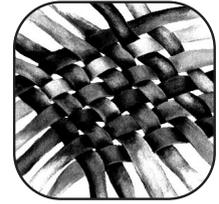


## MODULE 12: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE



**Step One:** Creating Your Inclusion Committee

**Step Two:** Training and Consultants

**Step Three:** Definitions and Case Statement

**Step Four:** Gathering and Analyzing Information

**Step Five:** Creating Your Inclusion Blueprint

**Step Six:** Implementation



## MODULE 12: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

### Overview of Content

In this module you will:

- Review a definition and explanation of organizational culture.
- Explore some of the ways in which organizational culture affects inclusiveness within organizations.
- Learn about three types of cultures that may hinder or help the development of inclusiveness within an organization, as well as eight components of inclusive organizational cultures.
- Analyze the data from the information gathering process regarding organizational culture.
- Review suggestions for improving organizational culture.
- Establish goals and objectives for your organizational culture that will be integrated into the inclusiveness blueprint.

This module should be completed by any organization that has decided to look at its **organizational culture**. If you haven't prioritized this area as a part of your inclusiveness initiative, then skip to *Module 13: Volunteers and Helpers*.

### *Who to Involve*

The work in this module will be completed by the Inclusiveness Committee as a whole or a subset of the committee that would include members who have particular expertise about or responsibility for organizational culture.

### *Exercises to Complete*

- *Exercise 12-A: Benefits of Having a More Inclusive Organizational Culture*
- *Exercise 12-B: Analyzing Information*
- *Exercise 12-C: Developing an Action Plan for Organizational Culture*

Step Five: Creating Your  
Inclusiveness  
Blueprint

## MODULE 12: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE



### What is Organizational Culture?

Simply put, organizational culture is the expression of an organization's collective values, beliefs, and behaviors. Organizational culture in connection with inclusiveness refers to an organization's collective values, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to racial and ethnic groups.

### Three Core Levels of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is expressed at three core levels:

1. *Surface Level*: the physical environment and the symbols, language, and visible products created by the organization.
2. *Espoused Values*: the values of the leadership (which may or may not have been effectively realized by the rest of the organization) in relation to goals and strategies.
3. *Basic Assumptions*: the beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts that are conscious and unconscious but are integral to the way the organization functions.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some specific ways in which these levels may be viewed using an inclusiveness lens:

- *Surface Level*: Inclusive organizations create physical environments that are welcoming to people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds; they use inclusive language; and their written materials use inclusive images and language that speak to people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- *Espoused Values*: The leaders of inclusive organizations believe strongly in developing goals and strategies that address the assets and needs of communities of color at a programmatic level.
- *Basic Assumptions*: Inclusive organizations integrate an awareness of the assets and needs of communities of color into everything they do. Their core values include a belief that everyone has a powerful contribution to make within the organization. The extent to which an organization's basic assumptions include a commitment to inclusiveness is fundamental to the foundation of an organization's culture.



### *Note for Organizations Interested in Addressing Other Diverse Communities*

This module defines and focuses on organizational culture in relation to racial and ethnic groups. As you work through this module, think about the ways your organization's collective values, beliefs, and behaviors are or are not fully inclusive of people from all different backgrounds. In what ways do your organization's espoused values include (or exclude) people from different class backgrounds? Does your organization operate with any basic assumptions about people with different religious beliefs, such as Muslim, Catholic, or atheist?

## **Three Types of Organizational Cultures in Relation to Diversity and Inclusiveness**

David A. Thomas from the Harvard Business School and Robin J. Ely from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs have studied organizational culture in relation to diversity and inclusiveness. Their research has uncovered three types of organizational cultures:

1. Discrimination-and-Fairness Culture: Assimilation
2. Access-and-Legitimacy Culture: Differentiation
3. Connecting Diversity to Work Perspectives: Integration

Thomas and Ely suggest that of the three types, only the third provides a model for maximizing the potential of a truly inclusive organization.<sup>2</sup>

### *Discrimination-and-Fairness Culture*

This type of organizational culture is based on the assumption that people are basically all the same and that awareness of differences should be minimized. The goal of diversity or inclusiveness work in organizations with this type of culture is generally to recruit diverse staff and board members, and to ensure that everyone is treated the same way.

