

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration



# EXPLORE SCIENCE

## NASA's PI Launchpad

### *DEI and Inclusive Leadership*

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Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility  
**NASA Science Mission Directorate**

# Session Overview

- Key Terminology
- Inclusive Leadership
  - Creating an Inclusive Workplace
  - Communication
  - Sustaining an Inclusive Culture

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# Key Terminology

Terms have been tossed around so much these past couple of years!

- **Diversity:** NASA defines diversity as “the entire universe of differences and similarities.” This definition specifically encompasses the full variety of communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of all people. It includes individuals from underserved communities, meaning populations and geographic communities that share a particular characteristic and have been denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.
- **Equity:** NASA defines equity as “the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment.” NASA is committed to advancing societal equity and removing barriers for the underserved and underrepresented within the Agency and throughout the world.

We've seen them  
so much that  
we've become  
desensitized to  
them.

- **Inclusion:** NASA defines define inclusion as “the full participation, belonging, and contribution of organizations and individuals.” This definition of inclusion specifically involves the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of employees of all backgrounds to identify and incorporate distinct viewpoints and gaps that will enable mission success.
- **Accessibility:** NASA defines accessibility as “the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.” Our definition specifically includes the provision of reasonable accommodations, equal employment opportunity, and inclusive participation for people with disabilities. By ensuring all individuals have accessibility to and at NASA, we best serve the public and ensure everyone has equitable opportunities to contribute to our mission success.

And related  
terms are  
sometimes not  
considered at all.

- **Social Identity:** A person's sense of who they are based on their group affiliations
- **Power:** The degree of control over resources
- **Privilege:** Unearned advantages that are restricted to certain groups



Equality



Equity

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# Inclusive Leadership



# What Makes DEI a Sticky Topic for Leaders?

- Pressure to have the “right answer”
- Not given the benefit of doubt
- Managing team members with differing viewpoints
- Reconciling personal beliefs with professional responsibilities
- Being human, when/if we respond to attacks

# The Fear of Being Attacked

- Chemical responses in the brain
- Physiological responses in the body
- Fight, flight, fawn, or freeze

*All of these can impact responsiveness to colleagues*





# **Creating an Inclusive Workplace**

# Inclusive Culture

*An environment of psychological safety that creates a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and belonging for all members, especially those from historically-excluded groups.*

As a leader, here is  
what we can  
influence:



# What Does This Mean?

- **Your consistent actions earn you trust** among the groups you are seeking to support
- **You take perspective**, listen deeply and think through systems—and the experiences they may create for others
- **You encourage high performance and** ensure that everyone has the appropriate tools to do so



# **Communication -** *Social Identities*



# Our Identities Can Influence Our Communication

- Gender stereotypes
- Racial stereotypes
- Age and generational differences
- Class and socioeconomic status
- Native language and culture
- Religious affiliation
- Disability status



# Setting the Scene for Effective Communication Starts With...

- **Awareness** of your own communication style. How does your identity impact how you communicate and show up?
- **Consideration** of environment and context. What power dynamics are at play in this setting? What is the recipient's own communication style?



# **Communication -** *Giving Feedback*

# Feedback Situations

Post-Event

Debriefing a discreet situation, feedback related to an incident or event, proximate/in the moment

Developmental

Exploring patterns of behavior, observations over time, structured, may not be related to a discrete event



# Common Pitfalls

- Focuses on past mistakes
- Feels like punishment or control
- Abstract or unclear; lacks substance or focus on action
- Too positive or inauthentic
- Inconsistent, delayed, or distorted

# Building an Inclusive Feedback Practice

- Get consent and set norms from the beginning
- Make it a consistent practice, positive + critical
- Behavior-based, actionable, + connected to impact/outcomes
- Solicit focused feedback for yourself regularly





# **Sustaining an Inclusive Culture**

# Leaders are Culture Custodians

- Leaders establish the vision that influences and sustains the real culture of an organization
- Leaders are key reason why people stay or leave
- Leaders have a greater negative impact on marginalized groups

# Ways to Sustain an Inclusive Culture

## At an interpersonal level

- Debias your own hiring
- Reshape culture norms by interrupting interpersonal bias when you see it
- Exhibit allyship to actively support those who may be less privileged
- Support DEI policies, processes, and events

## At an organizational level

- Standardize inclusive hiring practices and expectations
- Commit to onboarding, mentorship, and sponsorship
- Support DEI initiatives
- Continue to promote DEI intentionally in progression and development



# Additional Resources

- [Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility at NASA SMD](#)
- [Best Practices for Diversity and Inclusion in STEM Education and Research – The White House](#)
- [The Key to Inclusive Leadership – HBR](#)
- [What Is Inclusive Leadership? – Indeed](#)



danke 謝謝 ngiyabonga  
tesekkür ederim  
gracias  
thank you  
dziękuje  
sukriya kop khun krap  
go raibh maith agat  
arigato dakujem  
merci  
obrigado  
спасибо  
terima kasih  
감사합니다