

WHITE PAPER

How to Develop a Gender/Inclusion Program in Your Organization

It's not enough to support diversity, gender equity, and inclusion, you have to know how to get from here to there.





Overview

In 2020, inclusion is not only a “nice to have” but a business imperative – a strong diversity and inclusion strategy can help your business attract top talent and drive innovative results. Yet top organizations are still struggling to implement diversity and inclusion initiatives, often failing to define actionable steps to reduce systemic barriers.

There are many reasons why organizations aren't stepping up to the plate.

- Addressing gender imbalance isn't easy to do.
- Some leaders may deny any diversity problems at their organization, instead pointing to a meritocratic hiring process without recognizing the unconscious bias that may be present. (If it were so meritocratic, wouldn't women and people of color be fairly represented in senior leadership already?)
- Others may acknowledge bias but absolve their own personal responsibility in dealing with the issue. (Everyone is biased –what can we do?)

Then, there are those who are curious about acquiring the skills to champion diversity issues at work. These are the superstars who get it and will lead the future.

Because each person starts in a different place in the process of learning inclusive leadership, it can be difficult to carve out a path forward for your organization. After all, there's no “one-size-fit-all” approach. Training everyone about unconscious bias doesn't solve it. Hiring diversity won't either, if the company culture merely chews up and spits out difference. That's why partnering with a diversity and inclusion firm to explore the best means to success can be paramount to developing a more equitable, inclusive, and innovative workplace.

Diversity Works: Financial Performance Improves

(Source: McKinsey 2018)



At Orange Grove Consulting, we serve our clients by helping them successfully navigate the process of developing more equitable, inclusive and innovative workplaces with a third party objective and expert lens. Our process is something most operational leaders will recognize: **a business initiative designed to improve bottom line business results.** It starts with measuring where the organization is today and where it wants to go. Then we do detailed analysis of the problem for the organization –

what is standing in the way from where it is to where it wants to be. This gives us targeted opportunities for improvement and allows the organization to set concrete, measurable goals.

Then, we can apply best practices and targeted change management techniques. We also help install measurement systems and feedback mechanisms so progress can be tracked and the direction tweaked as needed. It's no different than solving any other operational problem.

There can be fear from stakeholders that opening up this topic will automatically mean implementing controversial solutions or superficial restrictions on the organization. That's because, historically, organizations have not done a good job of defining their goals before jumping into fad "solutions" often copied from other organizations. At Orange Grove Consulting, we recognize that done right, diversity and inclusion benefits -not impedes– organizational success across the pipeline (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Managing Inclusion Across the Development Pipeline

Too often, inclusion tactics are focused on members of out-groups, like when an ERG is started. A more operational approach, on the other hand, helps organizations identify and dramatically reduce bias across the pipeline.

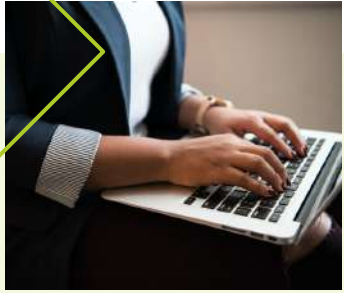


It starts with recognizing that lack of gender and inclusion is an operational problem requiring operational solutions – we call them the **Next Smart Steps** to inclusion.

See our webinar where we reframe inclusion as an operational challenge [here](#).



Next Smart Steps



Next Smart Step 1.

Define Inclusivity at Your Organization

The first step is to determine your organization's definition of equity & inclusion.

Do you want to be 50% women at all levels? Or do you want to stop calls to the sexual harassment phone line? How about improving the representation of people of color, LGBTQ, and people with disabilities? Does your organization have sufficient age and background diversity? Do your people represent your target customers or community?

Assuming the definition is universal can be problematic. On the other hand, defining clearly and as specifically as possible what you are trying to achieve can set your initiative up for success. It's ok if you don't yet know why your organization has inclusion problems. The first smart step forward is to acknowledge the symptoms.

To this end you may want to include some key stakeholders in the conversation. This could include senior leaders whose buy-in you need to make anything happen as well as champions in the organization who are advocates for the change you envision. Forming a stakeholder committee can go a long way to enlisting support and sharing the future workload.



How can we help?

Facilitated Strategy Sessions

We can help you answer the questions above and establish a go-forward process of discovery through either a series of facilitated discussions with your Inclusivity Committee and / or help you conduct a formal Strategy Session or retreat.



Next Smart Step 2.

Understand the Current State

It may be tempting to approach a gender/ inclusivity initiative by jumping right in, developing programming, and training people or throwing the latest trick at the problem.

We have seen organizations roll out expensive unconscious bias training programs company-wide, implement a blind-resume process, or set up an ERG with minimal thought to the impact these programs will have on their organization or whether these are even appropriate interventions for this particular setting. Of course, they may all be good techniques, but we find organizations spend a lot of money without clear results and then find they've lost the energy and focus needed to really move the needle.

