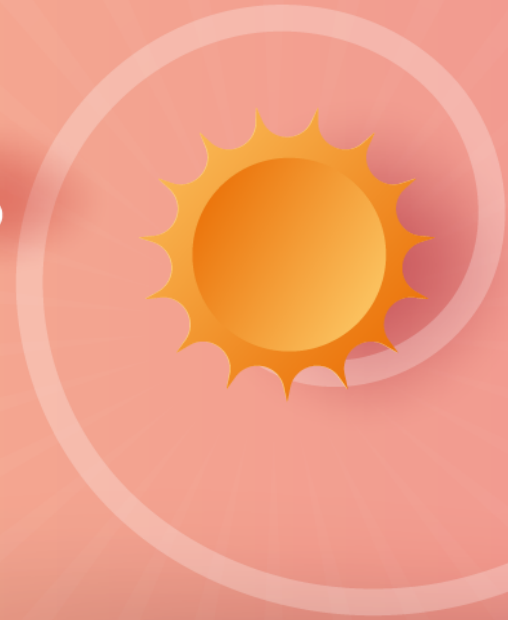


DEI *at* OIT

Volume 2: Allyship



June 2023



**DEI at OIT
Volume 1
2022**



Contents

Foreword by George Hoffmann	4
The Journey So Far	8
Sharing Experiences	10
Spiral into Allyship	12
Allyship Toolbox	14
Connecting the DEI Tissue with Anita Pinder	16
Accessible Technology	21
Inclusive Design	22
Allyship Conversations	24
Web of Inclusion	26
I am... But I am not...	28
Where We Are Going	30

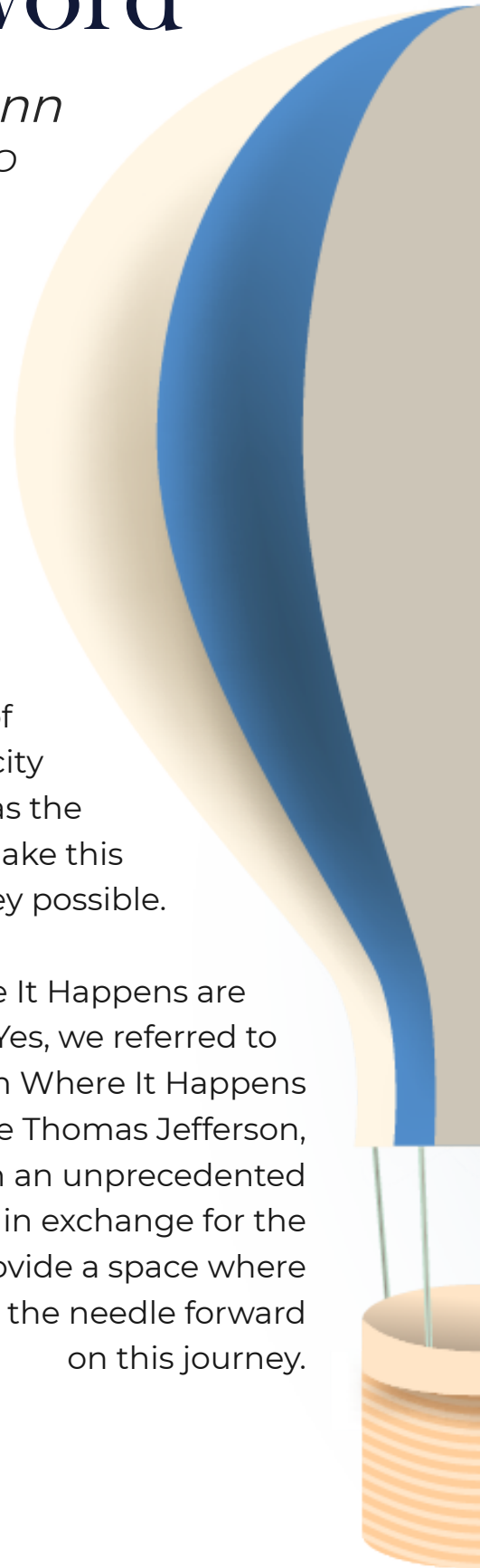
Foreword

George Hoffmann

Deputy Director & Deputy CIO

Over the last year, OIT committed to weaving DEI into its overall mission. Week after week, we continued to innovate inside the spaces we created years ago to listen, learn from each other, and grow. Now we are looking to develop and sustain a system built upon individuals' willingness to progress and unlock their full potential every day. Each of you brings authentic experiences to conversations across a wide range of values, and because of it, we expanded our capacity to connect with each other. Creating the space was the easy part. It is your work, resilience, and time that make this journey possible.

