

## Department of the Interior Inclusive Workplace Strategy

Diversity management and equal employment opportunity (EEO) are often considered to be one in the same. They are absolutely not. Without question, EEO programs have contributed significantly to eradicating employment discrimination in federal agencies. The Department of the Interior has a statutory obligation to maintain a legally compliant EEO program and the commitment must be communicated from the top down and vigorously enforced. It is also well-settled that there is a long-standing history of confusion within Interior regarding diversity and inclusion and its relationship to EEO. The pervasive misperception of diversity as an EEO initiative has made it difficult for managers and supervisors to learn the craft of utilizing multiple cultural backgrounds as competitive tools to manage diversity to its fullest potential. Therefore, after thorough research and careful consideration, Interior has separated the functions and developed an Inclusive Workplace Strategy.

The Department's Inclusive Workplace Strategy brings with it a new paradigm shift, a new way of thinking about differences among people. It is geared towards educating employees to recognize that differences contribute to peoples' viewpoints and how these varied perspectives are key to creative thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. The inclusive workplace concept aims at creating a workplace in which everyone and every group is fully engaged. Additionally, beyond changing numbers, the Strategy is focused on questioning and examining age-old hierarchies, traditions and biases, and instituting behavioral changes that can create cultural shifts.

EEO and managing diversity go hand in hand, each reinforcing the gains of the other. While there is much overlap in philosophy and practice, perhaps a good way to look at the differences is in the form of a few comparisons (see chart below). Making the distinction is necessary to mitigate the tendency for people to equate diversity and inclusion with EEO and affirmative action. This separation does not abandon or minimize the EEO program; the inclusive workplace initiative and the EEO program must complement and supplement one another.

The standards of success associated with this initiative incorporate an understanding that the Department of the Interior can better meet its goals and mandates by recruiting, hiring, and retaining the best people our Nation have to offer, from every background and every community.

Federal Sector EEO Programs	Interior's Past Diversity Efforts	Interior's Inclusive Workplace Strategy
Compliance with the EEOC Regulations	Compliance with the EEOC Regulations	Strategic Diversity Management
Laws, Regulations, and Executive Orders	Laws, Regulations, Executive Orders and Agency Policy Statements	Departmental Inclusive Workplace Strategy and Bureau Implementation Plans

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Federal Sector EEO Programs	Interior's Past Diversity Efforts	Interior's Inclusive Workplace Strategy
Focused on Eradicating Employment Discrimination	Focused on Eradicating Employment Discrimination	Focused on Workforce and Organization Development
Focused on Uncovering, Examining and Removing Barriers to Equal Participation at all Levels of the Workforce	Focused on Low Participation Rates/Underrepresentation	Focused on Inclusive Recruitment, Full Engagement and Utilization, Retention, and Diversity Management
Focused on Uncovering, Examining and Removing Barriers to Equal Participation at all Levels of the Workforce	Minimize Exposure to Employment Litigation	Manage Diversity to its Fullest Potential
EEO Director Responsible for Implementation	EEO Director Responsible for Implementation	Leaders Responsible for Implementation (with assistance from Diversity Change Agents and the Chief Diversity Officer)
Equip Leaders to Comply with EEOC Regulations	Equip Leaders to Comply with EEOC Regulations	Empower and Equip Leaders to Develop their own Innovative Solutions to Diversity and Inclusion Challenges
One Approach, Workforce Application	One Approach, Workforce Application	One Approach, Multiple Applications, e.g., workforce, partners, community organizations, and stakeholders

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### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **What is the goal of the Inclusive Workplace Strategy?**

The goal is to make the Department of the Interior the best and most inclusive place to work in the Federal Government. Our primary objective is to become an employer of choice in which people striving to improve their ideas, work products and decisions seek out collaborators who have differing points of view, backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and ideas.

#### **What makes the Inclusive Workplace Strategy different from past diversity efforts?**

Past diversity initiatives have primarily consisted of EEO workforce representation strategies designed to address the challenge of the underrepresentation of minorities and women. The Inclusive Workplace Strategy adopts an expansive vision of diversity and inclusion that goes beyond managing on the basis of representations of groups derived from EEO categories, such as race and gender.

The inclusive workplace approach is grounded in culture change and it positions diversity and inclusion as mission critical imperatives. It places accountability squarely on the shoulders of leadership and requires them to institute recruiting, hiring and promotion procedures that are based on merit, and do not deliberately or inadvertently exclude anyone from competing.

