

Embracing Inclusive Leadership

Historically the environmental movement has lacked racial diversity in both large and small green organizations across all levels of leadership. As more environmental organizations are adopting DEI strategies, data shows that many of these same organizations are not prioritizing overall team culture or addressing the inequities and exclusionary practices that negatively impact hiring and retention of BIPOC staff (S. K. Johnson, Green 2.0, 2019). Organizations can put 100% of their efforts into DEI recruitment strategies, but if they never address team culture and review systems for equity and inclusivity, then much of that work will be ineffective. Being an inclusive leader goes far beyond diversity representation.

Being an inclusive leader means valuing and leveraging diversity, creating a sense of belonging, and fostering an environment where all employees can thrive. It means creating work environments where employees feel valued, respected, and safe to express their opinion by fostering psychological safety. Inclusive leaders encourage open dialogue, actively listen, and consider perspectives different from their own. They examine existing policies to ensure fairness and equity to address systemic biases. And, they create a culture of giving/receiving feedback and model their commitment to continuous learning.

What is this resource?

This resource is a two-part workshop on Inclusive Leadership- why it matters, how it benefits everyone, and the behaviors and traits of inclusive leaders. It can be facilitated by an Executive Director or another senior member of leadership for the full leadership team including all staff in supervisory roles. It can also be completed individually for a personal assessment.

Who is it for?

- Executive Directors
- Leadership Teams, Senior staff members
- Staff in supervisory roles
- DEI leaders, DEI committees

What will you gain from this resource?

- The definition of Inclusive Leadership and why it matters
- The traits of an inclusive leader and examples in practice
- An individual leadership assessment

Exercise 1: Why Be an Inclusive Leader?

Activity Time: 60 minutes

Instructions:

1. **Watch Video:** [Inclusive Leadership](#), Dr. Steven Jones – 30 min
2. Individually reflect on the following prompts:
 - a. What key themes or ideas stood out to you?
 - b. Was anything surprising or an a-ha! Moment?
 - c. Was there anything you were challenged by or wondered about?
 - d. What are key takeaways or learnings from this presentation?
3. **Pair + Share:** In groups of two or three, share responses to the reflection questions.
4. As a full group, discuss themes that emerged from the small group discussions.

Exercise 2: Behaviors of Inclusive Leaders

Activity Time: 30-45 minutes

1. Individually read the article, [What Makes an Inclusive Leader?](#) (BetterUp, 2021) - 10 minutes
2. The article identifies six behaviors exhibited by inclusive leaders. Review each behavior on the chart below and write one way you practice the behavior currently and one way you can increase this practice in your leadership moving forward.

Pair + Share: In groups of two or three, share learnings and takeaways after filling out the chart.

3. As a full group, discuss themes that emerged from the small group discussions.

Inclusive Leadership Behaviors	What is one way I practice this behavior?	What is one way I can increase this practice?
Relationship Building <i>Inclusive leadership cannot be transactional.</i> Inclusive leaders invest time in building real relationships with their team members, peers, and other employees, getting to know what matters to them and what they need to be successful.		

Recognition <i>Inclusion is proactive.</i> Inclusive leaders make an effort to recognize people for their work and support their efforts and growth. That means recognizing specifically and personally the unique contributions of others in ways that are motivating and elevate their sense of personal accomplishment.		
Empathy <i>Creating an inclusive space requires having an appreciation for where others are coming from and what they might be experiencing.</i> Inclusive leaders are warm and encouraging in their interactions, embracing compassion in order to foster deeper connections with others. They make an effort to stay connected to the daily pulse of what is going on for employees and whether they are feeling seen, valued, and respected.		
Social Connection <i>Interactions with other people drive our sense of being included.</i> Inclusive leaders encourage people to recognize each other as humans, not just co-workers or adjoining parts of a process. They create opportunities for people to engage with each other — both in and out of work — to deepen their connections and model the importance of maintaining close personal relationships with supportive people in our lives.		

Encouragement <i>Inclusion is an invitation, extended day after day.</i> Inclusive leaders use a variety of approaches to seek input and feedback directly from people who might not speak up. and check- in on what people need to be successful. They also stay attuned to obstacles that might get in the way of participation — not just in meetings but in the way work gets done — and look for ways to minimize these obstacles.		
Alignment <i>Inclusion means being able to do your best work.</i> Inclusive leaders provide shared vision and clarity to guide others. They set their people up for success and create avenues for contributing to the larger outcome. Inclusive leaders also make space for people to find their own meaning and purpose.		

**Adapted from "What makes an inclusive leader? These 6 behaviors are a good start" by E. S. M. Woll, 2021, BetterUp*

Sources

- [Inclusive vs. Exclusive Leadership: Understanding the Differences](#) SHRM, 2023
- [What makes an inclusive leader?](#) BetterUp,
- [Inclusive Leadership - Dr. Steven Jones](#) Dr. Steven Jones Video
- [Leaking Talent](#) Green 2.0 Report, 2019

Additional Resources

Articles

- [The journey to becoming a more inclusive leader](#) Korn Ferry

TREC

- [Developing an Inclusive Culture](#) 55-min webinar
 - [Webinar Guide](#), worksheet
- [Accessibility and Inclusivity in the Workplace](#) resource
- [Building Engaged Virtual and Hybrid Teams: Communication Practices and Strategies](#) 60-min webinar