

Module 5: Creating Inclusive Organizations

Evaluators work in different contexts, including large institutions, community-based organizations, or some have their own consulting firms. How can evaluators help to create inclusive and equitable organizations, in whatever context they find themselves? How can they contribute to organizational cultural change?

Sustainable change requires work at multiple levels: personal, interpersonal, and organizational/systemic – to achieve changes that are resilient and integrated.

For the next few modules, we are going to look at the organizational level.

Organizations are living systems made up of a complexity of human interactions, relationships, and dynamics that express a culture – a way of being embedded in people’s everyday lives within that system. Some of what is culture are formal – policies, pay levels, hierarchies, job descriptions, etc.). A vast part of the culture is informal: behavioral norms, organizational stories of ‘how things are done around here,’ humor, jargon, interior décor, dress norms, architecture, etc. These all send messages that tell us who belongs, who is valued, what perspectives are respected. This is expressed in many ways, such as the language used, communication, styles, lunchroom jokes, art/images on the walls, naming of boardrooms, how people greet one another in the hallway, etc.

Integrating DEI into organizations means moving towards building cultures of belonging. A culture of belonging is one in which difference and diversity of perspectives are invited, welcomed, and celebrated. Additionally, a culture of belonging nurtures an environment where all people feel psychologically safe to share their ideas without fear of backlash, knowing, and feeling that who they are and what they contribute is valued. Feeling othered is receiving messages through the formal and informal organizational culture that who you are and what you think is not valued and sometimes even discouraged and punished. [Microaggressions](#) (1:58 min) are one way this happens. John Powell speaks eloquently about [Othering and Belonging](#) (17:44 min), highlighting how both occur and the necessity of belonging in the world.

One of the reasons why organizational culture is key to integrating DEI in practice is illuminated in the [“Problem Woman of Colour in the Workplace”](#) tool developed by the Centre for Community Organizations. The tool illustrates the typical trajectory of women of color hired within organizations with mostly white leadership or staff. Understanding how necessary cultural change is to create lasting change is critical to success.

There are enormous benefits to building cultures of belonging in organizations. Not only is it fair and just to build cultures where we all belong, bringing together the convergence of diverse perspectives leads to more innovative and resilient ideas. A Harvard Business Review [study](#) found that the highest performing teams have one thing in common: psychological safety.

What makes an organization inclusive? Here are [10 characteristics](#) (approximately 6 min) of Inclusive organizations by MD Anderson.

Reflection Questions

- Where do you see opportunities for inclusive change within your organization or your consulting firm?
- What can you do to ensure your organization is inclusive?

- How could your practice as an evaluator evolve to be more inclusive?
- What subtle cues are given in your organization's space that sends signals of who is truly valued?
- Any other reflections?

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group of the CES would like your feedback on opportunities for greater inclusion in evaluation practice through this [form](#).

References

Powell, J. (2016, March). *Othering and Belonging* [Video file]. Youtube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_-ux9LhkyY

Anderson, M.D. (n.d). *Ten characteristics of an inclusive organization*. <https://www.mdanderson.org/content/dam/mdanderson/documents/about-md-anderson/careers/diversity-and-inclusion/ten-characteristics-of-an-inclusive-organization.pdf>

Delizzona, L. (2019). *High-performing teams need psychological safety. Here's how to create it*. <https://hbr.org/2017/08/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety-heres-how-to-create-it>

Fusion Comedy. (2016, October 5). *How microaggressions are like mosquito bites: Same difference* [Video File]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450>

Additional Resource

Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun. (2001). *The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture*. From [Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups](#). ChangeWork. <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-chara...>