVE](#) - Team Dynamics Podcast
- [How to get Serious About Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace](#) - Janet Stovall “TED Talk”
- [Economic Disparities Information and Data](#) - Career Force
- [Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace: A Recruiter’s Guide](#) - Built In
- [Equity Definitions and Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Where Did BIPOC Come From?](#) - The New York Times
- [What are structural, institutional and systemic racism?](#) - KGO-TV San Francisco
  - Article and video clip (3:51)
  - Round-table discussion about race, equity, and justice (59:14)
  - W. Kamau Bell discussion about racism and demonstrations (29:54)
- [Hidden Bias in the Workplace](#) - Career Force

### ❖ **COVID-19 Related:**

- [COVID-19 and Videoclassism: Implicit Bias, Videojudgment, and Why I’m Terrified to Have You Look Over My Shoulder](#) - Dr. Taharee Jackson, Federal EEO Consultant



# Support

- [Coronavirus and COVID-19](#) - US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- [How U.S. Companies Can Support Employees of Color Through the Pandemic](#) - Harvard Business Review
- [Reasonable Accommodations during COVID-19](#) - Equip for Equality
- [How to rebuild and reimagine jobs amid the coronavirus crisis](#) - McKinsey & Co
- US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
  - [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#) - U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

## ❖ Consultants & Trainers

- [Brick & Mortar](#) - COVID Planning & Workspace Design
- [Peak Perspectives](#) - Intercultural Competency, Evaluation, Staff Dev
- [Team Dynamics](#) - DEI and Workplace Culture
- [BlackBird Revolt](#) - DEI & Strategic Planning
- [Career Force](#) - Recruitment, Hiring, Talent Development, Retention, etc
- [Diversity Consulting](#) - DEI, strategic planning, leadership training
- [Cultural Fluency Associates](#) - IDI, Cultural competency training and consulting
- [Mossier](#) - Proud to Work LGBTQ safe workplaces
- Duluth Workforce Development Board - Equity Committee







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