

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

January 2024



The IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center creates four types of documents: Model Policies, Considerations Documents, Concepts & Issues Papers, and Need to Know one-page summaries. Typically, for each topic, either a Model Policy or a Considerations Document is created, supplemented with a Concepts & Issues Paper.

This is a stand-alone Concepts & Issues paper that is unaccompanied by a model policy or considerations document. The purpose of this document is to explore the primary issues surrounding the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Following an assessment of the current state of knowledge, the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, in accordance with the Policy Center Advisory Group, concluded that a discussion of the issues related to this topic would be more appropriate than a model policy, given the state of mixed research results and conflicting professional views on implementation. This document examines the predominant issue areas with the intention of providing police leaders with essential information to make informed decisions about DEI initiatives in their agencies.

The IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center would like to thank the members of the IACP's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force for their valuable counsel and contributions to the development of this document.



Glossary

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DEFINITIONS¹

Cohesion – Refers to the extent individuals in a group or team work effectively together.

Diversity – Refers to differences among individuals within a group. A diverse group includes individuals with a range of different characteristics. Some of these characteristics include (but are not limited to) variations in age, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, veteran status, marital status, education, personal experiences, and language.²

Equity – Is the quality of ensuring that all employees are given similar opportunities to succeed while accounting for their varying qualifications, skills, and abilities. While diversity recognizes differences, equity includes the recognition that each individual also has unique needs. Equity helps translate diversity into inclusion through policy and practice by providing individuals with the resources and opportunities to succeed.

Inclusion – Involves utilizing diversity as a benefit in such a way that all individuals are given equal opportunity to participate, contribute, or engage in the organization, and individual differences are acknowledged, respected, and embraced. While diversity is based on differences, inclusion is the recognition, acceptance, and appreciation of those differences.³

¹ The definitions provided herein are for the sole purpose of understanding the terms within the context of the guidance that follows.

² Bernard L. Fontaine, Timothy Paz, and Lucinette Alvarado, “[Implementing Diversity Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace: How DEI Improves Psychological Safety Culture](#)” *Synergist* (March 2021).

³ William Murphy, “[Distinguishing Diversity from Inclusion in the Workplace: Legal Necessity or Common Sense Conclusion?](#)” *The Journal of Business Diversity* 18, no. 4 (2018): 65–83.



Concepts & Issues Paper

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide police agencies with essential background material to provide greater understanding of the developmental philosophy and implementation requirements for fostering a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive policing workforce. This material will help police leaders in their efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their agencies.

II. THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are three elements of workplace culture that help ensure all employees are treated equitably and are provided similar levels of respect, appreciation, and support for professional growth. Diversity and equity can be thought of as inputs to group dynamics. To a large extent, the leadership, policies, and practices of an organization contribute to diversity and equity. In contrast, inclusion is a characteristic of organizational culture that results when diversity and equity are embraced and encouraged.

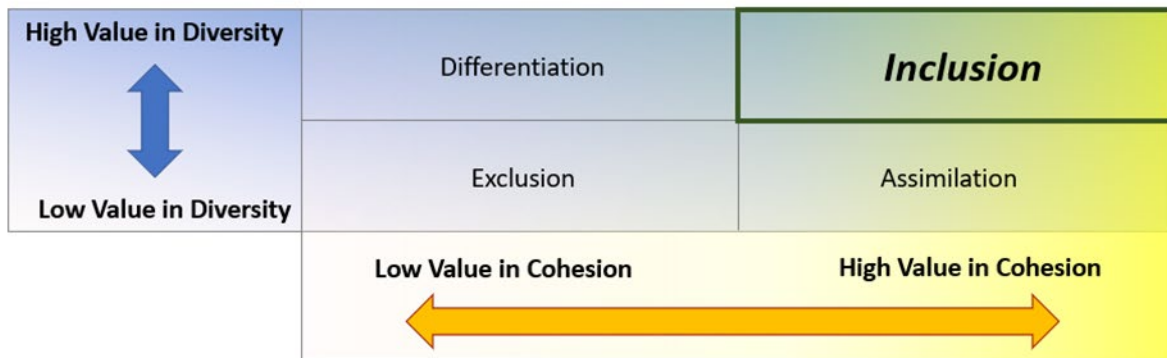
Traditional policing culture was one of assimilation, that placed a high value in cohesion but a low value in diversity.⁴ In a culture of assimilation, differences are discouraged, and individuals often feel pressure to conform to group norms. A culture of inclusion, however, is one that values both diversity and cohesion.

When diversity is valued, individual differences are recognized, celebrated, and leveraged as strengths, when appropriate. When cohesion is valued, individuals work cooperatively to enhance group performance, dedicated to a common goal. Equitable practices help achieve cohesion while valuing diversity, creating a culture of inclusion. This relationship is depicted in the following figure:⁵

⁴ David Alan Sklansky, “Not Your Father’s Police Department: Making Sense of the New Demographics of Law Enforcement,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 96, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 1209–1243; Angela Workman-Stark, “Inclusion Starts with ‘I’? The Missing Ingredient in Leading Change: The Case of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP),” *Development and Learning in Organizations* 35, no. 1 (2021): 10–13.

⁵ This depiction was adapted from a model proposed by Shore and colleagues (2011). Shore et al.’s original model proposed two axes of *uniqueness* and *belongingness*. These terms have been adjusted for consistency with the other definitions used in this paper. See Lynn M. Shore et al., “Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for Future Research,” *Journal of Management* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1262–1289.

Figure 1: Inclusion as the Intersection of Diversity and Cohesion



Well-designed DEI efforts can produce positive outcomes for the police agency, for the individuals within a police agency, and for the community the agency serves. However, despite the potential benefits of DEI in police agencies, it is also essential that minimum performance standards of individual employees and of the agency always be met or exceeded.

