

Inclusive Leadership Language

The words that encompass inclusive language are broad and ever-growing. This document's purpose is to supply common vocabulary to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. These are only the baseline definitions. These words may have different meanings depending on lived experiences of different people. This document is not exhaustive, since the language around inclusivity is continuously evolving. The purpose is to provide a basic framework for this conversation.

Ableism:

A system of superiority and discrimination that provides or denies resources, agency, and dignity based on one's abilities (mental/intellectual, emotional, and/or physical.) Ableism depends on a binary and benefits able-bodied people at the expense of disabled people. Like other forms of oppression, ableism operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels.

Acculturation:

The cultural modification of an individual, group, or people by adapting or borrowing traits from another (generally dominant) culture.

Ally:

Someone who supports a group other than one's own (in terms of multiple identities such as race gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc.). An ally acknowledges oppression and actively commits to reducing their own complicity, investing in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression.

Allyship:

The state or condition of being an ally: supportive association with another person or group

- Association with the members of a marginalized or mistreated group to which one does not belong

Androgyny:

A gender identity that has elements of both masculinity and femininity or gender identity with no feminine or masculine elements.

Asexuality:

An umbrella term used for folks who do not experience sexual attraction though there is a great amount of diversity in this community in regards to how different people experience attraction, relationships, and intimacy in different ways. This is not the same as celibacy.

Belonging:

Desire to form and maintain at least a minimum quality of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships where one can be authentic and a part of something bigger than themselves.

Bias:

A form of prejudice that results from our need to quickly classify individuals into categories.

- **Explicit Bias:** Operates on a conscious level; often arises as the direct result of a perceived threat. Expression of explicit bias (e.g., hate speech, discrimination) occurs as a result of deliberate thought.
- **Implicit Bias:** Operates on a subconscious level; often runs contrary to your conscious beliefs; triggered through automatic mental associates we make between people/ideas/objects and the attitudes and stereotypes we hold.
- **Unconscious Bias:** A positive or negative mental attitude towards a person, thing, or group that a person holds at an unconscious level.

BIPOC:

An acronym used to refer to black, Indigenous, and people of color. It is based on the recognition of collective experiences of systemic racism. As with any other identity term, it is up to individuals to use this term as an identifier.

Bisexual:

A person with the potential to be attracted - romantically and/or sexually - to more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.

Bystander:

A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part.

Bystander Effect:

A phenomenon in which someone is less likely to intervene in an emergency situation when others are present than when they are alone.

Cisgender:

A term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior aligns with those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth.

Classism:

A hierarchical system that provides or denies resources, agency, and dignity based on one's, or one's perceived, socioeconomic class (poor/working class, middle/upper class, upper class, etc.).

Conformity:

The process by which people's beliefs or behaviors are influenced by others, via subtle even unconscious processes or by direct and overt peer pressure. It is group behavior. Factors such as group size, cohesion, status, prior commitment, presence of authority, and public opinion all help determine the level of conformity an individual will reflect toward their group.

Cultural Appropriation:

The act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect the culture.

- The non-consensual/misappropriate use of cultural elements for commodification or profit purposes - including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. - often without understanding, acknowledgment, or respect for its values in the context of its original culture.

Decolonize:

The active and intentional process of unlearning values, beliefs, and conceptions that caused physical, emotional, or mental harm to people through colonization. It requires recognition of systems of oppression.

Demisexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction until they have a strong romantic bond with a person.

Disability:

Physical or mental impairment that affects a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Discrimination:

The unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favors one group over others on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, and other categories.

Diversity:

The blending of different identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives within an organization. Community, all of which impact the way a person is perceived and received by others, as well as how they can perceive and receive the world around them.

Emotional Trigger:

Any type of stimulus that is witnessed or experienced (e.g., a conversation, a smell, a sound, a person, a space, etc.) that elicits an emotional reaction in someone due to its relationship to past or present trauma.

Equality:

The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.

Equal Opportunity:

A system of employment or educational practices under which individuals are not excluded from any participation, advancement, or benefits due to race, color, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, disability, pregnancy, marital or parental status or any other action which cannot lawfully be the basis for limiting equal access.

Equity:

The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Ethnicity:

Unlike race, ethnicity refers to common characteristics of social groups (e.g., religion, language, or traditions). Labels include African-American, Puerto Rican, or Hispanic.

Gay:

A term used in some cultural settings to represent men who are attracted to men in a sexual or romantic way, a term used in some cultural settings to represent women who are attracted to women in a sexual or romantic way, a term used to refer to the LGBTQIA community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Gender Expression:

The ways in which one presents (or expresses) their gender. As we live in a society that holds and enforces messages about what particular genders are supposed to look like (e.g., men are supposed to look masculine) gender expression is often used (inappropriately and often ineffectively) to determine someone's gender identity. Though these two concepts can be related, one does not necessarily determine or indicate the other.

Genderfluid:

A gender identity that is mutable (liable to change) or that is not fixed/static.

Gender Identity:

Distinct from the term “sexual orientation,” refers to a person’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Non-conforming:

An individual whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Genderqueer:

A term that refers to individuals or groups who are “queer” or problematize the hegemonic notions of sex, gender, and desire in a given society. Genderqueer people possess identities that fall outside of the widely accepted sexual binary (i.e. “men” and “women”). Genderqueer may also refer to people who identify as both transgendered AND queer, i.e. individuals who challenge both gender and sexuality regimes and see gender identity and sexual orientation as overlapping and interconnected.

Harassment:

The use of comments or actions that can be perceived as offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, and unwelcome.

