



DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Exploring DEI Definitions

Often used together or interchangeably, diversity, equity, and inclusion do not however mean the same thing. An organization for example may have a *diverse* workforce yet struggle to create an *inclusive* workplace culture. Or an organization may treat everyone equally, however will lack *equitable* practices that acknowledge people have different needs or more barriers to overcome to access opportunities. Embodying all three elements are required to achieve positive outcomes and sense of belonging for everyone.

The following definitions from the **Centre for Global Inclusion**¹ can support important conversations across an organization to move diversity, equity and inclusion efforts forward.

“Diversity refers to the variety of similarities and differences among people, including but not limited to gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or Indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socio-economic difference, appearance, language and accent, disability, mental health, education, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role and function, thinking style, and personality type.

Equity, sometimes referred to as social equity, means in its simplest terms, fairness. In an equitable society, all people would have full and unbiased access to livelihood, education, participation in the political and cultural community, and other social benefits. It does not mean that everyone is the same or receives the same benefits.

Inclusion is a dynamic state of operating in which diversity is leveraged to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization or community. An inclusive environment ensures equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued, for who they are and for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.”

¹The **Centre for Global Inclusion** serves as a resource for research and education for individuals and organizations in the quest to improve diversity and inclusion practices around the world. The Center is the home of the Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDIB) to help organizations determine strategy and measure progress in managing diversity and fostering inclusion.



BUILDING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING

The following organizational context offered by the *RIMS DE&I Advisory Council* may help to foster and create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces.

Understanding Diversity

People aren't diverse, but teams and organizations need to be ... to thrive.

Organizational Context

The term **diversity** between people can be understood as the presence of difference. A relational concept, it includes visible and invisible dimensions of difference between people. Diversity shows up in the composition of teams, organizations, and ecosystems and includes differences in lived experiences and perspectives.

Understanding Equity

Equity is about fairness.

Organizational Context

Equity asks organizations to acknowledge that not everyone is starting from the same place or history. Deliberate measures to remove barriers to access, opportunities and resources may be needed to ensure fair organizational policies, systems, outcomes.

Understanding Inclusion

Inclusion doesn't just happen –we have to design for it.

Organizational Context

An organization can be diverse without being inclusive. People often explain the difference between terms by saying that 'diversity' is being invited to the party, whereas 'inclusion' is being asked to dance. Having a diverse workplace means differences exist, while **inclusion** asks how everyone can feel valued, for example by fostering work environments where the thoughts, ideas and perspectives of all individuals matter.

Diversity is a fact.
Equity is a choice.
Inclusion is an action.
Belonging is an outcome.

– Arthur Chan