Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion

In simple terms: DIVERSITY is the makeup of the individuals in an organization: it is all the unique backgrounds, perspectives, beliefs and experience of people that may be shaped by the individuals’ race, gender, geographic location, creed, ethnic background, language, sexual orientation, abilities, and many other factors.

INCLUSION can be seen simply as how an organization embraces the unique backgrounds, perspectives, beliefs, and experience of people, and how an organization creates an environment where people can bring their full selves to work and are valued for the things that make them unique.

WHY Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity has become a business imperative that is capturing the attention of leaders throughout our industry and the world. Embracing Diversity is becoming increasingly more important as the demographics of our workforce and our customers change.

Diversity and Inclusion affect the “bottom line” for many organizations—in other words, for businesses, this means employee engagement and productivity. Companies lose millions of dollars every year through disengaged employees who are statistically less productive than employees who are engaged and happy in their work environment. Associations like AWWA are really no different—the Association’s financial viability depends on membership and volunteerism. To sustain growth and financial success, AWWA must have an engaged and productive base of volunteers, and this means commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

Your AWWA Section can take a leadership role by having a strong Diversity & Inclusion program, and by always keeping Diversity and Inclusion in the forefront of Section activities.

This How-To Guide is to help you establish and operate a successful Diversity and Inclusion program.

GETTING STARTED: Integrating Diversity Into Your Section

AWWA has been on the forefront of Diversity & Inclusion in the water industry. In 1988, AWWA established the Minority Affairs Committee. Today, the Diversity & Member Inclusion Committee is an Executive Committee–level committee, answering and reporting directly to the Executive Board of the Association.
As with many technical professions, the drinking water community does not necessarily reflect the general population. We face many new challenges in our work and will need the best and the brightest individuals to most effectively serve our customers. We need to encourage all interested individuals to enter the drinking water profession, and we need to encourage new entrants to the profession, as well as those already in the drinking water field, to join and participate in AWWA. Our Association will be stronger through the differences in its members. It is critical to AWWA’s sustainability that we position the organization to welcome and integrate everyone into AWWA. How to accomplish this is the challenge ... but everyone has to start somewhere. If you already have an active Diversity Committee in your Section, you may want to focus more on the second and third sections of this How-To Guide.

If you do not already have a Diversity Committee established, here are some ideas on how to take beginning steps to achieve a successful Diversity program:

- Adopt a Diversity & Inclusion policy for your Section. This can be as easy as customizing a policy similar to the one that the AWWA Board of Directors adopted (see Resources Section of this How-To Guide).

- Find at least ONE opportunity to highlight Diversity and Inclusion within the Section. This could be including a Diversity article in your Section Newsletter or having a Diversity topic or speaker at your Annual Conference.

- Broaden your base of committee participation. Make the effort to recruit diverse people to Section committees; you may find that you gain more through their skills, education, and experience.

- Keep the idea of Diversity at the forefront of nominations for Section board members, for committee chairs, and at any opportunity to develop future leaders of the Association. For example, when looking for new committee chairs, Section leaders, board members, and directors at large, have the Nominating Committee look at the depth and breadth of talent and diversity.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Get the Word Out and Make Sure Your Committee Is Diverse. Send out an open Invitation to all Section members inviting them to join the Diversity Committee. Encourage and welcome everyone to join. This will help provide the committee with a clear picture of what Diversity truly means.

- Define Committee Goals and Mission. It is important for the committee to establish its mission statement, goals, and objectives for the year to begin to build the foundation for a Strategic Plan to guide the committee into the future.

- Gain Support From the Section Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will decide to “fund” any necessary projects/activities and approve Diversity/Committee Events.

- Encourage utility or service provider HR personnel to join the committee; their knowledge of job and advancement opportunities and recruiting needs can help your committee structure one or more useful programs that can promote the waterworks profession to new and diverse individuals.
TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: Six ways to start Implementing Diversity & Inclusion Activities and Programs

Establish programs or initiatives that promote Diversity & Inclusion within your Section. One way to spark this is to begin encouraging existing committees and the Section leadership to develop activities that focus on and promote Diversity & Inclusion. Some possibilities:

1. Have committees incorporate Diversity into their action plans; encourage them to recruit a wider range of committee members, which can then lead to a broader pool of Section leaders

   - Some sections have been successful in getting committees to include Diversity in their action plans by tying that to committee budget approval!

2. Technical program or speakers

   - Establish a Diversity session at your Annual Conference. This could mean offering topics about Diversity, or nontechnical issues (e.g., HR, Accounting, legal, purchasing) that might appeal to a wider audience, and encourage participation by new people/attendees; or, it might mean that you seek out more diverse types of speakers/presenters—or both.

3. Newsletter or other Section publications

   - Create a column, or series of articles that focus on diverse Section members’ contributions to the drinking water community and to the Section.

   - Make a conscious effort to include contributions of diverse individuals.

4. Establish a Section award that recognizes efforts of local members, companies, or utilities that have strong Diversity programs or encourage work environments that welcome employees of all backgrounds and abilities

5. Establish programs, activities, and practices that are focused on WELCOMING new as well as current members

   - Introduce new members at Section meetings, in Section publications, or on your Section website.