It is essential that DEI initiatives be implemented and managed effectively to achieve optimal results while adhering to desired performance standards. Efforts aimed at diversity alone without equitable and inclusive implementation can sometimes be detrimental. In the book *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*, authors Ruth Sessler Bernstein, Paul F. Salipante, and Judith Y. Weisinger explain:

*The effects of diversity on equity and performance depend on the social conditions in an organization... Leaders can implement particular inclusive practices that structure social conditions such that the organization’s members learn to interact professionally and effectively... Combining inclusive practices at the workgroup and team level with transparency and accountability practices at the organizational level enables simultaneous improvements in equity and performance, leveraging members’ differing talents, encouraging positive views of diversity, and increasing members’ commitment to the organization.*⁶

Some research suggests that well-implemented DEI initiatives can benefit agencies at an organizational level. For example:

- Equitable reward systems can motivate everyone to perform better. Alternatively, employees who feel stereotyped or stigmatized often show poorer performance at work.⁷
- Research shows that greater diversity among leadership is associated with more effective organizational performance.⁸ This is especially true when diversity is managed with equitable and inclusive policies and processes.⁹

⁶ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion: Leveraging Organizational Practices for Equity and Results* (NY, New York: Routledge: 2022), 2.

⁷ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

⁸ Kathleen Buse, Ruth Sessler Bernstein, and Diana Bilimoria, “The Influence of Board Diversity, Board Diversity Policies and Practices, and Board Inclusion Behaviors on Nonprofit Governance Practices,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 133 , no. 1 (2016): 179–191; L. E. Gomez and Patrick Bernet, “Diversity Improves Performance and Outcomes,” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 111, no. 4 (August 2019): 383–392.

⁹ Sungjoo Choi and Hal G. Rainey, “Managing Diversity in U.S. Federal Agencies: Effects of Diversity and Diversity Management on Employee Perceptions of Organizational Performance,” *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 1 (2010): 109–121; Christopher Fredette, Patricia Bradshaw, and Heather Krause, “[From Diversity to Inclusion: A Multimethod Study of Diverse Governing Groups](#),”

- Team diversity can improve information sharing and creativity, especially when team members are willing to explore their differences.¹⁰ The positive effects of diversity may be more likely when a group's tasks are complex and require innovation.¹¹

Some research also suggests that DEI can be beneficial to individuals within an agency. For example:

- Diversity managed through equitable practices may be associated with higher employee satisfaction. This effect may be especially apparent among employees of color, who are less likely to report high levels of satisfaction than their white counterparts.¹²
- Employees may be more satisfied with their pay when they feel salary and other rewards have been distributed equitably than when perceptions of inequity exist.¹³
- DEI may help strengthen community trust (see below), which facilitates cooperation and helps officers perform their jobs more safely and effectively.¹⁴
- Increased diversity among a police department can make the agency more willing to implement and embrace systemic changes,¹⁵ which are necessary in response to an ever-evolving society.
- When employees feel stereotyped or stigmatized at work, the agency is more likely to lose the talents of these employees due to employee turnover.¹⁶
- Organizations benefit when they allow and encourage employees to leverage unique aspects of their identity to contribute to organizational goals.¹⁷

According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, promoting DEI within a police agency can also benefit the community an agency serves.

when members of the public believe their law enforcement organizations represent them, understand them, and respond to them, and when communities perceive authorities as fair, legitimate, and accountable, it enhances trust in law enforcement, instills public confidence in government, and supports the integrity of democracy.

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 4, supp. 1 (2016): 28S–51S; Yves R.F. Guillaume et al., "[Harnessing Demographic Differences in Organizations: What Moderates the Effects of Workplace Diversity?](#)" *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 38, no. 2 (2017): 276–303; Aparna Joshi and Hyuntak Roh, "The Role of Context in Work Team Diversity Research: A Meta-analytic Review," *Academy of Management Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 599–627; David Pitts, "Diversity Management, Job Satisfaction, and Performance: Evidence from U.S. Federal Agencies," *Public Administration Review* 69, no. 2, (2009): 328–338; Günter K. Stahl et al., "Unraveling the Effects of Cultural Diversity in Teams: A Meta-analysis of Research on Multicultural Work Groups," *Journal of International Business Studies* 41, no. 4 (2010): 690–709; Daan van Knippenberg, Carsten K. W. De Dreu, and Astrid C. Homan, "Work Group Diversity and Group Performance: An Integrative Model and Research Agenda," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 6 (2004): 1008–1022; Graham Jones, Bernardita Chirino Chace, and Justin Wright, "[Cultural Diversity Drives Innovation: Modeling in the Global Pharmaceutical Industry](#)," *International Journal of Innovation Science* 13, no. 2 (2021): 133–144.

¹⁰ Ci-Rong Li et al., "A Multilevel Model of Team Cultural Diversity and Creativity: The Role of Climate for Inclusion," *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 51, no. 2 (June 2017): 163–179; Astrid C. Homan et al., "The Interplay of Diversity Training and Diversity Beliefs on Team Creativity in Nationality Diverse Teams," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 100, no. 5 (September 2015): 1456–1467.

¹¹ Hans van Dijk, Marloes L. van Engen, and Daan van Knippenberg, "Defying Conventional Wisdom: A Meta-analytical Examination of the Differences between Demographic and Job-Related Diversity Relationships with Performance," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 119, no. 1 (September 2012): 49.

¹² Pitts, "Diversity Management, Job Satisfaction, and Performance."