The conversations at The DEI Room Where It Happens are beginning to shape how we collaborate at OIT. Yes, we referred to Hamilton for this session title. The musical Room Where It Happens refers to a historical closed-door dinner where Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison reach an unprecedented political compromise to move the nation's capital in exchange for the support of Hamilton's financial plan. I aim to provide a space where anyone feels safe and excited to come in and move the needle forward on this journey.





In ten years, I hope the conversations look different, where we aren't asking ourselves to bring DEI to the table, but rather DEI is the central piece that everything else is built from. It is the sustainable framework to provide each other with the support needed to stay on this journey.

Since the journey is long and the work continues, we frequently look to innovate, change, recreate, and advance DEI with all possible places and methods. We look to make space because for this work to be authentic and sustainable, we need to get comfortable shifting between teacher, facilitator, and leader.

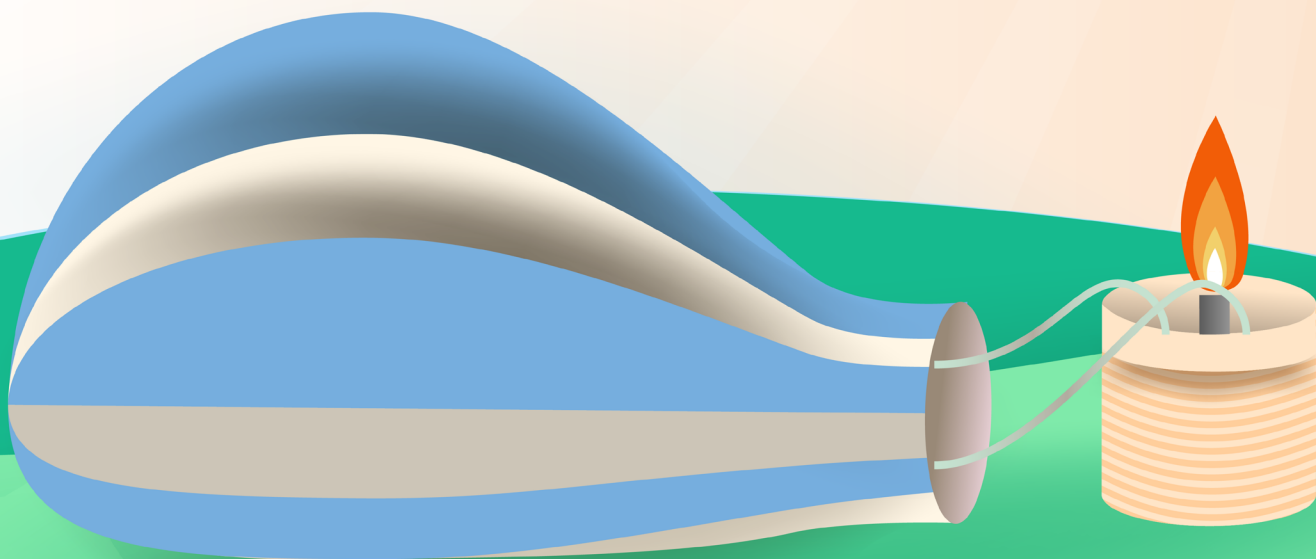
We merged our events and meetings with global holidays to make this work effective and honest. From MLK day to Black History Month, Chinese New Year, and Women's History to different December holidays, traditions, and anything in between, we chose to be intentional with how we welcomed you into these new spaces. Our book choices for the DEI book club are a representation of this vision. We intentionally chose from a pool of talented, diverse female writers.

“Allies and Advocates” by Amber Cabral, “How to be an Inclusive Leader” by Jennifer Brown, and “The Power Manual: How to Master Complex Power Dynamics” by Cindy Suarez. All are welcomed leaders that help us understand our commitment differently. I thank all the OIT facilitators that stepped up to further these choices. Your voice and intent rebuild our approaches and context.



I've learned from your stories this past year that we all have visible and invisible aspects of our identity that yield empathy. We are learning from different perspectives to make a whole, valued community. So don't hide your stories; continue to lead with them in these open, safe spaces.