The underlying premise of this type of organizational culture is that everyone should **assimilate** and reflect the dominant culture. While the intentions of those who promote such a culture are often good, the net effect can be that employees and board members from communities of color feel an obligation to mirror the dominant culture (generally reflecting the values, beliefs, and behaviors of white people) and are not encouraged to bring their cultural assets to the workplace. Another name for this type of organizational culture is “color-blind.” Research shows that color-blind management processes do not lead to inclusive organizations.<sup>3</sup>

**For example**, an arts organization might hire a Latina arts instructor with full bilingual capacity but prevent her from teaching courses aimed at monolingual Spanish-speaking children who would benefit from a bilingual environment.



### *Access-and-Legitimacy Culture*

This type of organizational culture moves closer toward inclusiveness. Individuals of color are hired and valued *because of* the contributions they can make in understanding and relating to constituents of color.

The underlying premise of this type of organizational culture is that the organization values the differences of people from different racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds. However, **differentiation** can go too far when individuals of color are valued *only* for their ability to work within and among communities of color.

**For example**, an arts organization may hire a bilingual Latino instructor for the specific purpose of working with monolingual Spanish-speaking students. However, in this type of organizational culture, the Latino art program does not get integrated into the organization; rather it – and the people who are involved with it – remain isolated. Thus, the skills and talents of the instructor and the students are relegated to a specific area of the organization and are not maximized by the whole organization. This minimizes the learning potential for the rest of the staff.

### *Connecting Diversity to Work Perspectives*

In this type of organizational culture, people of color are treated with respect, their individual skills and talents are valued and utilized, and their perspectives and assets are incorporated into the fabric of the organization rather than being isolated. Instead of viewing people of color only as connectors to particular constituencies, the organizational culture values and **integrates** their cultural perspectives and work into the entirety of the organization.

**For example**, an arts organization hires a bilingual Latina instructor to teach monolingual students, and she and all other staff people are treated equally; she becomes an instrumental member of the team of instructors that develops curriculum for all of the programs, and courses are designed for students of all cultural backgrounds to create art together and to learn about each other's cultures.



The following table illustrates the interrelationship between the core levels of organizational culture (surface-level culture, espoused values, and basic assumptions) and their expressions within the types of organizational cultures that relate to diversity and inclusiveness (assimilation, differentiation, or integration):

	<b>Assimilation</b>	<b>Differentiation</b>	<b>Integration</b>
<b>Surface</b>	Images in publications and around the facility are mostly homogeneous.	Images of people of color in publications and around the facility are generally found in specific places where people of color are most likely to view them (e.g., a brochure for a particular program targeted at communities of color).	Images in publications and around the facility are mostly heterogeneous.
<b>Espoused</b>	The leader articulates a belief in a color-blind management approach and states that he or she doesn't see differences; encourages others in the organization to do the same.	The leader actively seeks diversity for the staff and board with the intent of having people of color work on programs, outreach, fundraising, etc., that are specifically targeted at communities of color.	The leader communicates and actualizes a clear vision of a diverse and inclusive organization where the needs, viewpoints, and assets of all people are valued and integrated into the organization.
<b>Basic Assumptions</b>	Organizational culture reflects white dominant culture; norms go undiscussed or unchallenged; people from diverse backgrounds are expected to act like the dominant culture, e.g., women are expected to act like men and people are expected to act the same regardless of racial, ethnic, or cultural background.	Organizational culture values differences between groups, but the full contributions of people of color are undervalued except insofar as they provide access to communities of color.	Organizational culture values people from all backgrounds and encourages people of color to utilize their skills and knowledge to increase the organization's relevance to communities of color; and organization encourages people of color to be full participants in the work of the whole organization.