¹³ Paul D. Sweeney, "Distributive Justice and Pay Satisfaction: A Field Test of an Equity Theory Prediction," *Journal of Business and Psychology* 4, no. 3 (March 1990): 329–341.

¹⁴ Vanita Gupta and Jenny R. Yang, [Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement](#), report to the U.S. Department of Justice and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, October 2016.

¹⁵ Gupta and Yang, [Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement](#); Sklansky, "Not Your Father's Police Department."

¹⁶ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

¹⁷ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

*This trust is essential to defusing tension, to solving crimes, and to creating a system in which residents view law enforcement as fair and just.*¹⁸

DEI may help foster public trust, which may lead to positive outcomes. Some research supports these assertions. For example:

- The presence of minority groups within the police might help mitigate feelings of distrust among community members.¹⁹
- Increased diversity among a police department can help the agency be more responsive to the communities they serve.²⁰
- Although more research is needed to confirm, current theory suggests that a diverse police agency fosters a culture where employees are more likely to speak up against incidents of bias; this, in turn, enhances the integrity and ethical climate of the agency, which increases perceptions of legitimacy and public trust.²¹

III. PROCEDURES

For police agencies committed to DEI in their workplace,²² the following guidance may be helpful.

A. Needs Assessment

A first step for advancing DEI efforts in an agency is to collect data that will identify strengths and weaknesses of existing operations and allow leaders to articulate objectives linked to improvements.²³ There are many facets of diversity that an agency can consider measuring. Demographics such as race and gender of agency personnel are often the easiest to measure, but additional variables (for example, education, language) should also be considered if department resources exist. These measures should capture factors such as hiring, retention, turnover, promotion, and more based on departmental capacity.

Agencies should also survey their personnel to gauge perceptions of equity and inclusion. This data, too, can be used to identify objectives linked to strengthening the agency's diversity, equity, and inclusion. Data collection should be a continual process so that the agency can assess progress toward achieving goals. Where possible, agencies should consider appointing a DEI officer or designee in this role to continually monitor agency efforts, outcomes, and recommendations that follow.²⁴ The DEI officer should coordinate DEI improvement strategies and plans, continually monitor DEI efforts, and take an active role in implementing DEI practices.

¹⁸ Gupta and Yang, *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement*.

¹⁹ Joscha Legewie & Jeffrey Fagan, "[Group Threat, Police Officer Diversity and the Deadly Use of Police Force](#)" (Columbia Public Law Research Paper No. 14-512, 2016).

²⁰ Gupta and Yang, *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement*; Sklansky, "Not Your Father's Police Department."

²¹ Sounman Hong, "Representative Bureaucracy, Organizational Integrity, and Citizen Coproduction: Does an Increase in Police Ethnic Representativeness Reduce Crime?" *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 11–33.

²² Shore et al., "Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for Future Research."

²³ Joan C. Williams, Rachel M. Korn, and Asma Ghani, "[To Build a DEI Program That Works, You Need Metrics](#)," *Harvard Business Review*, October 12, 2022.

²⁴ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*. Note: Department resources will vary and may affect the structure of this position. While some agencies may choose to employ a full-time DEI officer, agencies with limited resources may structure the role of DEI officer as a part-time position with other additional responsibilities. Further, there are benefits and drawbacks both to appointing an existing employee of the department to the position of DEI officer and to hiring an external contractor to serve as DEI officer. Selecting a sworn officer from command staff to serve as the DEI officer can help garner respect and authority to ensure others in the agency take their role seriously. However, others might perceive more credibility from an external contractor who is better able to deliver an objective and unbiased assessment of the agency.

B. Leadership

Policing has traditionally been a field with hierarchical organizational structure, utilizing a clear chain of command. Thus, the success of any initiative in a police agency begins with its leaders. Those in leadership positions have the duty and responsibility to be organizational champions of DEI and demonstrate their commitment—through word and action—to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is the responsibility of personnel in leadership positions to lead by example in fostering an environment that is inclusive of and equitable to all agency employees.²⁵ However, although this responsibility begins with command staff, it applies to leaders at all levels—from the chief to the first-line sergeant and non-sworn professional supervisors, to the informal leaders who may become authorized leaders in the future.

In particular, the following guidance may be helpful to police leaders:

- **Make DEI a visible priority.** Command staff should incorporate the concepts of DEI into the stated values of the organization.
- **Stay informed.** Leaders at all levels should undergo continuous training and learning (see [Section III.H on Training](#)). Where possible, leaders should attend multiagency training with facilitators and students from outside of their own department to broaden their perspectives beyond their own immediate environment.
- **Handle conflict constructively.**²⁶ Conflict in an organization is inevitable and at times can even be beneficial, generating ideas for growth and innovation. Conflict stemming from personal bias and identity-based differences must not be tolerated, while conflict stemming from diverse perspectives should be embraced as opportunities for understanding. Leaders must make this distinction in any conflicts that arise and when considering the most appropriate course of action to follow.
- **Ensure all employees feel valued as individuals.**²⁷ No matter one's personal characteristics, their rank, or their function in the agency, all employees should know that their skills are valuable assets to the agency. It is a leader's responsibility to demonstrate to all employees that their role is important to the agency's overall mission.
- **Hold employees accountable for their decisions and their behavior.** Research indicates that systems of accountability encouraging responsible behavior are more effective at influencing behavior than are efforts that try to change attitudes.²⁸ Leaders must hold employees accountable both for appropriate decisions and for inappropriate conduct—and for the outcomes of such conduct, even if those outcomes were unintended. Leaders must be responsive to concerns expressed about discrimination, harassment, and unfair treatment by any employee for any reason. An agency that tolerates harassment and discrimination will make DEI efforts ineffective. Agencies must develop policies as to what behaviors constitute harassment and discrimination and procedural responses to harassment and discrimination and

²⁵ Eddy S. Ng and Greg J. Sears, "Walking the Talk on Diversity: CEO Beliefs, Moral Values, and the Implementation of Workplace Diversity Practices," *Journal of Business Ethics* 164 (2020): 437–450.