This book is an opportunity to say “Yes, and...” An opportunity to build upon the work we started by diving deeper into what each piece means. We recognize the work ahead, and we are excited by all the things yet to come. Thank you all for this incredible journey.





“The opportunity to lead OIT’s DEI journey has been a privilege and a pleasure.

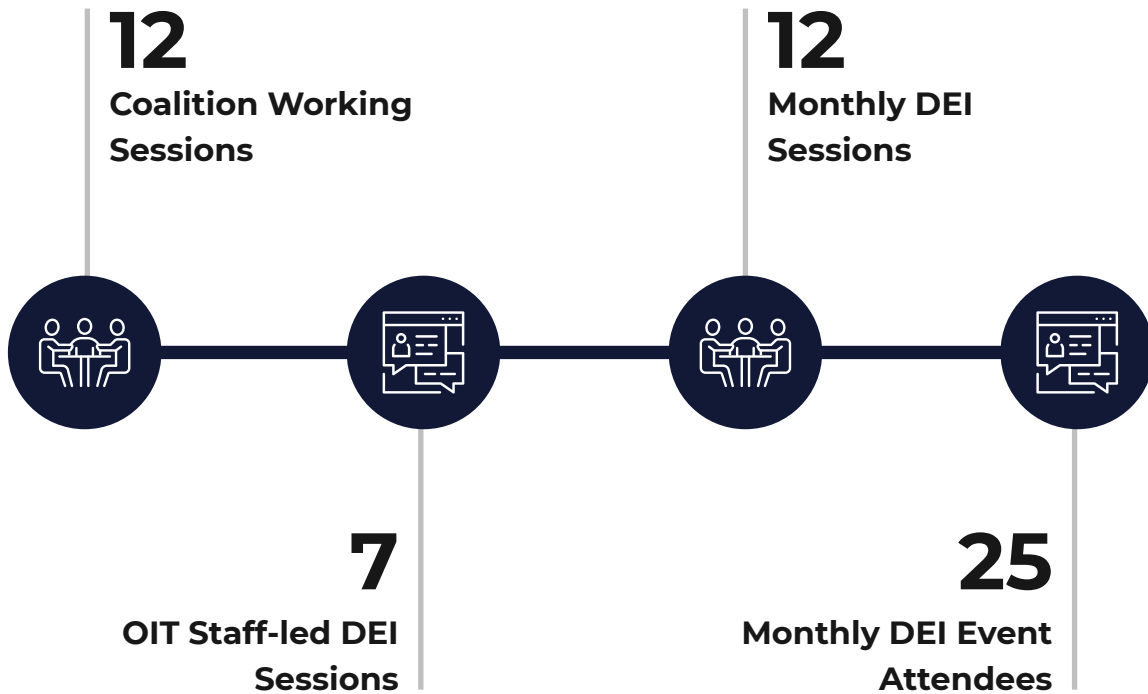
When Rajiv first asked me to take on this responsibility, I didn’t know how to do this impossible task, but we figured it out together.

This experience has always been a team effort, and I’m grateful for the fantastic people on this journey with me.”

George Hoffmann



The Journey So Far ...



Themes and Topics Celebrated

- Martin Luther King Day
- Black History Month
- Chinese New Year
- Women's History Month
- Autism Awareness Month
- Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

30

Book Club Sessions

4

Culture Co-Lab Events

5

DEI-based Activities Created and Played

3

Books Read

- Pride Month
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Hispanic Heritage Month
- Native American Heritage Month
- Disability Employment Month

Sharing Experiences



Karen Allen

Director of the Division of Data Operations & Maintenance, EADG

“I’ve been doing this for a long time, but this journey matters, so we do what we can to stay committed.”



Mark Elky

Senior Technical Advisor, ISPG Cybersecurity

“The different DEI offerings have helped teach me new ways to consider the perspectives of others. As a result, my eyes are opened a bit wider, and I notice more things around me from an inclusivity point of view that had previously gone unnoticed. I’m really enjoying the DEI book study with the Power Manual. It has introduced and redefined concepts on influence and power dynamics that will help me better work within my and other teams throughout the Agency.”



Wendy Wells

Director of the Business Operations Group, OIT

“We are making the vision of DEI practical through policies and processes.”



Madhu Annadata

Director of the Division of Shared Management Systems, AMG

“Creating a culture where everyone feels like they belong is essential for me as a first-generation immigrant who remembers what it’s like to interpret new places.”

