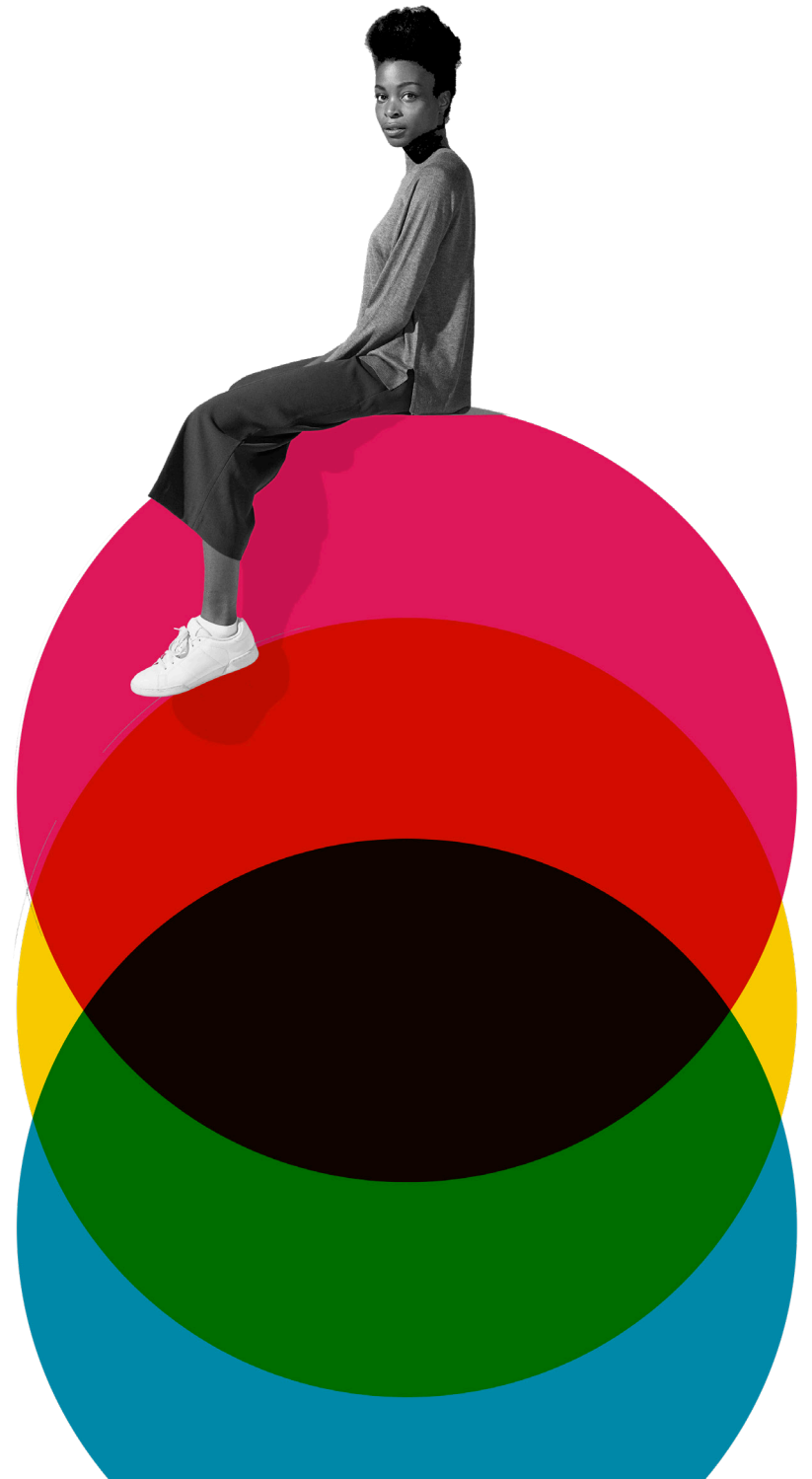


Embedded Inclusion

5 Elements to Create a
Sustainable DEI Program



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Is Your DEI Program Making a Real Difference?





Is Your DEI Program Making a Real Difference?

Organizations that foster diversity see better financial outcomes, innovate faster, and retain employees better than those that don't.¹ With that in mind, no organization can truly be considered successful without a meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) framework.