²⁶ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

²⁷ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

²⁸ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*; Emilio J. Castilla, "Accounting for the Gap: A Firm Study Manipulating Organizational Accountability and Transparency in Pay Decisions," *Organization Science* 26, no. 2 (2015): 311–333.

for prohibiting retaliation.²⁹ Further, for efforts to be effective, an agency must train employees on inclusivity and enforce the policies they put in place.³⁰

C. Organizational Culture

The culture of a police department is a fundamental influence on the behavior and attitudes of its employees, both sworn and non-sworn. The culture of an agency is shaped by its history, its leadership, its personnel, the training and education that both sworn and non-sworn personnel receive, the culture of the community the agency serves, and more. These influences can present difficult barriers to overcome.

While those in formal positions of leadership must demonstrate values of inclusivity and equity, all agency employees are responsible for upholding the same values in everyday interactions with their peers.³¹ These values must also be demonstrated when interacting with members of the community.³²

An organizational culture of valuing DEI is one in which employees feel safe to express their thoughts, ideas, and identities. The following practices can help create an inclusive organizational culture:

- **Emphasize the shared mission of the agency.**³³ All employees of the agency should be working toward the same common goal. Ensure the agency’s mission is emphasized in training, as well as visibly published in common areas to remind all employees of this shared identity.³⁴ For example, the mission of the IACP, as published on the association’s website, is to advance the policing profession through advocacy, research, outreach, and education.³⁵
- **Offer opportunities for all employees to interact with one another.**³⁶ This might include cross-team projects, virtual meetings, social events, community service events, and rotational opportunities. Often, employees come to know only those that they work closely or frequently with, which is only a small part of the agency. In an agency of multiple units and fixed shifts, providing opportunities for employees to interact more broadly can help break down artificial silos and reinforce the agency’s shared mission. It also offers employees the opportunity to practice navigating interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds, overcome discomfort, and strengthen cultural competence.
- **Address inequities in a code of ethics.**³⁷ Explicit guidance should be included in an agency’s code of ethics to promote equal opportunity across the agency and cultivate norms of inclusion. It cannot be assumed that unwritten expectations will be put into practice.

²⁹ For further information, see the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center documents on [Standards of Conduct](#), on [Harassment, Discrimination, and Unprofessional Conduct](#), on [Investigations of Allegations of Employee Misconduct](#), and on [Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](#).

³⁰ Jens Rennstam and Katie Rose Sullivan, “Peripheral Inclusion Through Informal Silencing and Voice: A Study of LGB Officers in the Swedish Police,” *Gender, Work, and Organization* 25, no. 2 (March 2018): 177–194. For additional information, see the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center guidance on [Harassment, Discrimination, and Unprofessional Conduct](#).

³¹ For additional information, see the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center guidance on [Harassment, Discrimination, and Unprofessional Conduct](#).

³² Sulaimon Giwa et al., “Workplace Experiences of Lesbian and Bisexual Female Police Officers in the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 1-2 (2022): 93–110.

³³ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

³⁴ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985).

³⁵ “[About the IACP](#)” (web page).

³⁶ Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger, *Performance through Diversity and Inclusion*.

³⁷ Sebawit Bishu, Sean McCandless, and Nicole Elias, “Gender in Emergency Services: Foundations for Greater Equity in Professional Codes of Ethics,” *Public Integrity* 23 (2021): 610–623.

- **Use inclusive language.** Inclusive language includes terms that are person-first (for instance, saying “a person who is blind or who has a vision-based disability” rather than “a blind person”).³⁸ Appropriate terms might depend on how the identifier is phrased, the specific population to which an individual belongs, or a person’s own identity preference. Using inclusive language can aid in transforming the perceptions of personnel to place greater value on diverse attributes. Additionally, it will reinforce the concept that everyone is accepted, and all identities are recognized.³⁹
- **Incorporate DEI into existing policies and procedures.** DEI is not achieved through any single policy but should be incorporated into all aspects of an organization. Examples of practices in support of DEI include allowing uniform accommodations for pregnancy, offering gender-neutral washrooms in the police station, and ensuring that the agency’s grooming policy allows personnel to adhere to their preferred religious or cultural standards.
- **Ensure department traditions reflect the culture of inclusion.** Department traditions are important for celebrating success and building team cohesion, but it is important that any tradition be considered for inclusivity. Such traditions should be celebrations that bolster feelings of inclusion among colleagues without making anyone feel excluded.

D. Recruitment⁴⁰

Efforts to achieve DEI start with recruiting diverse applicants for both sworn and non-sworn positions. To appeal to a wide range of applicants, departments should employ varied and adaptable recruitment strategies⁴¹ to attract potential applicants and implement support systems for potential applicants. Further, even though individual employees may be designated as “recruiters,” it is imperative to remember that every employee serves as a recruiter through their interactions with the community.

Some ways to reach a greater range of community members include, but are not limited to, the following:⁴²

- **Select recruiters who exemplify DEI.** When assigning officers to recruitment roles (including background investigators and anyone involved in the selection process), select officers who demonstrate respect for DEI. Recruiters should be emotionally intelligent and culturally competent⁴³ and should strive to manage their biases; they should seek these qualities in agency applicants, as well. Recruiters should receive training on the diverse groups within their community to strengthen their own cultural competence during interactions with the community.⁴⁴
- **Strengthen relationships between the agency and the diverse communities they serve.** An agency’s efforts to strengthen relationships with diverse communities should not just target potential applicants, but also the friends, family, and colleagues of those potential applicants. The opinions of these people may be

³⁸ For additional guidance, see American Psychological Association (APA), [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Inclusive Language Guidelines](#), 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: APA, 2023).