Spiral into Allyship



3 Convert to action

2 Lean into unknown



4 Put it all together



1 Shift mindset

Allyship Toolbox

**Prioritize
impact over intent**



**Challenge what
you think you know**



Center other perspectives in media

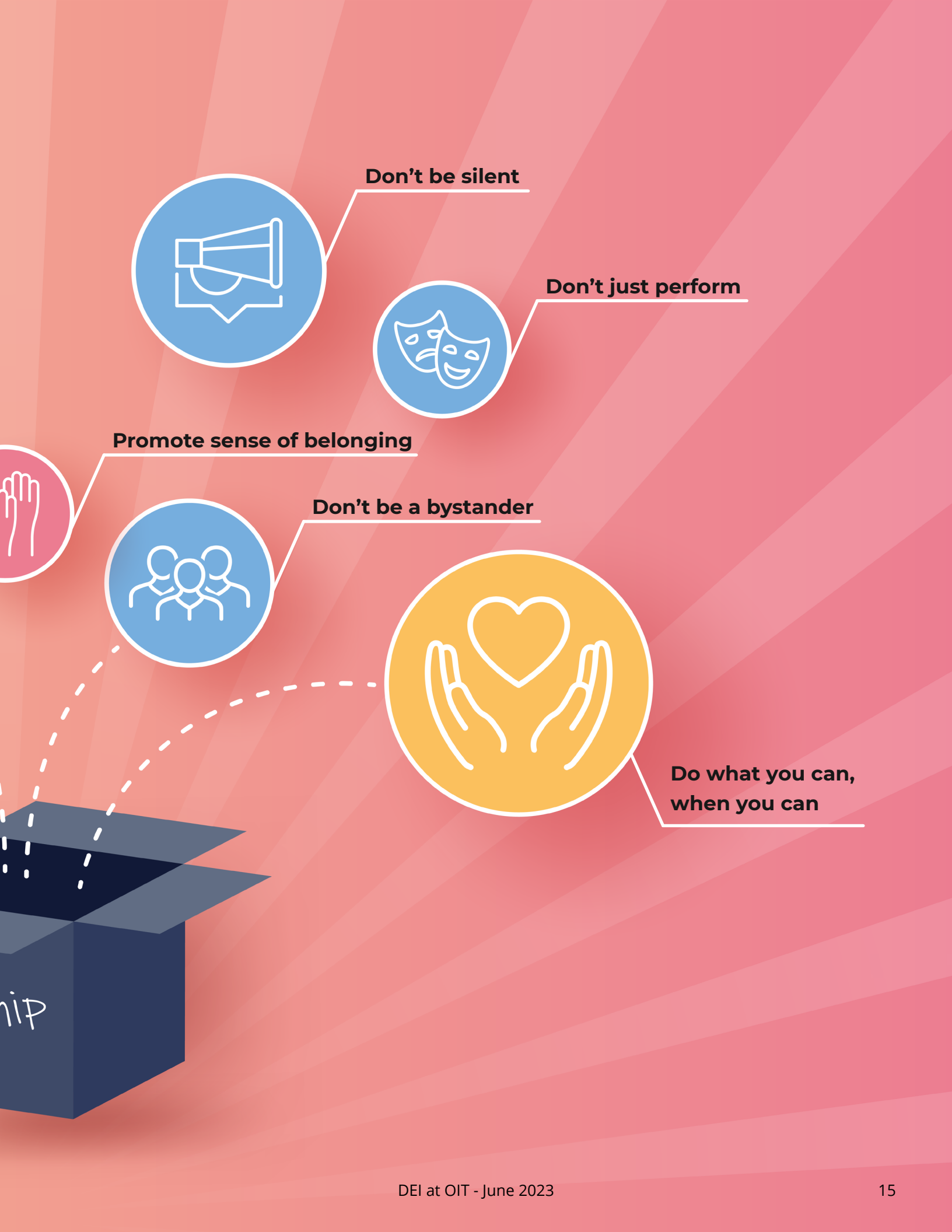


Acknowledge blindspots



Become uncomfortable





Don't be silent

Don't just perform

Promote sense of belonging

Don't be a bystander

**Do what you can,
when you can**

Connecting the DEI Tissue

Anita Pinder

Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights

George Hoffmann



Anita, we value you not just for where you sit but also for how you are able to humanize these important conversations.