But even as more companies worldwide launch or expand their DEI programs, how many of them are really driving the changes needed to make an impact? Some organizations do the bare minimum to claim a program or allyship but have yet to determine whether their strategies are working and cannot demonstrate their impact.

What exactly makes a DEI program successful, and how do you ensure its sustainability in the long term?

¹ BCG, <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation>



5 Elements to Create a Sustainable DEI Program



Successful programs have at least five things in common.

1 Formal measurement

2 A three-year plan

3 Checkpoints for accountability

4 Powerful training

5 Strategies to engage all employees

5 Elements to Create a Sustainable DEI Program

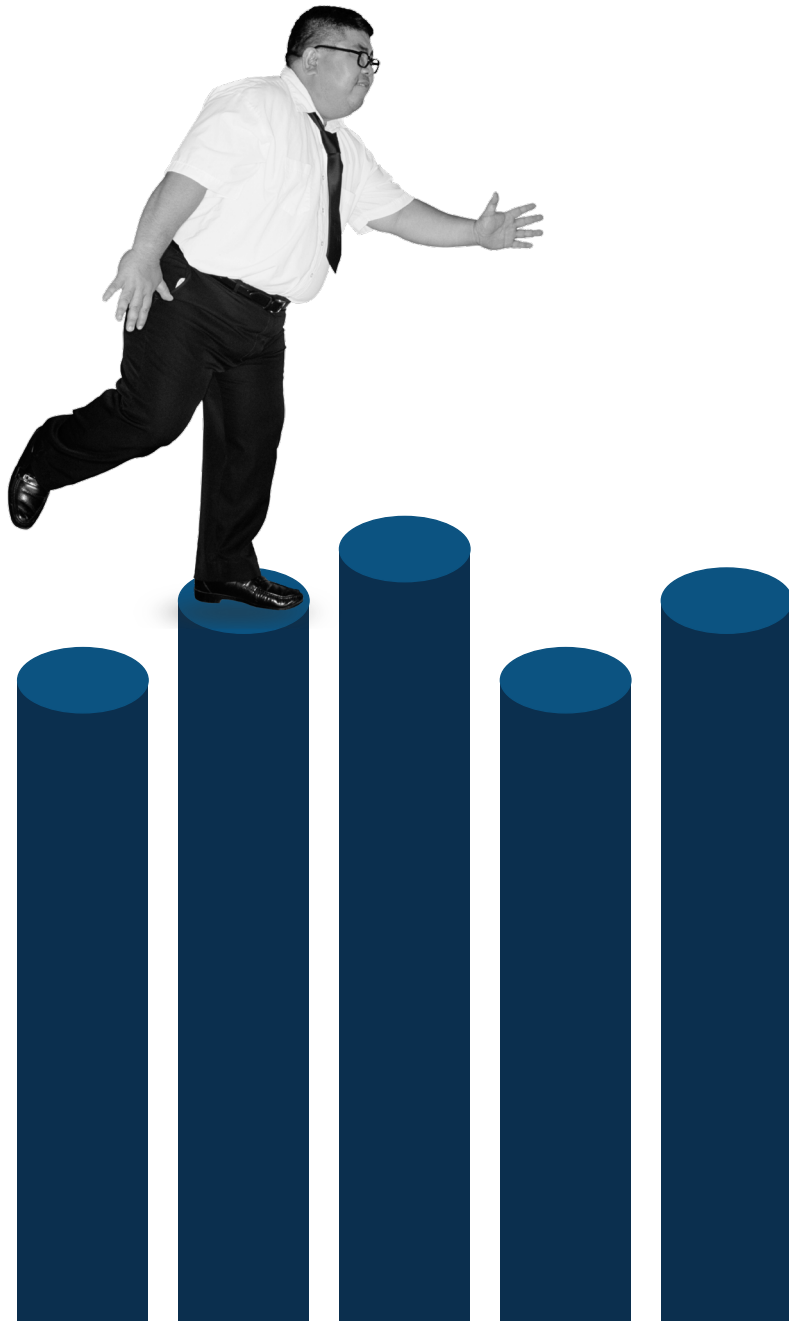
Your strategy and program should be tailored to fit your organization's needs. It can include customized training, milestone celebrations, and other components, but it must contain all five of these critical elements to be **successful** and **sustainable**.