³⁹ For more information, see the American Psychological Association’s [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Inclusive Language Guidelines](#), which also includes guidance on avoiding microaggressions in conversations.

⁴⁰ See the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center documents on [Recruiting and Hiring](#).

⁴¹ Thomas S. Whetstone, John C. Reed, and Phillip C. Turner, “Recruiting: A Comparative Study of the Recruiting Practices of State Police Agencies,” *International Journal of Police Science and Management* 8, no. 1 (March 2006): 52–66.

⁴² Gupta and Yang, [Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement](#).

⁴³ Terry L. Cross et al., “[Chapter II: The Cultural Competence Continuum](#),” in *Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Mental Health, Child and Adolescent Service System Program, 1989).

⁴⁴ Thomas S. Whetstone, John C. Reed Jr., and Phillip C. Turner, “Recruiting: A Comparative Study of the Recruiting Practices of State Police Agencies,” *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 8, no. 1 (2006): 52–66.

influential to the potential applicant. A trusting relationship with the entire community is necessary for outreach to be effective. Police leaders should ensure agency participation in community events; this can enhance community trust while also building relationships with underrepresented communities. Similarly, police leaders should ensure agencies establish relationships with the leaders and influencers of various community groups; doing so can help the agency earn trust from that group, which may spread to trust from the greater community the group members are a part of.

- **Focus recruiting messages to underrepresented groups.** This includes spreading advertisements and awareness of job openings to locations where members of each population within a community reside, work, shop, and spend time, rather than restricting awareness to locations frequented mostly or entirely by majority populations.⁴⁵ The identification of these locations could come from feedback from the current officers who represent various underrepresented populations. Those officers could also help the agency develop culturally appropriate targeted marketing materials by sharing what drew them to the department. Additionally, it is important to understand specific cultural barriers in police work and how to counter those barriers. Police leaders should ensure that the images and words used in their agency's advertisements appeal to various population groups. This applies to all forms of advertising media (print, television, radio, social media, etc.).
- **Highlight all aspects of the job.** Police spend most of their time providing service and guardianship to the community. A police officer's tasks may change daily, and portraying a variety of tasks in recruiting materials can help to attract more diverse candidates. Leaders might identify aspects that make their department unique and consider highlighting these aspects in recruitment efforts.⁴⁶ Some research indicates that highlighting the personal challenges the position brings may be more effective at attracting women and individuals of color.⁴⁷
- **Convey the range of roles and career paths the agency offers.** Policing offers a wide variety of roles and opportunities. Some examples include animal control officers, bike patrol, crime scene investigators, detectives, intelligence analysts, and administrative staff. Somebody interested in science may find a role as an evidence technician appealing, while someone who wants to mentor youth may be interested in becoming a school resource officer (SRO). While available roles will vary from one police department to another, recruiters should share all potential career paths policing can offer to appeal to the broadest population.
- **Be clear and transparent about minimum hiring standards.** Share hiring criteria with potential applicants, including any minimum standards they must meet to be qualified. For example, many agencies have qualification standards in the areas of physical health, psychological fitness, language fluency, criminal history, and drug use. Similarly, clarify which qualifications are strict eligibility requirements and which are preferred but not mandatory.
- **Provide preparation assistance.** Be clear about how potential applicants can prepare to meet those standards. Many police agencies provide application support such as courses and practice exams. Connect interested applicants with current employees for short-term coaching on the hiring process.
- **Partner with educational institutions.** High schools and institutions of higher education offer various opportunities for attracting applicants.

⁴⁵ Charles P. Wilson, Shirley A. Wilson, and Mary Gwann, "Identifying Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement Agencies," *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice* 14, no. 4 (2016): 231–253.

⁴⁶ Whetstone et al., "Recruiting."

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Linos, "[More than Public Service: A Field Experiment on Job Advertisements and Diversity in the Police](#)," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28, no. 1 (January 2018): 67–85.

- a. Recruitment efforts designed to inform high school students about careers in policing can include SROs and youth police academies. SROs offer an opportunity for police to build a relationship with the student body and can influence students' perceptions of policing.⁴⁸ Youth police academies offer students an opportunity to sample police experience, learn topics taught at the official police academy, perform drills, and attract their interest.
 - b. Universities and colleges may have career portals specific to their institutions that students use to search for jobs and opportunities. Police leaders could post agency openings on these portals to attract recruits.
 - c. Internship opportunities can be made available to students at higher education institutions. Making such opportunities available to a broader range of academic pursuits, i.e., beyond criminal justice, at a variety of universities will also broaden the pool of individuals applying and taking an interest in policing.
- **Attend community events.** Consider attending civic meetings, church functions, local festivals, public gatherings, school activities, and other community events to reach diverse individuals and integrate them into the department.
 - **Use a variety of methods to advertise vacancies.** Methods of recruitment should include printed material, personal interaction, social media, online advertisements, and other forms of communication. Sharing information about job openings on social media platforms will allow agencies to both share new opportunities and appeal to demographic groups that may not be reached through traditional flyer promotion or partnerships with educational institutions. Job openings should also be posted on the department website and/or government website for the jurisdiction the department serves and online job-search platforms. Efforts should also be made to reach applicants who have limited access to technology. Information on how to apply can be provided on printed flyers or brochures, and media such as television and radio can be utilized. In many cases, one mode such as printed material can be used to attract interested applicants, and direct the applicant to a website or other resource for additional information.⁴⁹
 - **When feasible, fund academy training.** Requiring candidates to fund their own recruit training may present a financial burden to some, making the job unattainable to candidates who would otherwise be qualified. If the department does not have the resources to pay for academy training and must rely on candidates to do so, seek grant funding that can be used for training scholarships for applicants unable to self-pay.⁵⁰
 - **Develop a pool of interested applicants.** These methods are geared toward getting job information to people who may be interested in the police profession. Police leaders should also invest in efforts to develop a pool of interested applicants to their agency. Programs such as community-police athletic leagues, junior academies, and cadet programs, can serve to produce an interest in policing on the part of individuals or groups who may not otherwise have considered policing as a career.