   - Encourage current members and Section leaders to make new members, and new participants, feel welcome at every opportunity.
• Mentor or buddy programs at events: establish a system to partner currently active members with new members or those just starting to get involved, to foster a positive and welcoming environment at Section events.

6. Social activities: try alternative social events, such as tennis, picnics, skiing, bowling, comedy night, group tickets at theater or sporting events, or creating a team for a charity event in order to encourage attendance by a wider range of people and more diverse networking opportunities.

MAKE IT STICK: Establish Diversity & Inclusion as Part of the Fabric of Your Section

Once you’ve gotten some momentum, make Diversity & Inclusion a continuing part of your Section by forming a Section Diversity & Inclusion Committee to continue growing, developing, and carrying out the Section’s efforts to encourage and engage all types of members to join and participate in AWWA.

A Section Diversity Committee can carry out activities such as those described in this guide, plus they can identify and develop new ideas, such as the following:

• Adding an element of Diversity to the Section’s website.
• Making Diversity & inclusion efforts part of the Section’s Strategic Plan.
• Having a Diversity Committee member on all nominating committees and/or having a Diversity Committee member serve as a liaison to other Section committees to ensure Diversity awareness is infused through the Section.

When you are forming your Diversity & Inclusion Committee, be sure your committee includes members from all your Section’s geographic areas and types of organizations, as well as members reflecting the Diversity of your Section. Remember, the more people involved in Diversity efforts, the more likely it is to be successful.

Establish goals and objectives for your Diversity & Inclusion Committee. Your Section board may or may not provide the Diversity & Inclusion Committee with guidelines or suggested goals and objectives. As you set your goals and objectives, you will want to consider and discuss what Diversity is and on what aspects of Diversity your Section may want to focus. Be willing to talk openly and freely about what Diversity is – and what it is not – and what you want your committee to achieve. If your new committee needs help setting goals and objectives, contact the AWWA DMIC for ideas and resources to help you get started.
MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

It is important that your committee decide up front how you will measure your success. Goals and objectives should be quantifiable so the committee can evaluate the success of its efforts. A measure should be set for each of your goals and objectives. For example, if one of your committee’s goals is to hold a workshop on Diversity issues, a possible measure of success could be the number of participants in the workshop.

RESOURCES

You don’t have to reinvent the wheel! AWWA’s DMIC is a valuable resource for you, and there are other Sections that have successfully implemented many of the ideas suggested in this Guide.

- AWWA Diversity Center: the Diversity Center on the AWWA website (www.awwa.org/diversity) offers you access to tools and resources to help your Section build its Diversity activities.

- Award-Winning Diversity Programs: AWWA recognizes member utilities and service providers for their efforts to promote Diversity & Inclusion within their workplaces. These ideas could also be adapted or incorporated into your Section.

- Look at companies outside our industry for ideas: many companies (UPS, Wegmans, Ritz-Carlton, etc.) have made Diversity an integral part of their company’s business plans because having a diverse and inclusive workforce pays off – literally. Look at how the business case for Diversity has changed corporate culture, and try some ideas that could pay off for your Section.

- Work with your employer and section to recognize Special Emphasis Observances Months by utilizing AWWA’s campaign. This campaign helps utility and service provider members to recognize the outstanding contributions to water by employees of different background, gender, race and sexual orientation during Special Emphasis Observances Months.

Modeled after Only Tap Water Delivers, the Special Emphasis Observances Months campaign provides a set of highly customizable materials in a downloadable toolkit. The campaign uses vocabulary and imagery that are designed to support current diversity, human resources, and public outreach efforts. Find out more at www.awwa.org/diversity.

ANNUAL AWWA DIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

ACE Diversity Call for Papers
When: Every September

Our members include more than drinking water professionals. And those professionals include more than operators and engineers. Each year over 100 managers, diversity and human resource professionals gather to learn best practices. The Call for Papers invites professionals to share their knowledge on Diversity topics at AWWA’s Annual Conference & Exposition (ACE).

AWWA Diversity Award Nominations
When: Every October

AWWA recognizes the role of diversity as being essential to the growth, structure and continue success of any organization. The prestigious AWWA Diversity Award recognizes exemplary achievements, accomplishments and commitment to Diversity annually.
AWWA’s Statement of Policy on Diversity and Nondiscrimination

AWWA has adopted a policy statement on Diversity and Nondiscrimination. We encourage you to adopt and adapt ours or create your own. The statement will serve as a testament to our commitment and frame our future engagement with our members and customers alike.

The Association’s statement reads: “AWWA strongly recommends the adoption of diversity policies by all members and water profession organizations that reflect the demographics of those we serve. These policies should promote volunteerism and provide employment opportunities encouraging the diversity of staff, membership, and leadership. Policies should make it clear that discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, veteran status or disability and harassment of any type are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Further, these policies should reflect specific and results-oriented procedures to which good faith efforts are applied.

The success of AWWA depends upon the full utilization of all its members. To this end, AWWA is committed to proactively engaging a workforce that reflects the demographics of those we serve by promoting volunteer and employment opportunities that will encourage diversity of staff, membership, and leadership in all of AWWA operating units without regard to any of the characteristics listed above.”