Building an Inclusive Community

Valuing, Engaging, and Leveraging the Diverse Population We Serve.

For: Michigan Municipal League
What is an Inclusive Community?
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An inclusive community is one that:

• Promotes respect, equal treatment, and equal opportunities for everyone.
• Eliminates all forms of discrimination.
• Engages all citizens in decision making.
• Values diversity.
• Responds to racist and discriminating incidents.
Why are you here?
Why is it important?
Why is it important?

• Injustice should not be tolerated.
• Each citizen has the right to help make decisions that affect them.
• Diversity enriches our lives.
• When left unaddressed, the tension that builds between rival groups can lead to cyclical injustice.
How inclusive is your community?
Factors to consider:
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The types and sequence of strategies should be selected based on motivation and current need.

For example:

• If there was a crisis you might have to start with a strategy to address the conflict.

• If there was no crisis, but just a strong vision of an inclusive future, you might start with a public education campaign.
Factors to consider:

What resources are available to support the initiative?

- Individuals
- Groups
- Businesses & Foundations
- Funding/grants
- Legislature
Factors to consider:

What institutions and community groups will support or obstruct the change?

For example:

- If a dominant group in the community is motivated to be more inclusive there is likely to be more support.
- However, if a dominant group has no interest in changing the status quo, there are likely to be more barriers.
Factors to consider:

What outcomes do you desire from the initiative?

• Raise awareness
• Address a specific incident
• Promote fair treatment
• Initiate policy change
How do you do it?
How do you do it?

Assess the demographic landscape.
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- Find out what groups live in the community and learn their history (length of residence, migration patterns, socio-economic status).
- Observe and ask about group characteristics (cultural traditions, ethnicity, employment categories, religion).
- Learn about different groups’ social points, support networks, and major institutions.
- Identify the major events that affect the community (political, social, and economic).
How do you do it?

Create a community council with influential leaders from all demographic groups.
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- Engage this group of influential leaders throughout the initiative to provide input, guidance, and feedback.
- Review, analyze, and summarize the information you gathered about the community.
- Identify potential entry points and strategies for engaging the different groups in the community.
- Be careful to consider the history of exclusion and power differences and ensure that power is shared equally within the council.
How do you do it?

Foster a community culture of inclusion based on cultural competence.
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*Foster a community culture of inclusion based on cultural competence.*

- Bring groups together to learn and share.
- Increase familiarity and acceptance through repeat exposure.
- Create a forum for informal social opportunities to talk, share a meal, etc.
- Coordinate activities and events to celebrate the community’s diversity.
- Educate community members about the history and conditions that help shape each group’s identity and current situation.
How do you do it?

*Identify the cultural assets that each group brings to the community.*
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- Consider values, traditions, historical events, art forms, language, and other characteristics that make a group proud of their identity.
- Create discussion about cultural assets within the community council.
- Share cultural assets with the community through local newspapers, radio stations, and local public television.
- Create community events to share and celebrate cultural assets.
How do you do it?

Resolve conflicts and improve relations within the community.
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• Conflicts occur when groups do not understand or appreciate each other’s cultures, they hold negative stereotypes about one another, and/or must compete for resources and power.

• Remember that different groups have their own way of dealing with conflict, i.e., some are encouraged to conform while others are encouraged to confront.

• Consider using an outside facilitator/mediator to help work through the conflict.
How do you do it?

Examine and change systemic issues that prevent groups from having equal access to resources and opportunities.
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• Public safety
• Education
• Workforce development
How do you do it?

Ensure institutional support for inclusion, equity, and justice.
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• Everyone deserves equal access to economic, social, and educational opportunities.

• Fair treatment must be upheld in accordance with honor, standards, or law.

• Because of their status, power, resources, and relationships, institutions have the ability to either sanction or support your efforts.

• Engage institutional leaders in your efforts and find a way to show them how they could benefit from being more inclusive.
How do you do it?

*Inclusion, equity, and justice in public safety.*

- Creating healthy relationships with the community
- Appropriate alignment of crime and punishment
How do you do it?

*Inclusion, equity, and justice in education.*

- Inclusive and collaborative relationship between parents and educators.
- Courageous conversations around the achievement gap.
- Appropriate use of standardized testing.
How do you do it?

*Inclusion, equity, and justice in workforce development.*

- Create community based rehabilitation opportunities.
- Ban the Box
- Think out of the box in your HR practices.

Research shows:

- A person with a conviction that is 7-10 years old is no more likely to commit a crime than a person with no criminal history.
- Those with former convictions have been shown to be slightly more productive than the average employee.
How do you do it?

Acknowledge and celebrate successes.
How do you do it?

**Acknowledge and celebrate successes.**

- Reinforce the positive experience and outcome of working with different groups.
- Even small accomplishments should be celebrated (e.g., dinners, awards, open houses).
- Invite important members of the community to attend celebration events (e.g., the mayor, superintendent, faith leader).
- Point out that success was possible thanks to all the groups working together and highlight special achievements.
- Publicize the event in the local paper, etc.
How do you do it?

*Sustain the relationships, strategies, and changes.*
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- Building an inclusive community is an ongoing process.

- Accept that some failure and regression is a natural part of creating change and don’t let it stop you from pressing forward.

- It is important to sustain the relationships, strategies, and changes you establish, no matter how small, because they create the foundation for future progress and change.

- Create opportunities to maintain frequent contact and cooperation between groups.
Summary

Creating an inclusive community benefits us all.

- Everyone deserves to have equal access to economic, social, and educational opportunities.
- All people must be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.
- Cultural differences should be acknowledged and celebrated.
- Diversity enriches our lives and our community.
- Injustice and discrimination should not be tolerated.
Personal Action Plan

How will you create an inclusive community?
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• What strategies will you implement?
• What challenges will you have to overcome?
• What resources will you need?
• Who are potential partners in your effort?
• In what timeframe will you implement?
Thank You!

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