## Components of an Inclusive Organizational Culture

If you're still confused about what an inclusive organizational culture looks like, consider the elements that Thomas and Ely<sup>4</sup> found in their research on connecting diversity to work perspectives (i.e., the third type listed above). They found the following components to be present in most of the successfully inclusive organizations they studied:

- The leadership understands that a diverse workforce embodies different perspectives and approaches to work and truly values the variety of opinions and insights that people with different cultural backgrounds bring to the organization.
- The leadership recognizes the opportunities and challenges that diversity presents to the organization, embraces those opportunities, and commits to finding healthy solutions to the challenges.
- The organizational culture creates expectations of high standards of performance from everyone regardless of their racial or ethnic background.
- The organizational culture is such that training and education programs nurture personal development, and carefully designed jobs maximize the potential of different staff people without relegating them to isolated niche areas within the organization.
- The organizational culture encourages debate and constructive conflict.
- Workers feel valued and are encouraged to apply their background and skills in creative ways to improve the work of the organization.
- The mission and goals of the organization are well articulated and widely understood, which keeps discussions about differences focused on the organization's work.
- The organizational culture and structure are relatively egalitarian and people are encouraged to be themselves, unencumbered by unnecessary bureaucratic systems that control and limit the activities of the people within the organization.



*“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”*

*-Maya Angelou*

**Complete Exercises 12-A: Benefits of Having a More Inclusive Organizational Culture and 12-B: Analyzing Information.**

## Creating a More Inclusive Organizational Culture

Perhaps more than any of the other elements of creating an inclusive organization, changing organizational culture takes time. It is not a linear process that happens overnight. Furthermore, changes to organizational climate can be chaotic. While you can and should develop deliberate strategies to improve organizational culture, some change will naturally occur as a by-product of other activities in your inclusiveness initiative.



**For example**, if you reassess and change how you work with clients, you will likely learn from your clients about issues related to race and ethnicity of which you were not previously aware. This new level of awareness will likely alter your organizational culture over time.

Using the three core levels of organizational culture (surface level, espoused values, and basic assumptions), develop long-term strategies to improve organizational culture within those three levels. Here are some specific ideas to consider at each of the three levels:

### *Surface level*

- Complete an audit of the organization’s printed materials looking for the way your organization presents itself in relation to communities of color. To do this, collect most or all of the printed materials (including posters for events, annual reports, brochures, fundraising materials, etc.) that you have created in the recent past and analyze the extent to which communities of color are presented. Look at the language that is used and give consideration as to whether the symbols and examples used effectively communicate with diverse constituents. Give consideration not only to the number of times that images of people of color are presented but also *how* they are portrayed.

**For example**, if your organization provides clinical services, are images of physicians of color presented as well as patients of color? Are multiple communities of color represented or only one group?

- Have discussions about and try to develop consciousness around your organization’s language. Is it generally inclusive?

**For example**, at the end of the year, if people take time off is it generally referred to as a holiday break or a Christmas break? For people who celebrate Kwanzaa, Chanukah, or other year-end holidays, calling it a Christmas break may not feel inclusive.

Similarly, do you refer to “moms and dads” when talking about parenting rather than simply saying “parents”? Members of single-parent households may not feel included when your default language refers to a traditional nuclear family unit.

- Pay special attention to the physical environment in your organization. Consider how people are greeted when they enter your organization. Is there someone there who greets your visitors? If so, are greeters equally welcoming of all people? You may be surprised to find that nonverbal, unconscious cues cause people to have an



immediate reaction that isn't always positive. If you're not sure how people of color and others respond when they visit, consider asking them. Also look at the physical surroundings and evaluate whether the signs, pictures, or images that one first sees when entering your facility are likely to be welcoming to all racial and ethnic groups. Do communities of color see people who look like them? Do groups whose primary language is not English see references in their own languages on signs and elsewhere?

Making changes to your organization at the surface level probably won't radically transform the organizational culture on its own; however, coupled with other changes, these surface level adaptations can make a difference.