The culture shifted from, “We need to do this big thing” to, “Look at this big thing we all get to do together.” You brought in the idea that every employee at CMS is responsible for DEIA.

Anita Pinder

It really is about what each of us does – our commitment to being better and serving better. If there were a rule or policy, I don’t know if that would make much difference on its own. It’s only when we decide to step into that – serving ourselves, each other, and the American public -- that’s what makes a difference.





What are some actions everyone can do individually to make the organization and our community better for everybody?



Anita: At the heart, it is getting a little bit better at being uncomfortable as adults. Adult learners, we don't like to be uncomfortable, but then that really limits our learning and our experiences.

There are some little things we can all start with. One, be open and curious to what is and what could be. Two, consider other ways of looking at or doing things, not just our own perspective. Three, challenge ourselves with new experiences that expand our awareness.



In DEI spaces, there is often the concern of making a mistake, of being wrong. How can we help each other be okay with this?



Anita: It's about challenging the assumptions, like, 'Did I really think I'd never make a mistake?' And there's just no way around it. I could be the smartest one in the room, the nicest person, pick whatever it is, and I'll mess up. And maybe reframe "mess up" as "learning," which is the core human experience.

It's going to happen anyway, so learn that it is just a part of being human. That's just what it is and despite my best efforts, it's going to happen. Take everything as information and find the value in that experience. I suggest practicing or at least thinking about how you'll feel or react when you make a mistake, so that you can consciously decide to employ some different words and actions, and not resort to your defaults.



How could we create this culture in the organization, of making mistakes and learning?



Anita: Our actions will set the course for how people perceive learning and growing. It will be more difficult if you're in an environment where messing up is penalized. What happens in the room? When someone says or does something that is not the right thing, how do we respond? Let's talk about it.

Let's talk about what happens when, not if, it happens again. The outcome we want is that an individual learns from what is happening. And then everyone benefits, the people around get to learn, 'Oh, this is how we handle those things.' It doesn't have to be the elephant in the room that we don't discuss. Those actions will set the course for people to say, 'Oh wait, that's different. So, I'll be a little braver. I can try it. It'll be okay here.' It opens the door for that shift.



How do we hold people accountable without blaming?



Anita: That's also part of diversity... and learning. Our experiences are different, so accountability needs to allow for some education and some learning to occur. Initially, it is about, if something happens, right, how do we explore, how do we learn? This helps us figure out the best way to drive accountability.

Now, if we don't encounter the expected change after the learning opportunity, then we're looking at accountability in a different way. Is it a mindset? Is it just an unwillingness to change, is it defiance? We have to have the conversation to figure out what it is so we can then figure out what the right approach is. Now clearly, at some point we actually are looking for behavior, for words, for actions to be different.



What change would you like to see in the agency?



Anita: It is really important that the agency be clear on why we're focusing on DEIA, and creating real space for people to have experiences where they can learn and grow. We want to be sure that employees have good workplace experiences, and that our beneficiaries and consumers have good experiences as they achieve better health outcomes.

Thinking about CMS in the future, we won't be saying, 'Let's have a DEIA conversation?' My vision is this will just be how we do business. It will be embedded that we're always thinking about 'Are the right people in the room to solve this problem?', 'Have I assembled the right resources, knowledge, and experience?', 'How do we make this work better for everyone?' CMS will be living DEIA, not talking about DEIA. We will be realizing our DEIA vision and values.

George Hoffmann



5 years from now, we won't be talking about DEI, DEI will be how we talk.

Anita Pinder

Exactly George, we will be living DEIA, and that involves every one of us. We are our culture, so we each have a part to play. If we all do what we can, we will realize our vision of leveraging employee's unique perspectives and needs as we serve the nation.



Accessible Technology

As technology is increasingly essential to fully taking part in our society, incorporating accessibility into innovation and discovery work is both good business and the legal standard for government agencies, as represented by these three standards.

1. Making what we do accessible to all Americans is the common element.
2. Ensuring that the agency lives up to these values is part of OIT's book of business.
3. And truly living up to our accessibility values is all of our collective responsibility as allies.



"The most effective and least costly approach to technology accessibility is for CMS to incorporate accessibility into its IT governance, development, and procurement processes."

Rajiv Uppal, CIO

Introduction to 504, 508, and WCAG

Section 504

Federal agencies are required to provide individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in their programs and benefit from their services, including the provision of information to employees and members of the public.