Sometimes you only get one shot to get this right so we suggest the second Smart Step conducting analysis to identify the biggest opportunities for improvement and how to target solutions more specifically.



...identify the biggest opportunities for improvement and how to target solutions more specifically.



The analysis we recommend is an assessment of the entire development pipeline – each level from entry level through senior executive – to ferret out the specific obstacles: biases, processes, and lack of leadership skills that prevent women and people of color from being hired and moving up successfully in the organization. This includes reviewing recruiting practices, how hiring and evaluation decisions are made, pay structures, promotions, how work is assigned, how work gets done, what role modeling takes place, and how the culture treats in-groups and out groups.

Often, this involves surveying more than just women and people of color, but rather, surveying many people around the organization, including suppliers and customers and then comparing the differences in their perspectives and experiences. We suggest looking at individual career trajectory data and rates of attrition by gender, group, and department or region. It is critical that this assessment be done as objectively as possible, which is why we recommend it be done by a neutral 3rd party.



How can we help?

Inclusivity Assessments

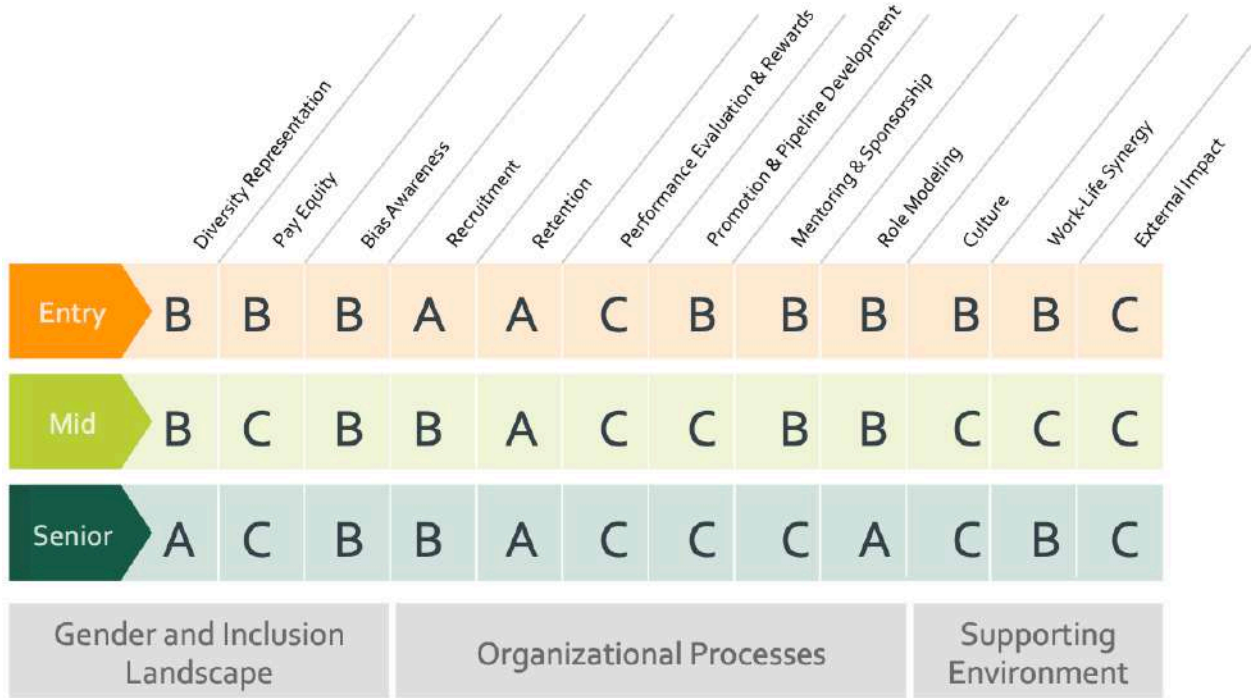
We conduct inclusivity assessments. The outcomes of this process would help you and senior leadership understand what is happening on the ground in each of the regions or departments.

This can be done as a pilot in a single area or geography and then subsequently rolled out across other regions. The assessment includes surveys and, on occasion interviews as well. It can also include analysis of any HR data provided by the company as well as external sources such as Glassdoor, etc.