⁴⁸ Deanna N. Devlin and Mateus Rennó Santos, "The Association between Police Officers in Schools and Students' Longer Term Perceptions of Police as Procedurally Just," *Criminology & Public Policy* 21 (May 2022): 273–301.

⁴⁹ Wilson, Wilson, and Gwann, "Identifying Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement Agencies."

⁵⁰ Consider a required retention period for candidates who received scholarship funding. This will promote retention and help ensure greater return on the agency's investment.

E. Hiring

Potential applicants may face barriers when applying and throughout the hiring process due to factors stemming from their identities as members of minority groups. Below are some ways to promote the equitable consideration of all applications.⁵¹

- **Ensure the qualifications specified in the hiring process are necessary and valid to perform the job.** Out-of-date, irrelevant, or unnecessary employment qualifications may block applications from underrepresented groups who could otherwise serve the agency well.⁵² Develop application assessment processes that provide for a holistic view of the skills and strengths of the applicants—including the consideration of their life experiences. Evaluate low-level criminal records for all applicants on a case-by-case basis (rather than as an automatic exclusionary factor), taking into consideration the environment in which the applicants grew up and the challenges they may have faced.⁵³ If permissible by applicable law, consider allowing applicants who are non-citizens of the country (who are legally documented with permission to work in the country) to apply for policing jobs.⁵⁴ Consider, also, whether some skills can be substituted for others. For example, additional language skills or advanced degrees might offset a lack of experience in other areas that can be trained.
- **Ensure that any testing instruments used to screen job applicants are reliable and valid.**⁵⁵ Ensure they measure what they purport to measure and are not culturally biased. This includes psychological examinations, which should be administered by culturally competent mental health professionals.
- **Screen applicants for awareness and acceptance of diversity, emotional intelligence, and cultural competence.** Such individuals will help an agency produce a culture that values DEI.⁵⁶ Consideration could be given to the extent to which the individuals have had constructive, positive interactions with individuals from diverse populations. In interviews, applicants could be asked how they would respond to certain scenarios that are written in such a way as to identify biases. Background investigators should ask references during interviews about evidence of bias or discrimination. For instance, “How does the applicant get along with or work with others of different races, sexual orientations, ethnic or cultural backgrounds?”, and “Have you ever heard this applicant use derogatory language in reference to people of another race, culture, or sexual orientation?” While many skills can be improved with training, character traits are more enduring and are essential to assess at the time of hire.

⁵¹ Some jurisdictions may have more stringent hiring processes as codified by applicable civil service laws. Always ensure agency processes adhere to applicable laws and regulations.

⁵² Gupta and Yang, [Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement](#).

⁵³ Mike Maciag, “[Where Police Don’t Mirror Communities and Why It Matters](#),” *Governing*, August 19, 2015.

⁵⁴ Alan Gomez, “[Police Departments Hiring Immigrants as Officers](#),” *USA Today*, updated March 21, 2015.

⁵⁵ There is evidence that some assessment instruments used in psychological exams are biased, and there is the potential for bias in how examiners interpret responses. See Tom Avril, “[Racial Disparity in Police Screening Linked to One-Test Method](#),” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 22, 2016; Howard N. Garb, “Race bias and gender bias in the diagnosis of psychological disorders,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 90 (December 2021), 102087; Matthew J. Monnot et al., “Racial Bias in Personality Assessment: Using the MMPI-2 to Predict Psychiatric Diagnoses of African American and Caucasian Chemical Dependency Inpatients,” *Psychological Assessment* 21, no. 2 (2009): 137–151; Matthew C. Fadus et al., “Unconscious Bias and the Diagnosis of Disruptive Behavior Disorders and ADHD in African American and Hispanic Youth,” *American Psychiatry* 44 (2020): 95–102. For additional guidance specific to psychological evaluations, see the IACP Police Psychological Services Section, [Preemployment Psychological Evaluation Guidelines](#); see also the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS), [International Declaration on Core Competences in Professional Psychology](#).

⁵⁶ Wilson, Wilson, and Gwann, “Identifying Barriers to Diversity in Law Enforcement Agencies.”

- **Use a cross-sectional panel of trained employees in the screening and selection process.** Diverse perspectives from multiple viewpoints allow for a more comprehensive assessment of the candidate. This applies to all parties involved in all phases of the hiring process (hiring manager, human resources, background investigators, etc.). Ensure key personnel are trained on how implicit biases can impact the screening process.

F. Retention

A factor as important as hiring diverse people is providing an environment in which their diversity is valued as an asset. Equity and inclusivity are essential to retaining diverse personnel. While traditional policing culture often placed a high value in cohesion but a low value in diversity (assimilation),⁵⁷ a culture of inclusivity values *both* diversity and cohesion and sees DEI as important to establishing a cohesive team. Some research has documented that diversity and inclusion promote employee well-being and organizational health,⁵⁸ and they are linked to employee retention.⁵⁹ Equity within an agency produces similar results; there is evidence that organizational justice (which includes the concept of “fairness”) within a police department is related to organizational commitment.⁶⁰ Further, fostering an inclusive environment can make employees more comfortable requesting appropriate accommodations to help them do their job better or to remain at their job when faced with personal conflicts.