ELEMENT 1

Formal Measurement





Formal Measurement

For any DEI plan to be successful, you must understand where you're starting from and what you are trying to achieve.

Before writing and executing your strategy, gather data on your current organizational makeup. If you do not yet have this data available, you should gather it from your employees through an employee engagement survey.

You can ask identifying questions around diversity, but take the time to build trust by explaining to employees why the organization is gathering this information and what you will do with it. They will be more willing to participate if they understand your rationale and intentions.

It is also important to explore the current state of inclusion. How do your people feel about the organization? Do they feel a sense of belonging?

Once you have the data, you can compare it to industry and regional benchmarks. Analyze it to capture meaningful insights and then use those insights to set measurable goals for your organization.

As your DEI program is launched, set up measurement checkpoints at regular intervals to track the data, identify changes and trends, and adjust your plan as needed.



ELEMENT 2

A Three-Year Plan



A Three-Year Plan

A DEI program is not something you can implement and then consider complete. To be successful, map out a comprehensive and dynamic plan with an intentional order of operations that progresses over the first three years.

This three-year plan should be based on what we call “the facts of today,” a quantified snapshot of the current state of your organization. Then, start your three-year plan by defining the goals for your program. Are you trying to achieve less bias in hiring? Create more safe spaces for the minorities in your company? Close the pay gap among genders? Establishing your specific goals will allow you to build a strategy and plan the tactics to help you reach them.

Although goals are essential, your DEI program can only survive with the buy-in and support of your organization’s executives and leaders. They must be engaged, model the changes, and work toward the same goals. We’ll talk more about this in the next section?



The Process: Building Your Three-Year Plan



ELEMENT 3

Checkpoints for Accountability



Checkpoints for Accountability

DEI plans only succeed with accountability checkpoints and incentives for achieving goals. The shared commitment to meet target KPIs should motivate your leaders to make real improvements.

Following are a few steps to build accountability measures into your initiatives.



Step 1: Answer the Question

Equip every leader with the knowledge and agency to answer one question every month:

“What have I done to create inclusion in my team?”

The response won't always be earth-shattering. For example, one month's answer might be, “We held a two-hour exploration of our affinities and benevolent biases at last week's offsite.” But perhaps during quarterly or yearly planning, a leader might say, “I worked with the HR department to analyze employee engagement results from my team and identified three specific actions I'll take to improve inclusion KPIs.”

This step is about activity, laying the groundwork, and developing more profound, long-term DEI commitment from your leaders. Executives must empower people leaders to prioritize this work.



Step 2: Make a Plan Within the Plan

With the help of a human resources business partner (HRBP) or a DEI consultant, every leader should create an 18-month diversity plan relevant to their geography and business unit. Although you can pull on internal resources, working with an external resource can result in more credible plans. Working with an external resource ensures your plan will be based on best practices rather than unconscious biases or other aspects of the organization's culture.

These business unit plans should be attainable with available resources and aligned with the global plan. Organizational transparency is important here. To inform their plan, the leader should have access to examine your DEI data and the organization's short- and long-term goals or targets. With this information, they can be sure the objectives they plan for their teams align with the organization's desired outcomes. For example, if you expect to launch a new recruitment approach in April, your leaders should support this by committing to ensure the relevant training for their people by the end of March.

TIP

As with the previous step, monthly check-ins keep the plan on track. These check-ins can be one-on-one progress reports or team meetings, but keeping your leaders' DEI commitments top-of-mind is critical.



Step 3: Set KPIs

The first two steps help your leaders prepare to hit specific goals and targets for the year's end. They will have spoken at length to their people and completed some activities to drive desired results.

As mentioned before, KPIs should always be the driving force for a successful DEI initiative. Once your leaders create their plans, set

KPIs that support your organization's goals and will help keep leaders motivated about their DEI initiatives.

The KPIs you decide on should be directly tied to the global DEI plan and fit the needs and structure of your teams, both regionally and by function.



