

# The Role of HR in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

By Viva Asmelash Consulting



VIVA ASMELASH

# Today's Outcomes

## YOU:

- ❑ Have safe space to explore their personal identities, and places on the privilege spectrum
- ❑ Understand the role of HR in creating inclusive and equitable cultures
- ❑ Have the opportunity to identify key barriers (and antidotes) to true equity in public sector
- ❑ Feel you have tangible actions you can take towards creating DEI strategy, either within their orgs and/or as a collective group

# Shared Agreements

- ❑ Keep it confidential
- ❑ Lean into courage
- ❑ One person, one mic
- ❑ Practice humility
- ❑ **Move up, move back**
- ❑ Show grace
- ❑ Leave power dynamics at the door
- ❑ Approach with curiosity



## 1. *Our individual lens:*

How do we each identify ourselves with key societal markers of privilege?

- Gender identity
- Race/ethnicity
- Nationality/country of origin
- Sexuality
- Religion
- First language spoken
- Socio-economic status
- Ability



# What's the role of HR in equity work?

- ❖ **Gatekeepers** for the employee experience
  - **How you engage the workforce**
- ❖ **Moral compass** of the agency
  - **How you engage agency/org leadership**



## 2. Employee engagement data & why it matters

- ❑ Investment
- ❑ Culture of feedback
- ❑ Accountability



# Employee engagement surveys: the stats

- ❑ Overall, companies with high employee engagement are 21% more profitable.
- ❑ In fact, a Gallup study shows that highly engaged workplaces saw 41% lower absenteeism.
- ❑ Disengaged employees cost organizations around \$450-550 billion each year.



# 3. Start asking the tough questions

- ❑ Who do your policies really protect?
- ❑ Do you regularly engage employees about their experience?
- ❑ What has any past employee education and engagement on inclusion looked like (either formal or informal)?
- ❑ Has any concrete data (like employee surveys) been collected since the pandemic began?



# 4. Start recognizing and naming key barriers

## What is masking language?

- ❑ **Masking language:** Used by a dominant group to mask a social reality, and to support and maintain the status quo when it benefits them. Examples might include:
  - ❑ “We should stay neutral”
  - ❑ “Politics shouldn't be a part of the workplace”
  - ❑ “Talking about this makes it a bigger issue”

# Creating truly anti-racist workplaces

Characteristics of white dominant culture that can show up in workplaces:

- ❑ **“Only one right way”:** The belief that there is one right way to do things. Once people are introduced to ‘the right way,’ they will willingly adopt it; when someone does not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them
- ❑ **Either/or thinking:** Closely linked to perfectionism. Perfectionists tend to aspire to a singular view or end goal, which makes it difficult to learn from mistakes, take feedback, and deal productively with those who do not agree
- ❑ **Paternalism:** In a paternalistic organization, decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it



# Discussion Questions

What would an equitable and inclusive workplace look like in this field?

What do you think is the current culture in your agency related to equity and inclusion?

What are barriers that you or others experience in creating diverse and inclusive teams?

What are steps you can take now as an individual?  
As a collective professional group?

What would make you feel comfortable in having these discussions with your teams?

What resources or training would support your ongoing efforts?



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- ❑ Feel you have tangible, immediate steps you can take

# What's next? The how.

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VIVA ASMELASH

Bringing it back to **values**.



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