Some actions that police leaders who want to foster a strong DEI culture could implement to increase retention in their police force are as follows:⁶¹

- **Select field training officers for new employees who value DEI and who instill those values in the employees they train.** Consider multiple factors when pairing a field training officer (FTO) with the new employee. If resources exist, encourage new employees to train with multiple FTOs and ensure diversity across FTOs in their individual characteristics and perspectives.
- **Provide opportunities for mentorship.**⁶² Mentoring increases commitment to the organization.⁶³ Mentorship allows experienced officers to share what they have learned in their time on the force and help newer officers adapt to both their role as a police officer and the culture of the department they work for. Additionally, a bond with an established officer can connect the new recruit with other officers within the organization, outside of new recruits, allowing them to build more connections within the force. These ties can result in a greater sense of community and belongingness experienced by the new officer, thereby providing more reasons to stay and fewer reasons to leave. While mentoring can serve all agency employees, it can be particularly valuable for producing full inclusion on the part of traditionally under-represented groups.

⁵⁷ Sklansky, “Not Your Father’s Police Department: Making Sense of the New Demographics of Law Enforcement”; Workman-Stark, “Inclusion Starts with ‘I’? The Missing Ingredient in Leading Change.”

⁵⁸ Kendra L. Smith, *Beyond Compliance: Recruitment and Retention of Underrepresented Populations in Local Government* (Washington, DC: International City/County Management Association, 2019).

⁵⁹ Quinetta Roberson, Ann Marie Ryan, and Belle Rose Ragins, “The Evolution and Future of Diversity at Work,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 102, no. 3 (2017): 483–499.

⁶⁰ James D. Carr and Sheila Royo Maxwell, “Police Officers’ Perceptions of Organizational Justice and Their Trust in the Public,” *Police Practice and Research* 19, no. 4 (2018): 365–379.

⁶¹ Gupta and Yang, *Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement*.

⁶² Gabriele Suboch, Colleen Harrington, and John House, “Why Do Female and Minority Police Officers Remain in Law Enforcement,” *Race, Gender & Class* 24, no. 3–4 (2017): 100–118. See also Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev, “[Why Diversity Programs Fail](#),” *Harvard Business Review* (July–August 2016): 1–8.

⁶³ Davis M. Robinson and Thomas G. Reio Jr., “Benefits of Mentoring African-American Men,” *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 27, no. 4 (2012): 406–421.

- **Ensure training is equitably offered.** To the extent practical and subject to agency needs, training should be equitably distributed and accessible to all who are interested, so that all employees have equal opportunities to pursue education in topics that interest them. While there may be eligibility requirements for certain types of training, those requirements should be related to the training content or job function and should not systematically exclude any groups of individuals. Similarly, employees should be empowered to seek out training that they would like to attend, rather than solely relying on supervisors to nominate their participation. Training can include formal education programs as well as cross-training and rotational opportunities on the job.⁶⁴ Providing employees opportunities and information about how to participate in training can help them to feel valued, to inspire further learning and career growth, and to see the police department as a place they can achieve their goals.
- **Offer incentives for professional growth.** Agencies should provide recognition of the skills an employee provides to their department to demonstrate the value of the employee and remain competitive with other employment/career opportunities the employee may be considering. This could include salary increases for educational achievements or acquiring new language skills, but it could also include nonmonetary compensation such as badges and pins of recognition, department ceremonies, or public announcements.
- **Provide reasonable accommodations for work-life balance.** The 24-7 nature of policing—while necessary to protect public safety—can produce barriers to attracting and retaining some individuals. For instance, in many families, women are still considered the primary caregiver for children and/or aging parents, and work schedules may conflict with caregiver responsibilities. Work schedules may impact obligations outside of work such as caregiver responsibilities and may also affect employees' health and well-being. Thus, flexible scheduling, when possible, should accommodate work-life balance to help to attract and retain women and other underrepresented employees. Although schedule flexibility may not be possible in all police agencies, evaluate the feasibility of other options such as job-sharing programs, and make sure your agency's policies for employee leave allow employees to take time off of work without any fear of negative repercussions.⁶⁵ Policing can be a high-stress occupation, and encouraging work-life balance for all employees can reduce the likelihood of burnout, thereby improving retention.

G. Promotions

The concept of equity requires that promotions be awarded in a nondiscriminatory fashion that recognizes applicants for the skills and experience they bring to the position. An agency should aspire not just to bring diversity into the ranks, but to move that diversity up the ranks by ensuring bias-free processes.

As outlined above, opportunities for training and professional development must be provided equitably. Such training, education, and experience may have a great impact on promotional opportunities. To create or leave in place barriers that prevent officers of minority populations from having the same opportunities or achieving the same potential as officers of majorities would be discriminatory and undermine efforts toward achieving DEI.

- **Establish clear criteria for promotion eligibility.** Communicate these criteria to all employees of the department. While years of service may be one factor within these criteria, it should not be the only determining factor. While promoting individuals based on years of service with the department could be perceived as an equitable form of advancement, given the diverse pathways through which officers may join the agency and the experiences and backgrounds that an officer may gain while on the force or prior to joining, it is important that agency tenure not be the determining factor for promotion. Rather, individuals being considered for promotion should be considered holistically.

⁶⁴ Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev, *Getting to Diversity: What Works and What Doesn't* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2022).

⁶⁵ Dobbin and Kalev, *Getting to Diversity*.