Section 508

Federal agencies are required to ensure that persons with disabilities (both employees and members of the public) have comparable access to and use of electronic information technology. Any electronic and information technology used, maintained, developed, or procured must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

WCAG

Web Content Accessible Guidelines (WCAG) is an industry standard that has been adopted as a government standard to ensure digital accessibility in line with technological changes.

Inclusive Design

Accessibility is multifaceted. Incorporating accessibility to technology is one aspect of applying accessibility; another is how we envision and improve our physical surroundings to reflect all of our needs.

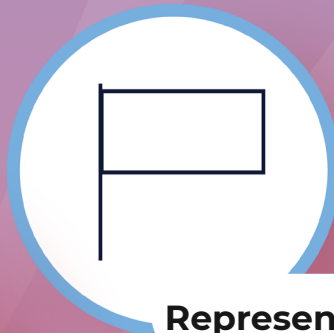
Here are some examples of how accessibility could be applied for both the physical structure of a building as well as some of the internal functions. The key is to, at each point, think about how people with differing needs would be able to navigate with the least amount of additional effort.



Ramps



Automatic Doors

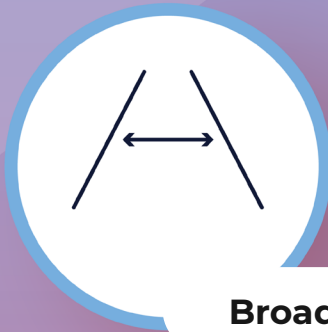


Representative Flags





Lowered Kitchenette Appliances



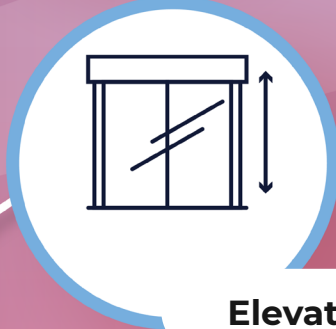
Broader pathways



Adjustable Desks



Inclusive Calendars



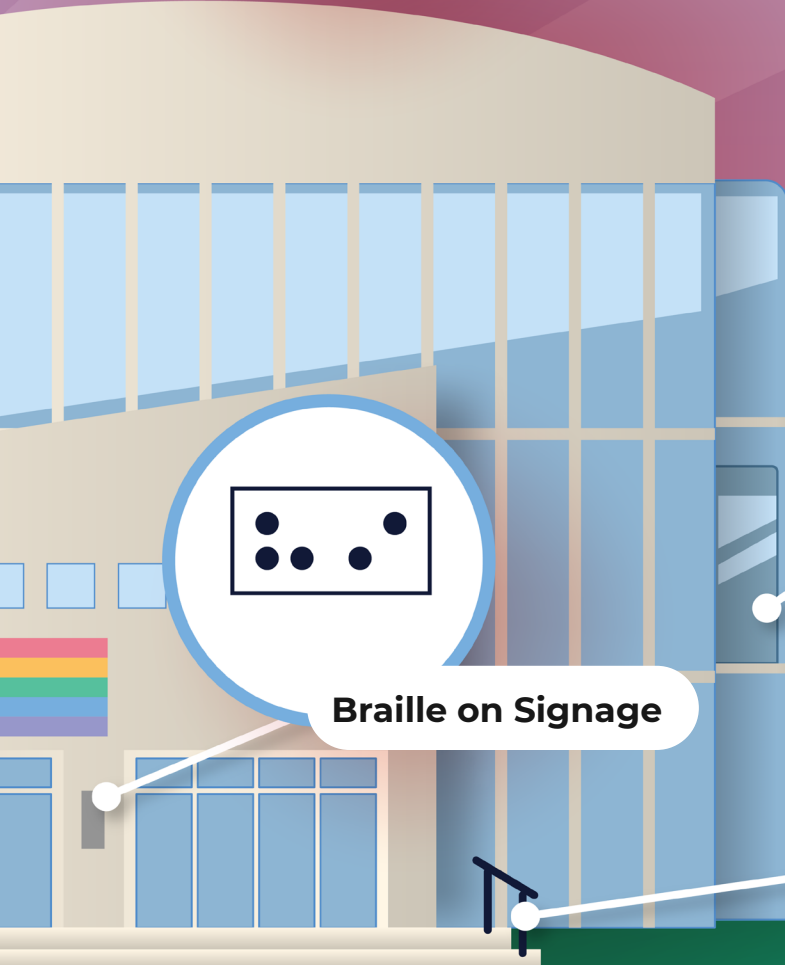
Elevators



Braille on Signage



Handrails



Allyship Conversations

Being a DEI ally in the workplace requires having challenging conversations. Increasing our ability to do so is an example of putting the value of allyship into practice. The facilitation spinner is a technique that can help cultivate this ability.