***Note for Organizations Interested in Addressing Other Diverse Groups***

It can be challenging to assess organizational culture from multiple viewpoints unless you already have an especially diverse organization. In order to get a handle on how diverse communities respond to your organization's written materials, language, and physical environment, it might be worthwhile to host a conversation with people from different groups. Begin by providing them with samples of your publications, then ask them to drop by your facility and assess how they felt when they visited; or take them on a tour of your facility, then ask them to respond to some basic questions. For example, ask questions such as "Do you see your community reflected in our materials?" "Does the language we are using resonate with you?" "How do you feel when you enter the facility?" Bringing people from various groups together, such as from different age groups, disabilities and abilities, and sexual orientations, for this dialogue may be very illuminating, as you should be able to see how different groups can respond to the same stimulus quite differently.

***Espoused Values***

Not surprisingly, organizational culture is directly tied to the leadership style and philosophies of an organization's leaders, especially the CEO or executive director. Espoused values are generally aspirational, that is to say the CEO holds the values but they are not yet embraced by the organization.



- In order to understand your organizational culture in relation to the values of the leadership, compare the responses in the assessments from *Modules 5 and 6* of the leaders (usually the CEO, the board chair, and perhaps other key senior staff) to the responses of the other people in the organization. Look for areas of overlap and differences. Where there is a difference, the leadership should be encouraged to assess the root of the difference and discuss strategies to bridge the gaps.

**For example,** the leadership might believe that the organization should develop targeted outreach strategies to reach communities of color while the culture of the program staff is such that they do not value targeted outreach programs.

- One especially effective method for addressing discrepancies in perspective is for a leader to work with an executive coach to assess how the leader strengthens or weakens organizational culture. Together, the coach and the leader can develop strategies to communicate and then implement the leader's values regarding organizational culture. In particular, the leader should consider the first two characteristics of organizations with inclusive cultures that were mentioned previously: (1) The leadership truly values the variety of opinion and insights that people with different cultural backgrounds bring to the organization; and (2) the leadership recognizes the opportunities and challenges that diversity presents to the organization.

### ***Basic Assumptions***

Since the basic assumptions that make up the core of an organization's culture are developed and held collectively, it follows that understanding and adapting the culture should also be done collectively.

- Probably the most useful mechanism for doing so is to work with inclusiveness trainers and/or organizational culture consultants/trainers who understand diversity and inclusiveness. (Refer to *Module 2* for more information on inclusiveness training.)
- If resources allow and you haven't already been working with an inclusiveness trainer, consider hiring one to help develop a common understanding of your current organizational culture. The information collected in the assessment process about organizational culture provides an excellent starting place for this process. However, you will likely find that discussing these matters collectively will provide a level of knowledge and understanding about organizational culture that isn't easy to capture in an assessment tool. (Refer to *Module 3* for more information on hiring a consultant.)



- You might also consider the informal ways that staff and/or board members spend time together. If, for example, a white individual joins your staff and is invited out to lunch by peers, but an individual of color is not included in informal lunches, you might consider what such interactions mean for your organization's culture and basic assumptions. Or, you might also look to the relationships between administrative staff of color and their supervisors versus those between white administrative staff and supervisors. Are any assumptions made regarding the ambitions or professional future of some staff versus other staff?

In summary, here are some suggestions that may help improve your organizational culture in relation to inclusiveness:

- Complete an audit of printed materials and evaluate the appropriateness of images and language.
- Develop a consciousness about the language your organization uses internally.
- Assess your physical environment and find new ways to ensure that people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds feel welcome from the moment they enter your facility.
- Examine similarities and discrepancies between the leadership's values, beliefs, and behaviors and those of the other people in the organization.
- Use an executive coach, if necessary, to understand differences and help the leadership create a plan and communicate aspirations for the organization's culture.
- Engage in inclusiveness training that focuses on examining and improving the organization's culture around inclusiveness issues.
- Consider the informal culture and interactions among staff, board, and volunteers.