- **Ensure candidates for promotions are assessed using a diverse panel of reviewers.** Reviewers should represent multiple units or functional areas across the department as well as various ranks and positions, and their individual backgrounds and characteristics should vary. Police leaders should consider including someone from outside the department who does not know the candidates to be part of the panel as well. Diverse perspectives from multiple viewpoints allow for a more objective and comprehensive assessment of the candidate. Ensure key personnel are trained in how implicit biases can impact the promotion process.
- **Ensure any assessment instruments used are reliable and valid.** Just as is the case for assessments used during the hiring phase, assessments for promotion should measure skills and abilities related to the position of promotion, should be designed in a way to minimize cultural bias, and should be standardized with objective ratings criteria.
- **Include questions related to DEI.** Some agencies include behavioral event questions that invite candidates to describe actual situations involving DEI that they've handled. Including these types of questions in promotional assessments communicates that DEI is an important value to the agency.

H. Training

Achieving a culture and promoting practices that support DEI requires training at all levels. The goals of effective training should include both a commitment to DEI as well as skills for supporting DEI (appropriate to the rank/responsibilities of the employee). The skills taught should encompass practices to promote inclusion, to ensure equity, and to enhance communication and collaboration across diverse teams.⁶⁶ Training focused on the value of DEI for officer and agency performance tends to be more effective than training focused solely on legality and liability.⁶⁷

The effects of DEI training vary and depend on context, design, and implementation. DEI training is more effective when it is integrated into other efforts than when it is offered as a stand-alone session.⁶⁸ Whenever possible, DEI experts recommend departments consider infusing training on the topics listed below into other training courses.

- **Bias** – Implicit bias training has been promoted primarily as a way to ensure equitable treatment of community members, but the science and concepts have equal applicability to interactions within a department and, thus, such training is essential for producing a DEI culture.⁶⁹ Emphasis should be given to the potential *outcomes* of implicit bias, as noble intentions can sometimes lead to unintended harms. Thus, it is important that officers understand how their behavior might be influenced by their human biases outside of their conscious awareness and despite their good intentions. This training should include skills for reducing and managing biases.
- **Diversity/Inclusion** – Sworn and non-sworn personnel throughout the agency should be educated on the value that DEI brings to them as individuals, to the agency, and to the community they serve. Because research examining the learning/cognitive styles of police show that “the vast majority of police are objective, thinking types”⁷⁰ who prefer practical solutions to problems, the training should include reference to [the research shared earlier in this document](#) showing the value that DEI brings to a

⁶⁶ Organizational culture can also foster—or inhibit—effective teamwork. See Daniel Coyle, *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups* for further guidance on building a successful team; Hussain Alhejji et al., “Diversity Training Programme Outcomes: A Systematic Review,” *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2016): 95–149.

⁶⁷ Dobbin & Kalev, *Getting to Diversity*.

⁶⁸ Katerina Bezrukova et al., “A Meta-analytical Integration of Over 40 Years of Research on Diversity Training Evaluation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 142, no. 11 (November 2016): 1227–1274.

⁶⁹ See the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center resources on [Bias-Free Policing](#).

⁷⁰ Stephen M. Hennessy and James R. Delung, *Cultural awareness and racial sensitivity training for police in the United States: A look at effective methodologies. Law Enforcement Personality Profile* (Palm Bay, FL: TD Publishers, 2015).

workplace. The training should convey skills for valuing diversity and building inclusion that are appropriate to the rank/responsibilities of the trainee.

- **Cultural competence** – As with bias training, cultural competence training has primarily been advocated for its value in enhancing the effectiveness of police interactions with members from its diverse community members. But this topic, too, has great value for producing effective interactions *inside* an agency that is committed to DEI. Such training should highlight the value to officers and to the agency of culturally competent interactions within the agency and provide the officers with skills appropriate for their rank/responsibilities within the agency.
- **Emotional intelligence** – Possessing social and emotional intelligence, knowledge, skills, and abilities is essential to both personal and organizational success. Individuals who understand emotions in themselves and in others will be better able to process, manage, and direct those emotions more effectively. Just like procedural justice has been shown to improve police relations with the community,⁷¹ the same principles of fairness, voice, impartiality, and transparency⁷² can be delivered through emotional intelligence—both in interactions with agency colleagues and with community members.
- **Accountability** – Training on active bystandership and the duty to intervene encourages peer intervention to prevent harm. Not limited to uses of force, the same principles also apply to holding fellow employees accountable to the principles of DEI.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper defines key terms; explains the interdependence of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and highlights the impact of these factors on the performance of individuals as well as the overall organization and its relationship with the community. It provides police leaders and others with information related to DEI in policing, actions that might be helpful for fostering DEI, and related research findings.

The successful stewardship of a police agency's DEI initiatives can help address challenges facing police administrators such as community-police relations, the recruitment and retention of police officers, and other leadership and management challenges. Building an agency that values DEI is a multifaceted, long-term endeavor that starts with demonstrated commitment from top leadership. It requires attention to the organizational culture; to leadership at all levels; and to policies and practices related to recruitment, selection, retention, promotion, and training. It also requires attention to goals, implementation strategies, and measures of impact. While success in one or two of these areas is unlikely to create desired outcomes, success in a critical mass of these elements can support desired outcomes through a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive police workforce.

⁷¹ Tom R. Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law*, revised ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁷² Tom R. Tyler, "Social Justice: Outcome and Procedure," *International Journal of Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2000): 117–125.

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Every effort has been made by the IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this document incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no model policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives, and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities, among other factors. Readers outside of the United States should note that, while this document promotes procedures reflective of a democratic society, its legal basis follows United States Supreme Court rulings and other federal laws and statutes. Law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions, and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered and should therefore consult their agency's legal advisor before implementing any policy.

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