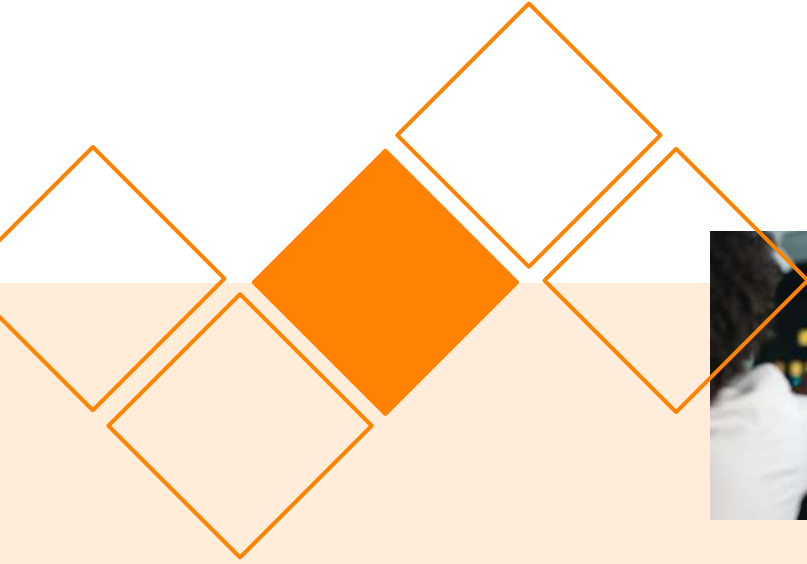
The outcomes of our objective third-party assessment are summarized in 12 key business areas, which creates valuable intelligence for the business.

Our inclusion scorecard report includes a letter grade for each business area, by level, and a detailed documentation of our findings, recommendations, and suggested prioritization.

Figure 1 Inclusion Scoreboard



(© Orange Grove Consulting)



Next Smart Step 3.

Envision and Empower Change

The Next Smart Step is to re-engage the stakeholders - inclusivity committee and any other advocates who have spoken up during the survey/interview/assessment process - to lead your change and implementation team.

This step includes sharing the results of the assessment and co-developing the go-forward plan. By engaging these advocates and making them part of the solution, you reward (instead of punish) their feedback and enlist their energy.

Here a few key questions to consider as you envision what you want to accomplish:

- What does success look like?
- What does it mean to have an inclusive culture at your organization?
- What expectations will you set for your employees?
- How will you evaluate success?
- How will you share and build on your successes?
- How will you oversee the change management required?
- What is achievable?
- Who will be accountable for the success of the program?



How can we help?

Facilitated Planning Sessions

We can facilitate structured planning sessions with the inclusivity committee and/or regions or departments to share the vision to garner feedback, set out a baseline for action, widen awareness and begin to build a coalition for change.



Next Smart Step 4.

Program Assistance and Process Changes

The fourth Smart Step is where your organization begins to implement change.

This step could include systemic process improvement, focused training on particular groups such as leadership, and could also include further areas of study, such as a pay equity investigation or running job advertisements through a bias checker device. Each of these subprojects should be conducted with clear objectives, measurements and feedback mechanisms. The committee leaders should be kept in constant appraisal of the results and come together to re-evaluate and change direction as needed.



How can we help?

Training & Leadership Development

We offer many related training topics including Unconscious Bias and Inclusive Leadership for both associates and leaders of the organization. We can build long-term programs as well as specific custom interventions adapted and designed based on your identified gaps and goals.

Inclusive Leadership Competencies

Often, existing leadership competency measures exclude diversity and inclusion. As a result, your organization may not have a way of identifying where leaders need more specific training in areas like leading inclusively. We can design inclusive competencies in collaboration with your HR leaders, or assess your existing competencies against our Taxonomy of Inclusive Leadership Capabilities.

ERG or Affinity Group Assistance

We can help maximize the potential of these organizations to assist with organizational change initiatives. Whether you need help getting started for the first time, or want to refresh an existing program, we can be of assistance.

Figure 3. Taxonomy of Inclusive Leadership Capabilities



(© Watson and Detjen, 2020)



Next Smart Step 5.

Roll out, Measure, Systemize, and Review

Our approach is to pilot, measure and adapt and then systematize the changes so that they can be expanded across your organization.

Change works best when tested within the context of the various areas of your business. Adapting it for each area enables you to realize the benefits. Measuring each step of the way and systematizing the changes into the daily operations ensures that you understand when/ if a problem arises again. Inclusion becomes integral to how the organization works. Measurement enables progressive evaluation and micro-adaptations to ensure you are continuing to remain “bias-free”.

Even if your organization is coming from behind on achieving diversity and inclusion, the opportunity to lead is here. By leapfrogging all of the piecemeal, arbitrary efforts of those organizations that haven't implemented an effective program, and implementing our Next Smart Steps plan, your organization can leverage diversity and inclusion for better results.

Ultimately, with Orange Grove Consulting, we can explore together the best means for helping you find success.

“

Inclusion becomes integral to how the organization works.



How can we help?

Metrics and Dashboard Creation

Implementing metrics and reporting dashboards that are integrated with company systems and processes is of particular importance to sustain long-term inclusion initiatives. We can help develop the systems of measurement and reporting tools for the organization.

Annual Checkup

Having an outside partner review and re-assess the organization on an annual basis can bring credibility to your results and progress improvement. Like an annual financial audit, this can ensure any areas that need a tune-up get the required focus before they become problems.

Advisory

We can also serve as an ongoing advisor as you implement your initiative. We are seasoned experts in change management and can work with your team to build a program that minimizes resistance and maximizes integration. We can provide feedback as you navigate your way from point A to point B. We can also refer you to trusted sources for any work required that is not in our current catalog.