ELEMENT 4

Powerful Training



Powerful Training

Learning and development (L&D) professionals should work with modern and evidence-based DEI learning templates, especially in our environment of social justice movements, legislative tension, and evolving cultural values.

All too often, diversity training focuses on compliance: a sterile session of definitions providing check-box immunity for the coming year. Instead, gaining compliance in DEI should be one step in a positive, ongoing process. True success is measured in behavior change, not just attendance.

Instead of viewing compliance as a one-and-done event, think of it as a collection of check-in efforts throughout the year—a learning pathway of practical application, monitored and measured through the actions of employees and the real-world results of their invested time.



ELEMENT 4

Flipping the classroom can help promote shared responsibility for employee development. Sharing the learning content via digital resources before the training event allows learners to engage and become familiar with it even before they begin formal training.

Sharing learning content reduces the need for rote knowledge transfer and makes the training more of a collaborative discussion. It positions the trainer more as a facilitator rather than an instructor, allowing learners to experience the topic at their own pace. Participants arrive at real-time training sessions prepared for practical and meaningful discussions.

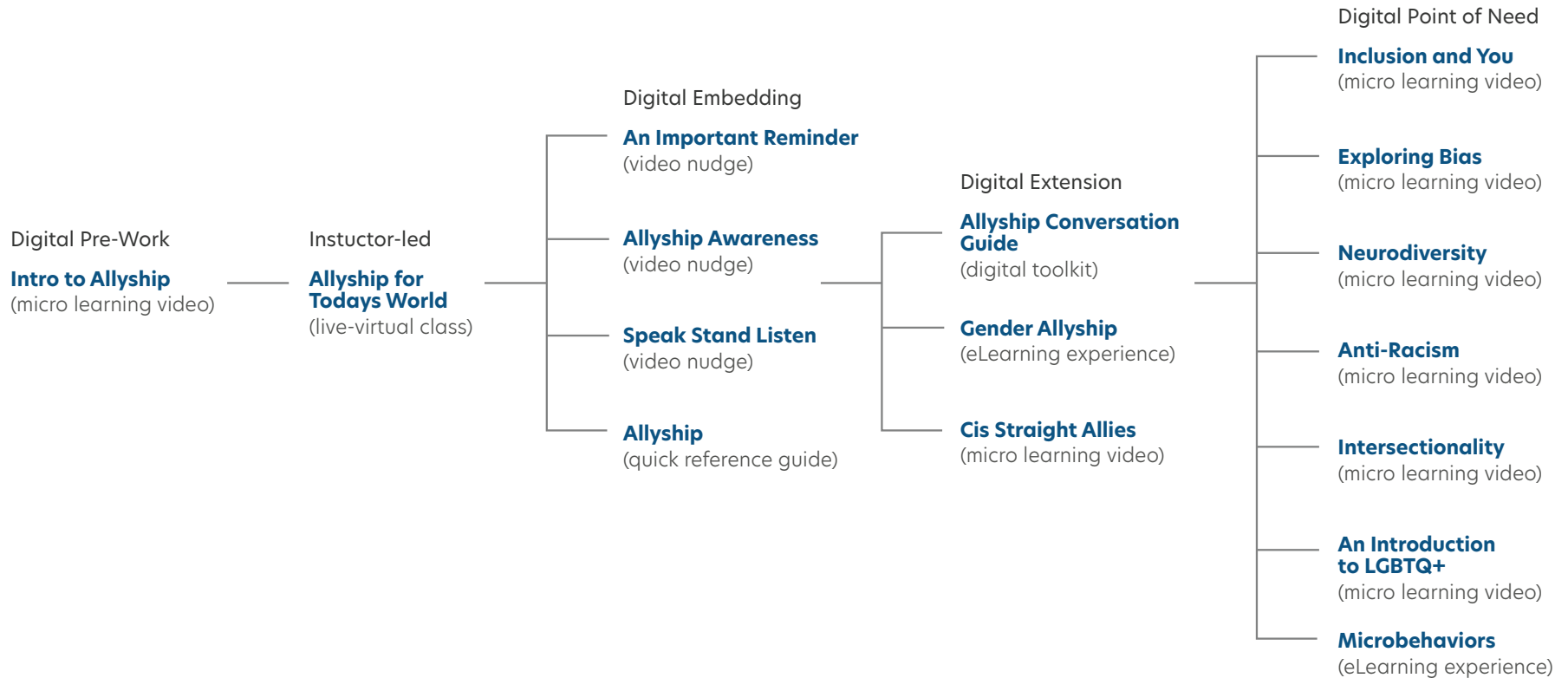
To elevate your DEI program, think beyond your usual and traditional training delivery team. Thoughtfully assemble a group of facilitators with deep, researched, or (preferably) lived experience to speak to your people with insight and authenticity. Consider partnering with outside experts on the topics you wish to explore at a deeper level with your learners.