Hate Crime:

A hate crime is any criminal act or attempted criminal act directed against a person(s), a public agency, or private institution based on the actual or perceived race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender or because of associations with a person(s) or groups identified with one of these protected categories. A hate crime includes an act that results in injury, however slight; a verbal threat of violence that apparently can be carried out; an act that results in property damage; and property damage or other criminal act(s) directed against a public or private agency.

Homophobia:

Refers to the interpersonal and institutional devaluing and dehumanizing of LGBTQ+ humans.

Identity:

The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitely recognized or known. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.

Inclusion:

Creating an environment of open participation from all individuals with different ideas and perspectives where everyone feels they have a voice, are valued, and feel validated.

Institutional Racism:

Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes and opportunities for different groups based on racial discrimination.

Intent versus Impact:

A concept applied typically when there is a negative outcome or experience. The intent is a crucial aspect of our actions, and it does not negate the impact on ourselves or others whether intentional or unintentional.

- Intent: a usually clearly formulated or planned intention; the act or fact of intending; purpose especially; the state of mind with which an act is done; volition.
- Impact: the force of impression of one thing on another; a significant or major effect.

Intersectionality:

is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It takes into account people's overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

LGBTQ+:

The term LGBTQ+ is an initialism used to refer to non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender individuals, topics, and communities. The original letters represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

Lesbian:

A woman who is attracted to women.

Marginalized/Minoritized Groups:

Creating an environment of open participation from all individuals with different ideas and perspectives where everyone feels they have a voice, are valued, and feel validated.

Microaggression:

Term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

- A statement, action, or incident is regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

Misogyny:

dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.

Multicultural Competency:

A process of embracing diversity and learning about people from other cultural backgrounds. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for how others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.

Nonbinary:

People who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as outside of the male-female gender binary.

Oppression:

The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures.

Outing:

is the act of disclosing an LGBT person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent.

Pansexual:

A person who is sexually attracted to people of all or many genders, regardless of gender.

Patriarchy:

Actions and beliefs that prioritize masculinity. Patriarchy is practiced systemically in the ways and methods through which power is distributed in society (jobs and positions of power given to men in government, policy, criminal justice, etc.) while also influencing how we interact with one another interpersonally (gender expectations, sexual dynamics, space-taking, etc.).

People of Color:

A collective term for humans of Asian, African, Latinx, and Native American backgrounds, as opposed to the collective "White".

Personal Identities:

Encompasses our personality traits, things that are special to us, and things that make us distinct from other individuals. Focused on the individual, fluid over time, self-categorization.

Polyamorous:

Refers to honest, usually non-possessive, relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a “primary” relationship or relationships and various “secondary” relationships). This is different from polygamy, which usually involved possessive structures based on power.

Positionality:

Refers to the location of a person in the organizational structure of an institution. It considers what authority a person has, to whom they report, and who reports to them. What power others have in relation to the person and what power the person has in relation to others. It is concerned with the variables that affect their status within the organizational structure and their capacity to act with legitimacy.

Power:

Ability to decide who will have access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself, and/or the course events.

Prejudice:

Attitudes and beliefs, without basis in facts or just grounds, held toward a particular group of people. Prejudgment on inadequate information. Can be unconscious or intentional.

Privilege:

Exclusive access or access to material and immaterial resources based on membership to a dominant social group.

- Unearned access to resources or power is only readily available to some people as a result of their group membership. Privilege exists on multiple levels - societal/cultural, institutional, interpersonal, and individual.

Pronoun:

Historically, gender pronouns have existed in a binary in the English language: he/him/his or she/her/hers. A person can choose any pronoun that makes them feel comfortable for any reason.

Queer:

An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society’s view of gender or sexuality. The definitional indeterminacy of the word Queer, its elasticity, is one of its characteristics: “A zone of possibilities.”

Race:

A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly race), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time.

Racism:

The systematic discrimination and exploitation of human beings on the basis of race.

Safe Space:

Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience.

Sex:

The classification of a person as male, female, or intersex assigned at birth.

Sexism:

Is prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender.

Sexual Orientation:

An individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Social Identities:

The groups we fall into and that we associate ourselves with based on identities we cannot change. Social identities can provide people with a sense of self-esteem and a framework for socializing, and it can influence their behavior.

Social Justice:

Social justice constitutes a form of activism, based on principles of equity and inclusion that encompasses a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others.

Stereotype:

A form of generalization rooted in blanket beliefs and false assumptions, a product of processes of categorization that can result in a prejudiced attitude, critical judgment, and intentional or unintentional discrimination. Stereotypes are typically negative, based on little information, and does not recognize individualism and personal agency.

Structural Inequality:

Systemic disadvantage(s) of one social group compared to other groups, rooted and perpetuated through discriminatory practices (conscious or unconscious) that are reinforced through institutions, ideologies, representations, policies/laws, and practices. When this kind of inequality is related to racial/ethnic discrimination, it is referred to as systemic or structural racism.

System of Oppression:

Conscious and unconscious, non-random and organized harassment, discrimination, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice, and other forms of unequal treatment that impact different groups. Sometimes is used to refer to systemic racism.

- System: A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network.
- Systemic: Relating to a system, especially as opposed to a particular part.

Tokenism:

is “the practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly.

- Performative presence without meaningful participation. For example, a superficial invitation for the participation of members of a certain socially oppressed group, who are expected to speak for the whole group without giving this person a real opportunity to speak for her/himself.

Transgender:

People whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Many transgender people will transition to align their gender expression with their gender identity, however, you do not have to transition in order to be transgender.

Transphobia:

Is the interpersonal and institutional devaluing and dehumanizing of transgender/non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming people.

Unlearn:

Discard (something learned, especially a bad habit or false or outdated information) from one's memory.

White Supremacy:

A power system structured and maintained by persons who classify themselves as White, whether consciously or subconsciously determined; and who feel superior to those of other racial/ethnic identities.