

## A Webinar Discussion: Find Your Path to a More Inclusive Workplace Culture

To watch the Webinar:

<https://alford.com/find-your-path-to-a-more-inclusive-workplace-culture/>

*“Nothing changes if nothing changes!”*

*“Achieving diversity, equity and inclusion will take a marathon, not a sprint”*

So how does an organization create a pathway to a more inclusive workplace culture? Freddy Garcia and Inaudy Esposito joined The Alford Group’s President Brenda Asare for a spirited webinar discussion hosted by AFP Mid-Hudson Valley, NY Chapter on August 11, 2020.\* They agreed there is not a “checklist” you can tick off to go from here and get to there, declare victory and move on. The process must be sustained and ingrained to create and nurture a culture where everyone feels respected and valued and where there is room for all voices to be heard. Here are some insights as well as some concrete recommended action steps that emerged during the informative conversation that took place.

We need to agree on the meaning of the acronym DEI. “D” stands for the diversity you have (or don’t) among employees, management and board. In other words, diversity describes who sits at your metaphorical table. “E” refers to the equity at your organization, that is, the opportunity for people at your table, the way they are treated, including being promoted, and having potential to impact the organization. “I” is for the inclusiveness of the culture. Does every person have a voice at the table and is each voice treated with respect? Can people bring their authentic selves to the table?

Asking how to get going on a constructive path toward greater equity and inclusion is top of mind for many organizations. You want a roadmap, some concrete actions to take individually or institutionally. But the kind of change needed will require relationship-building. That can’t just happen overnight. There’s language. And norms around everyday behaviors, preferred music and forms of expression that signal different racial and ethnic identity. How is it possible for everyone to feel comfortable in the workplace given differences we bring?

There are some concrete steps worth trying, but before going there, some principles for basic human decency are worth remembering. Support each other. Show kindness and empathy. Don't throw people out who don't get it. Bring them in and bring them along. Assess your own unconscious bias by taking online trainings and reading. Be intentional about building bridges – invite someone different from you to have lunch.

But there are indeed some recommended action steps to introduce in the workplace:

- Start with training to help people become aware of unconscious bias
- Establish a committee to address DEI strategies and ensure that action steps move forward
- Conduct an anonymous survey to learn where people are currently and what efforts to prioritize
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- If you are a leader in your organization, speak up and use your power to help other voices be heard, encouraging people to ask questions if they don't understand something.
- Set goals and metrics to measure progress in moving the needle in recruitment, retention and promotion.
- Ensure that candidate interviews are conducted by more than one person as a buffer against unconscious biases.
- Explore diversity even within apparently homogenous groups and identify who is missing.
- Ensure accountability *from the beginning*.

The panel recommends the following resources to continue your journey: Jennifer Brown, *How to be an Inclusive Leader*, 2019; Phil Vischer, *Race in America*, RightNow Media, 2020; [bit.ly/antiracismresources](https://bit.ly/antiracismresources).

*\*Inaudy Esposito serves as Executive Director for the Orange County, NY Human Rights Commission. Freddimir Garcia is Northeast Regional Director for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement, Westchester Medical Center.*