A common challenge of allyship is stepping into awkward moments and turning them into learning opportunities for all. We can all ask ourselves, 'how could we choose vulnerability, empathy, and courage?'

The Method

Start with your intent (why do you want to have this conversation), identify the outcome (what you'd like to have happen) and lastly, consider which techniques would best help align intent to outcome.

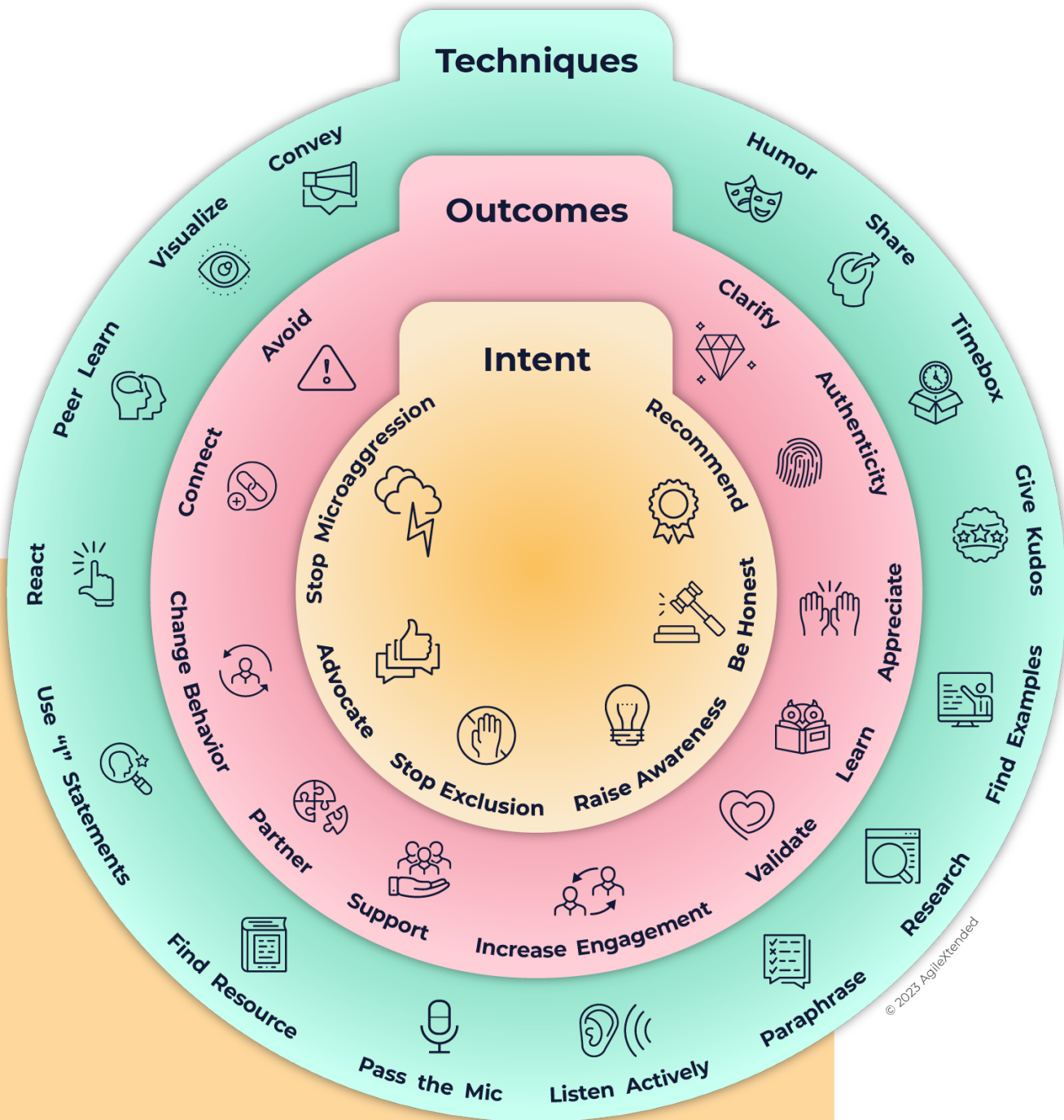
Intent



Outcomes



Techniques



© 2023 AgileXtended

Web of Inclusion

We each have many ways to identify who we are and how we define ourselves. DEI is recognizing the different facets of our identities and finding common ground to cultivate empathy; this activity is a starting point for this process.

