

Crafting Your DEI Statement and Making a Case for Change

Diversity, equity, and inclusion statements can be powerful when they are created thoughtfully and implemented authentically. By shining a light on historical inequities and actively committing to a DEI mission, green organizations can directly increase the retention of BIPOC workers in the sector. According to a 2019 study of US environmental organizations, BIPOC workers reported a higher intent to stay at their organization when there are stated long-term DEI goals and metrics, when the Executive Director demonstrates an authentic commitment to equity and inclusion, and when DEI commitments are incorporated into the strategic plan as well as the organization's mission, vision, values (Green 2.0, 2019).

When organizations establish DEI goals and values that their leadership is accountable to, there is increased trust and sense of belonging with staff, partners, and other folks just browsing your website like potential job candidates. It helps establish expectations of leadership and the direction of the organization while stating the organization's explicit responsibility and role in creating change. When revisited annually, DEI commitments can be a catalyst for change as your organization's narrative evolves over time.

This resource includes a multi-part exercise to draft an organizational DEI commitment statement with staff input to be led by the Executive Director. It would also be the perfect project for a DEI committee facilitated by a DEI Lead. Through the exercises, you'll explore why DEI is important to your organization and begin to outline your commitments to diversity and inclusion.

What is this resource?

This resource includes a pre-work activity and a guided workshop to draft your organization's DEI mission statement as a team. It can be facilitated by an Executive Director for the board, the leadership team, or the full staff across multiple sessions. It could also be led by a DEI Lead for a DEI committee.

Who is it for?

- Executive Directors
- DEI Leads

What will you gain from this resource?

- Understand why DEI is important to your organization.
- Explore your organization's internal values and DEI commitments.
- Worksheet to create your own organizational DEI statement.

Pre-Work: Crafting a DEI Case for Change and DEI Statement

Activity Time: 90 min

Instructions:

1. Watch the TREC webinar [Crafting a DEI Case for Change and DEI Statement](#) – (0:00–00:58 min)
2. Reflect using the following prompts:
 - a. What are key takeaways or learnings from this presentation?
 - b. Why do you think it's important for your organization to have a DEI statement?

Exercise: Crafting your DEI Statement

Activity Time: 2 hours

Instructions:

Start to build your DEI statement by answering the following questions. Try to focus on getting your ideas on paper and less about crafting the perfect language. This exercise is an adaptation of the Avarna Group resource, [TREC Clients DEI Statement Worksheet](#). It can be split into multiple sessions to make space for necessary conversations and to accommodate more input from staff.

Getting Started

1. Collectively review your organization's mission, vision, and values.
2. As a large group, compare the following sample DEI statements:
 - [Conservation Labs](http://www.conservationlabs.com/dei) (www.conservationlabs.com/dei)
 - [Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources](http://www.yourcier.org/about-us/) (www.yourcier.org/about-us/)
 - [Greenbelt Alliance](http://greenbelt.org/mission-vision/) (greenbelt.org/mission-vision/)

Acknowledgement of Inequities

3. How would you or your organization characterize inequities in the world today?
 - a. Brainstorm different ways you might discuss this in a way that feels consistent with your organizations' other messaging.
 - b. Craft one sentence that summarizes your thoughts.

Your Role

4. What is our role?
 - a. Based on your mission and skill sets, how can your organization contribute to a more equitable world?
 - b. How does your organization make the world a better place and for who? (This can be aspirational if you're not already implementing DEI tactics).

Articulating Your Why

5. Why is DEI important to your organization?
 - a. Brainstorm as many possibilities – don't worry about whether they are more pragmatic or more values based). Write them in your own words – don't feel the need to mirror anyone else's language.
6. Circle each 'why' that feel core to your organization. Discuss how each is connected to your organization's mission. Cross out any ideas that no longer resonate.
7. Of the remaining ideas, consider which area of equity and inclusion they address.
 - a. Does this 'why' compel us to simply diversify?
 - b. Does this 'why' compel us to promote inclusion?
 - c. Does this 'why' compel us to shift what we do to ensure equal access to a resource?
8. *See Appendix A below for examples of why organizations value DEI work, if you need more support.*

Outlining Your Commitments

9. How do you bring your DEI values to fruition?
10. What are the actions that you take that support equity and inclusion?
11. Ensure you mention strategies that relate to your external constituents' well-being as well as your staff's.
12. See Appendix B below for pitfalls to avoid in articulating your if you need more support.

Write Your Narrative

13. Write your DEI statement. Be mindful of not over-editing and striving for perfection, instead focus on getting a first draft completed to share with the team for input. See Appendix C for two examples of DEI Statements.

Appendix A: Some examples of why organizations value DEI work:

1. Future of conservation relies on including the diverse voices of the US; we cannot solve vexing environmental issues without creative solutions.
2. We all have a responsibility and right to care for the environment in a culturally relevant way.
3. Health and wellness: being outdoors can increase the health and wellness of individuals.
4. Environmental justice: caring for the environment can also mean caring for our communities' livelihood, health, and access to basic needs like clean drinking water.
5. Access to the outdoors as a basic right.
6. Access to high quality education, programs, and opportunities
7. Staff & volunteers should feel valued.
8. Participants, students, and constituents should feel valued
9. The need to expand our conservation lens by honoring myriad outdoor connections

Appendix B: Pitfalls to avoid in crafting your commitments:

- Overbroad and ambiguous commitments
- Unrealistic commitments where you can't hold people accountable.
- Broad statements about valuing all identities.
- Listing identities (you'll inevitably forget someone)
- Vague references to "diversity" or conflating "diversity" with race without being more specific.
- Don't list identities (i.e. race, class, gender) unless you say something like, "including, but not limited to..."
- Focusing solely on diversity, instead of the more important concepts of equity and inclusion (and perhaps even justice)
- Not connecting diversity to the concepts of equity and inclusion (what is your diversity goal in service of?) • Purely external commitments.
- Analysis paralysis.
- Making too many commitments (We like the "3-5" rule of making 3-5 commitments for the next 3-5 years.)
- Articulating "whys" that are not represented in your commitments. That is inauthentic.
- Not following through on your commitments

Sources

- [Crafting a DEI Case for Change and DEI Statement](#) – TREC Webinar
- [DEI Statement Worksheet](#) – TREC/Avarna Group Resource
- [Equity and Inclusion: The Roots of Organizational Well-Being](#) – Stanford Social Innovation Review
- [Leaking Talent: How People of Color are Pushed Out of Environmental Organizations](#) – Green 2.0

Additional Resources

Articles

- [Laying the Foundations for DEI Work in Your Organization: An Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) – The Management Center
- [Using Choice Points to Advance Racial Equity and Inclusion](#) – The Management Center
- [So you've declared that Black Lives Matter. Now what?](#) – The Management Center

TREC Resources

- [Connecting to your D.E.I “Why”](#) – TREC Resource
- [Embedding Accountability and Sustaining DEI Initiatives](#) – TREC Resource
- [Anti-Blackness and Conservation: Dismantling Anti-Black Racism in Conservation](#) – TREC
- [Is Racial Justice an Environmental Issue?: A Continued Conversation of Anti-Blackness in Conservation](#) – TREC
- [Indigenous Lands Activity](#) – TREC
- [TREC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement](#)