**Complete Exercise 12-C: *Developing an Action Plan for Organizational Culture.***

**Track your progress in completing Module 12 on the *End-of-Module Checklist*, located after the exercises.**

<sup>1</sup> Stupak, Ronald J., Symposium on Organizational Culture: Theory Practice and Cases, summarizing Schein, Edgar H. (1985). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass (pg. 6) <http://www.pamij.com/stupintro2.html>

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, David A., and Ely, Robin J., "Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity." *Harvard Business Review*, September-October, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Pease, Katherine & Associates, *Inside Inclusiveness: Race, Ethnicity, and Nonprofit Organizations*. The Denver Foundation. July 2003

<sup>4</sup> Thomas and Ely, *Ibid.*

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## EXERCISE 12-A

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### Benefits of Having a More Inclusive Organizational Culture

**Instructions:**

Write down all of the benefits that you can think of for having a more inclusive organizational culture.

- Before you begin, revisit Module 4: Making the Case for Inclusiveness, Exercise 4-B: Visualizing Greater Inclusiveness for a reminder of some of your initial reflections on this matter.
- In addition to the points discussed in the module, think about benefits that might be specific to your particular organization.

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Date Exercise Completed \_\_\_\_\_



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## EXERCISE 12-B

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### Analyzing Information

**Instructions:**

Refer to Module 7: Information Gathering, Part 3: Compiling Results

- *Exercise 7-C: Available Facts: Compiling Other Information*
- *Exercise 7-G: Stakeholder Perspectives: Compiling Likert Scale Responses*
- *Exercise 7-H: Stakeholder Perspectives: Compiling Narrative Responses*

Select and review the information that pertains to mission and organizational values.

Answer the questions below.

**Available Facts**

List those best practices from the field regarding organizational culture that might be useful to your organization.

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Can you identify any trends regarding your organization's organizational culture based on the available facts?

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continued

**EXERCISE 12-B: Analyzing Information *continued***

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Is there any additional information regarding your organizational culture that currently isn't available that would be helpful for your inclusiveness work that you would like to collect as a part of the inclusiveness process in the future?

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Did you notice anything else regarding organizational culture within the available facts?

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**Stakeholder Perspectives**

Are there any salient themes about organizational culture that were identified by a majority of your stakeholders?

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continued

**EXERCISE 12-B: Analyzing Information *continued***

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Are there any stories or strongly held beliefs regarding your organizational culture that were identified by stakeholders?

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Are there any significant inconsistencies in perspectives regarding your organizational culture among groups of stakeholders?

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Can you identify any trends regarding your organizational culture based on the perspectives of your stakeholders?

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continued

**EXERCISE 12-B: Analyzing Information *continued***

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Did you notice anything else regarding organizational culture?

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Is there any additional information regarding organizational culture that currently isn't available that you would like to collect in the future?

yes  no

If YES, what information would be helpful?

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**Date Exercise Completed** \_\_\_\_\_

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## EXERCISE 12-C

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### Developing an Action Plan for Organizational Culture

**Instructions:**

*Using the following template, record the problem statement, goals, etc., as well as the steps that you will take to accomplish your goals. Remember that every organization usually has its own way of defining goals and objectives. The outline below can be tailored to match your organization's usual planning process.*

(1) What is the primary problem you want to address in regards to your organizational culture?

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(2) What is/are your desired goal(s)?

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continued

**EXERCISE 12-C: Developing an Action Plan for Organizational Culture *continued***

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(3) For each goal, what is/are your desired outcome(s)?

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(4) For each goal, what are the primary objectives you hope to accomplish?

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(5) For each objective, what tasks will you complete to accomplish the objective?

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(6) Who will be responsible for completing each task?

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continued

**EXERCISE 12-C: Developing an Action Plan for Organizational Culture *continued***

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(7) When will the objectives and tasks be completed?

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(8) What resources, financial and otherwise, are necessary for achieving each goal?

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**Date Exercise Completed** \_\_\_\_\_



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## END-OF-MODULE CHECKLIST

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### Module 12

<i>Action Item</i>	<i>Date Completed</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Review content on developing a more diverse and inclusive organizational culture.		
Analyze the information gathered about organizational culture.		
Develop an action plan to accomplish goals and objectives.		
Recognize your progress to date and communicate it to appropriate stakeholders.		