#### **Are Diversity Change Agents duplicating the work of EEO professionals?**

No, absolutely not. The pervasive misperception of diversity as an EEO initiative has made it difficult for our managers and supervisors to learn the leadership craft of utilizing multiple cultural backgrounds as competitive tools for achieving our mission and managing diversity to its fullest potential. EEO and diversity go hand in hand, each reinforcing the gains of the other.

The hardworking professionals in the Office of Civil Rights and EEO programs across the Department are to be commended for their efforts to get this important work done. However, the EEO practitioners' efforts without leadership engagement and culture change will not achieve a diverse workforce that can be sustained over time. While there is much overlap in philosophy and practice, EEO is a legally mandated program while managing diversity is not.

DOI (through its EEO professionals) has a statutory obligation to track and report on the EEO demographic makeup of its workforce to gauge representation progress. While it is important to have measurable metrics and benchmarks, the work of Diversity Change Agents is focused on qualitative factors, including questioning and examining age-old hierarchies, traditions and biases, and instituting behavioral changes that can create cultural shifts.

#### **What are the objectives of our new approach to diversity training?**

The Inclusive Workplace Strategy aims at transforming diversity training and education from traditional anti-discrimination compliance, to a journey that has a laser focus on organizational development and talent management. The training was designed to leverage real culture change drivers, which are not rooted in what agencies can do for diversity, but in what diversity and inclusion can do for agencies in terms of game-changing performance outcomes.

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### **How did you determine that FranklinCovey diversity and inclusion training would be a good fit with your Inclusive Workplace Strategy?**

Because our previous diversity training and definitions were deeply rooted in EEO and antidiscrimination compliance, we needed diversity and inclusion training that could create mind-set shifts. To that end, we conducted extensive market research to gather information on the effectiveness of diversity training at public and private sector organizations. Our research focused on diversity training outcomes relative to the following four areas: (1) the impact on employee empathy towards others who are different; (2) whether or not the training moved participants to a different place in terms of attitude and understanding of diversity and inclusion; (3) whether the training generated meaningful and powerful diversity and inclusion dialogue; and (4) whether the training convinced white employees that they too are diverse and have a key role in implementing diversity and inclusion strategies.

Our research revealed FranklinCovey's proven track record of achieving diversity and inclusion mind-set shifts and buy-in. Their Championing Diversity and Working at the Speed of Trust workshops are laying the groundwork for a structured, deliberate, sustainable approach and establishing diversity and inclusion as everyone's business at Interior. Our association with FranklinCovey is unquestionably the best investment we ever made regarding diversity and inclusion training.

### **Why is it so important to expand our recruitment efforts beyond referrals and the USAJOBS Website?**

Historically, we have relied heavily on referrals and networking to fill jobs and internship opportunities. This can sometimes work to our advantage, but an overreliance on this practice may work against the diversity that boosts the workplace experience and perspective. People tend to make recommendations from within their own social circles, which tend to be homogenous. Oftentimes people get referred for promotions and developmental assignments because of their access to and associations with key people in the organization. This practice—and restricting our job advertisements to USAJOBS—results in the exclusion of talented people who do not have the same access and associations.

### **Are we required to lower qualification standards to achieve an inclusive workplace?**

No, absolutely not. High-quality talent resides in every segment of American society and we aim to hire the best people our Nation has to offer; however, in order to accomplish this, we must ensure that our recruitment efforts reach every background and community.

### **Aren't diversity efforts divisive in that they pit groups or cultures against one another?**

Diversity and inclusion is actually about reducing divisiveness, promoting mutual understanding and strengthening everyone in the organization. Divisiveness is a risk with any halfhearted approach to diversity and inclusion. And even with a well-executed effort, leaders must expect and endure some resistance and push back in the early stages. Every diversity and inclusion initiative has its commitment-testing phase, but with a sustained clarity of purpose and perseverance, there will be progress. The progress occurs as a result of the process of discovering, acknowledging, and valuing the differences in people.

### **Will achieving a diverse workforce really improve Interior's performance?**

Achieving and sustaining a diverse workforce can lead to improved DOI performance; however, diversity in and of itself is not necessarily a performance enhancer. What determines impact is how "diversity capable" we are as an organization in terms of how well we manage a diverse workforce. Every person brings a different portfolio of strengths based upon where he or she comes from in life. The Inclusive Workplace Strategy is about constructively using those attributes that make us different and unique to produce collective knowledge and spur innovation. Inclusion is about recognizing, respecting and, ultimately, leveraging the differences we innately possess to build a better Department of the Interior.