



Association of  
Aquatic Professionals

## Crafting a Diversity Statement

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A diversity statement for an organization is a formal declaration or statement that outlines the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility, (DEIBA). It typically articulates some of the organization's primary values, policies, and actions related to promoting diversity within its workforce, operations, and community engagement efforts.

All types of aquatic organizations can benefit from crafting and sharing a statement on inclusion and equity. Diversity statements can vary (you'll see why and how below) but generally they'll read and flow like this:

*At [Municipal Department] Parks and Recreation, we celebrate and embrace diversity in all its forms. We believe that our strength lies in the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of our community members, employees, and visitors. We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best. Diversity is not just a concept but a cornerstone of our organization, enriching the experiences we provide and enhancing the quality of life in our community. In our parks, facilities, programs, and services, we strive to reflect the diversity of [City/Town] and to ensure equitable access for all. We recognize that promoting diversity requires ongoing effort, and we are dedicated to continually improving our practices to better serve the needs of everyone we engage with. By embracing diversity, we not only strengthen our organization but also create a welcoming and vibrant community where everyone can thrive, explore, and connect with nature and each other.*

It's not hard to find a generic inclusion statement that could be slightly tailored to meet the needs of your organization or workplace. But dedicating effort, time, and mindfulness to move through a step-by-step process like the one outlined below to create one for your organization, program area, or aquatic operation is an important exercise towards understanding potential inclusion at your agency or association.

### **Step 1: Reflect on Your Organization's Values and Mission**

Take time to review your organization's mission statement and core values. Consider how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) align with these principles. Write down key phrases or ideas that stand out to you.

## **Step 2: Identify Your Organization's Commitment to Diversity**

Brainstorm specific ways your organization demonstrates its commitment to diversity. This could include a variety of areas such as:

- Focusing on inclusive recruiting and hiring practices
- Offering diversity training to your team
- Prioritizing community outreach efforts
- Providing inclusive programs and events
- Actively removing barriers to entry at your facilities
- Offering scholarships and low or no cost opportunities

List these initiatives or actions.

## **Step 3: Define the Purpose and Audience of Your Diversity Statement**

Determine who your diversity statement is intended for (internal team members and leaders, stakeholders, community members) and what you want it to achieve such as communicating values, attracting diverse talent, or strengthening community relationships.

## **Step 4: Conduct a SWOT Analysis**

Assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to diversity within your organization or agency. Identify areas where you excel and areas for improvement. If timing allows, incorporate as many layers of staff as possible and allow folks to be candid (which may require anonymity) as possible to gather as much accurate information as possible. If you have the ability to further seek input from your partners, stakeholders, and community, include that as well.

## **Step 5: Draft Your Diversity Statement**

Based on your reflections and analysis, begin drafting your diversity statement. Use the following structure to guide you:

- **Define:** *State your commitment to diversity and inclusion.*

*Try "At [Organization Name], we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated and valued." or "Diversity is at the heart of everything we do at [Organization Name], enriching our community and enhancing our collective experiences."*

- **Beliefs:** *Highlight key value-based beliefs* such as respect, belonging, curiosity, empathy, and celebration of differences.

Start with these sentences: "We believe in promoting respect, equity, and inclusivity for all individuals." and "We uphold a culture that values the unique perspectives and contributions of every individual."

- **Actions:** *Describe specific actions your organization takes to promote diversity such as inclusive hiring practices, diversity training programs, and community partnerships*

"Through inclusive hiring practices and diverse recruitment efforts, we strive to build a team that reflects the communities we serve." and "We provide ongoing diversity training and education to our employees to foster a culture of understanding and inclusion." are examples for the 'Actions' portion.

- **Impact:** *Share how diversity enriches your organization's culture, strengthens community relationships, and contributes to your mission.*

Edit "Diversity strengthens our organization by fostering innovation, creativity, and collaboration." or "By embracing diversity, we create a welcoming and supportive environment where every individual can thrive and contribute their unique talents."

- **End:** *Wrap it up with a final statement.*

*End with* "Together, we strive to build a future where diversity is celebrated, barriers are dismantled, and everyone feels valued and respected." or "At [Organization Name], diversity isn't just a goal—it's the foundation upon which we build a stronger and more inclusive community."

## **Step 6: Seek Feedback & Revise**

Share your draft diversity statement with a diverse group of stakeholders within your organization. Ask for their feedback on whether the statement accurately reflects your organization's values and commitment to diversity.

## **Step 7: Implement and Communicate**

Once finalized, integrate your diversity statement into your organization's communications, website, employee handbook, and other interview questions. Use it as a guiding principle in your organizational practices and decision-making.

Consider building out your diversity statement and beliefs into specific behaviors for each position in your organization. Work with your aquatics team to talk through these behaviors and include it in your training. Here are a few more actionable ways:

- Create a matching game that connects DEIBA values to behaviors and play as an icebreaker.
- Create a worksheet exercise that helps your team discuss workplace policies and how they relate to DEIBA values.
- Create a multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank quiz to incorporate into pre-summer training.
- Use this as a starting point when offering a division-wide inclusion training for your full-time and part-time teams.

### **Step 8: Reflect and Iterate**

Set your calendar to annually review your diversity statement to ensure it remains relevant and impactful. Consider updating it as your organization evolves and as new opportunities for inclusivity arise. Create opportunities for your team members to review and iterate on the statement as part of their own understanding and to encourage team buy-in to the concept and integration of the statement.

Taking the time to create a solid, well-thought-out diversity statement helps set the stage for your team, your organization and your community. It can not only demonstrate your dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment while providing a framework for diversity; it can also enhance your reputation while helping attract top talent.

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