Although your go-to L&D team is undoubtedly professional and effective, they may lack the depth of subject-matter expertise required to create the safest environment possible or speak with credibility about particular groups.



Be sure to complement synchronous training events with point-of-need learning opportunities. The competing demands of busy workloads can make it hard for learners to recall essential concepts in the flow of work, so layer training events with digital microlearning that can be accessed when the employee needs them most. Make these just-in-time resources easy to access and quick to comprehend.

Learning Pathway Example | Allyship



ELEMENT 5

Strategies to Engage All Employees



Strategies to Engage All Employees

It is vital to provide your employees with information as early as possible about your DEI program, why it is important, and how it will benefit them and the organization. They should be informed and equipped before implementing any changes or expectations associated with the program. Without this preparation, many employees may respond negatively.

Luckily, there will be those who actively champion DEI efforts in each organization. Recognizing and understanding the most common reasons for their support is vital. Their lived experience may inform their commitment, they may be emotionally motivated, or they may deeply understand the business case for DEI initiatives.

However, some will also perceive DEI initiatives as threatening or pointless. These employees may form a sizeable population within your organization and could react with fear or apathy—if not outright antagonism—when asked to do the corresponding work. Ensuring that they are on board takes a different approach than it would with those who are active supporters of DEI principles.



Active and positive participation from skeptical employees is just as meaningful as the participation from those who enthusiastically support your DEI program. However, it may take different strategies and incentives to engage them.

Drive inclusion as well as diversity. Creating an environment that benefits just one group and does not acknowledge others can cause ambivalence enterprise-wide. Speak with everyone and understand their needs to create better policies that benefit the entire organization.



For example, offering flexible time for parents and caregivers can exclude other people who don't have these responsibilities but would still value the same benefit to maintain their mental health or manage their home lives.

Connect with the individual. Members of the skeptical group can be encouraged when you give them specific, relatable advice about how they can act positively to support the program. It may also be helpful to share information with them to remove some of the fear of "getting it wrong." This can be a short video or a series of nudges delivered to individuals daily, sharing the experience of typically excluded groups with a practical call to action.

Get specific about how DEI can help people on the job. Rather than extolling the broad virtues of DEI, tailor the message to each person or job function. A sales manager is more likely to engage with DEI prompts knowing the work may result in them attaining and keeping clients, for instance.





Building Inclusion to Achieve Exceptional Outcomes

Designing, implementing, and enacting a sustainable DEI program takes considerable thought, data, strategy, planning, and commitment—not only from your organization’s leaders but also from all your employees. Although there are many ways to customize a DEI program, the five elements we have outlined will give you a solid framework to ensure that your work will lead toward a DEI strategy that works.



To learn more about GP Strategies' **DEI Development** courses, visit www.gpstrategies.com.





GP Strategies Corporation is one of the world's leading talent transformation providers. By delivering award-winning learning and development solutions, we help organizations transform through their people and achieve meaningful change. GP Strategies has delivered our innovative consulting, learning services, and talent technology solutions to over 6,000 organizations globally.

In 2023 PDT Global brought its unique diversity, equity, and inclusion expertise to GP Strategies to create a combined force in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Together we have strengthened our global inclusion training, solutions, and consulting expertise dedicated to creating inclusive workplaces for our clients.

Whether your initiative requires developing the skills of your talent, the implementation and adoption of learning technologies, or refining critical processes, GP Strategies is a transformation partner you can trust.

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