Instructions for the Activity



Participants all start with cameras off.



As each prompt comes up, everyone to whom this statement applies will turn on their cameras. *Example: If the prompt, “I’ve never been followed by security while shopping” comes up, anyone who identifies with the statement turns their camera on for a few seconds.*



Everyone will take turns sharing their own prompts so that we can better understand each other’s perspectives.



Prompts to get us started

I've never been followed by security while shopping.

I always have my car keys in hand on the way to my car.

I've been mistaken for the help while staying in a hotel.

I am... But I am not...

Sharing facts about ourselves can contradict and help deconstruct commonly accepted stereotypes. This activity highlights what makes us all unique while challenging associations others might make about us based on those stereotypes. It also illuminates challenges others may face in navigating their daily lives and how we could change our own future behavior.

Instructions for the Activity



Complete three-to-four “I am...” statements. Select common identifiers, such as race, religion, gender, etc.



Complete three-to-four “but I am not...” statements for each of your “I am” statements which contradict a common stereotype about that identifier.



Share your statements with the group to begin an open and respectful discourse on stereotypes.

I AM

BUT

BUT I AM NOT

I am Asian.

But I am not good at math.

I am from New York.

But I dislike the Yankees.

Where We Are Going

Leila Rao

Organizational Culture Change Consultant

Diversity

The future of diversity is not only acknowledging the reality that exists, but also embracing it to expand our collective understanding to effect change in the world.



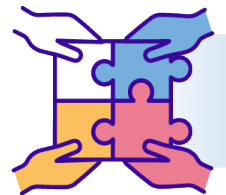
Equity

Achieving equitable outcomes requires deliberately applying time, resources, and awareness to readdress historical imbalances first.



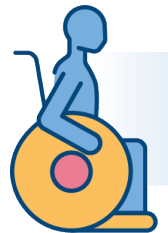
Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all organizational work and cultural aspects. Inclusion is accessibility plus intentionally designing processes and systems that ensure all voices are genuinely heard and considered.



Accessibility

Achieving accessibility is a multi-factored approach because individuals need different accommodations, and not every adaptation works for all individuals. The goal of accessibility is to ensure full access for all in both the process and the outcome.



Belonging

Belonging is the outcome of DEI; it is something that employees themselves feel, and it results from our inclusion efforts to welcome everyone as they are into diverse, equitable, and accessible spaces.



Realizing DEI through allyship is the journey of a lifetime for individuals, organizations, and communities. The best time to start was yesterday, and the next best time to start is today. Throughout these pages, we've shared examples of what each of us can individually and collectively do in the spirit of allyship.

Here, we focus on what we can do as an organization by reimagining our processes and policies. Intentional, targeted changes in how we do our work can help cultivate the community we aspire to be.

How else could we ...?

1. Recruit intentionally from non-traditional sources.
2. Incorporate anonymous hiring and bias-free job postings.
3. Re-imagine perceptions of what leadership looks like.

How else could we ...?

1. Standardize similar pay for similar work.
2. Adjust policies for intended outcomes, valuing impact over intent.
3. Apply innovative approaches to overcome historical biases.

How else could we ...?

1. Integrate inclusivity earlier in all technology purchases and development decisions.
2. Incorporate inclusive facilitation approaches in all meetings.
3. Correct mistakes of omission, whether intentional or accidental.

How else could we ...?

1. Ensure whenever possible all physical and virtual spaces go beyond compliance and enable ease of use.
2. Apply multiple approaches to make all information accessible.
3. Create open and trusted feedback loops to identify and address gaps.

How else could we ...?

1. Demonstrate trust in people by ensuring a sense of ownership.
2. Get to know people beyond just their work responsibilities.
3. Cultivate a psychologically safe environment in which to speak up, innovate, learn, and grow.

“Although we still have a ways to go, we’ve come a long way. The way forward is to shape a better, brighter, more inclusive future where everyone belongs.”

Leila Rao



Designed and written by

Bri Cloutier
Leila Rao
Yamel Gorrie

