DESTINATIONS
INTERNATIONAL

2023-2024

Implementing Inclusive Practices Through a Welcoming and Belonging Lens

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

It is my absolute pleasure to share Destination International's updated social inclusion strategic roadmap with our members and the travel and tourism industry at large.

As an organization we have adapted to the changing needs of the industry by making a conscious effort to listen to the challenges our members are working through to create places that welcome people of all backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. We have also taken the time to learn about member success stories – how they have successfully implemented inclusive practices in their destination and within their organizations. The intent behind these conversations is to ensure we provide support that is realistic, achievable, and creates true impact within your communities.

Our commitment to social inclusion is long term, and we have come a long way since 2017 when this work was first prioritized as a strategic goal. For members who are new to our community, I'd like to highlight notable milestones that serve as a foundation for our work in social inclusion:

- **July 2018:** Hosted our first Diversity & Inclusion meeting during our Annual Convention in Anaheim, CA.

- **August 2018:** Announced a member-wide call for committee participation to form our first Diversity & Inclusion Task Force.

- **December 2018:** In partnership with Association Forum, hosted a dialogue with key industry leaders from the association and CVB communities to brainstorm potential strategies to cultivate a welcoming environment for meeting and event attendees.

- **February 2019:** Launched a study to collect a snapshot of racial and workforce diversity examining demographics of board leadership, executive, staff, and some general policies.

- **March 2019:** In collaboration with the Philadelphia CVB/PHL Diversity, convened a Meetings & Conventions Leaders Roundtable designed to guide industry leaders through the process of developing a common language and vision for diversity and inclusion within the Meetings and Convention industries.

- **November 2020:** We released our first Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Study on Destination Organizations examining overall demographics and perceptions on EDI within our member destination organizations.

- **2021:** Released our first EDI strategy roadmap highlighting the strategic priorities for the association.

- **February 2022:** Hired our first Chief Diversity Officer, Sophia Hyder Hock.

- **July 2022:** Launched the EDI Assessment Tool for destination members – a tool that is first of its kind in the industry and created by destination members to establish standards and benchmarks related to social inclusion on an annual basis.

- **November 2022 – April 2023:** Pilot tested our social inclusion services by conducting organizational assessments and leading inclusion workshops for destination organizations.

- **April 2023:** Released our new working definition of social inclusion through a welcoming and belonging lens available on our website for any organization to use and adapt.

- **April 2023:** Aligned our social inclusion work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

- **May 2023:** Revisited language and accountability measurements from our CEO EDI Pledge and relaunched as an Inclusive Leadership Pledge to create a stronger ecosystem for organizations to learn and implement this work in ways that align with their environment.

- **June 2023:** Officially released our social inclusion services to serve our members in the industry. Finding trusted professional development and services tailored for our industry was a critical need we identified in 2022 and piloted in 2023.

- **July 2023:** Release of our updated strategic plan, aligned with member conversations and feedback.

- **October 2023:** Launch of our inaugural EDI Summit in Little Rock, Arkansas.

As you can see, our progress has been personal, gradual, and effective. We are investing in long term strategies that have an economic and social impact for our industry and our communities. Your commitment is necessary to create these opportunities that welcome people of all backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities and to create spaces that incorporate a sense of belonging for all.

I encourage you to read and sign our inclusive leadership pledge, to hold your organizations accountable through our assessment tool, to learn more about our services as you need them, and to reach out to Sophia if you have questions, ideas, or if you would like to share a success story.

We are committed to being your trusted resource and to supporting your strategic goals.

Lastly, I would like to thank Sonya Bradley and Timothy Bush for your leadership as co-chairs of the EDI committee and the entire EDI committee for your time and dedication to this important work.

We invite your feedback and look forward to working together to create a unified industry where we thrive together through mutual respect.

Sincerely,

Don Welsh, President & CEO
Destinations International

NOTE FROM PARADISE ADVERTISING

When Paradise was founded in 2002, the founder set out to build more than an agency – he set out to help people and build a better world. For more than two decades, we've done just that – thanks to team members who are deeply committed to our mission of positively impacting the people and communities we serve around the world.

We're proud of our reputation as a leading creative, brand marketing, and strategic communications partner for cities, municipalities, and destinations. And we're even more proud of our work as purpose-driven, mindful, and kind stewards who care about growing brands, businesses, economies, and communities.

We are change-agents, working to fulfill current generation needs without compromising future generation needs by cultivating a balance of economic growth, environmental care, and social well-being.

As your partner, our pledge to Destinations International is to:

- Preserve and honor your History and Heritage.
- Promote and protect your Commitment to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.
- Cultivate and advance a Responsible Resident and Visitor Economy.
- Safeguard and strengthen your Sustainability and Regenerative Tourism Efforts.
- Develop, enhance, and evolve the EDI and Social Inclusion brand positioning.

Paradise has a purpose higher than itself.

We're about helping you realize your hopes and dreams for the future. We believe that tomorrow can be better than today -- and that every day after tomorrow can be better than the day before.

A lot of people have given up on that idea, but we never will. We're just getting started.

We are honored to partner with Destinations International and its valuable stakeholders and partners. We vow to help you ensure that all communities are embraced and promoted as equitable, diverse, and inclusive -- today, tomorrow, and for many generations to come.

Sincerely,

Barbara Karasek, CEO
Paradise Advertising & Marketing, Inc.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 EDI COMMITTEE

Hilina D. Ajakaiye

José Arana

Renee Areng

Tania Armenta

Bailey Ashida

Roberta Atzori

Nan Marchand Beauvois

Sonya Bradley

Nick Breedlove

Stephanie Brown

L'America Brown

Nicole Brownell

Lauren Bruggemans

Adam Burke

Timothy Bush

Courtney Mann Cacatian

Claire Carlin

Melissa Cherry

Jay Cloutier

Terence Concannon

George Cooley

Santiago C. Corrada

Jayne DeLuce

Greg DeShields

Katharyn DeVille

Sean Dixon

Yvonne Drayton

Jason Dunn

Jordoun Eatman

Brandy Evans

Cara Frank

Nicole Fitzpatrick

Tiffany Gallagher

Maura Gast

Emily Eiland Gonzalez

Kati Hagedorn

Kellie Henderson

Charlene Hoffman

Jessica Holt

Leonard Hoops

James Jessie

Miranda Ji

Linda John

Kristie Johnson

Cambria Jones

Dzidra Junior

Barbara Karasek

Connie Kinnard

Kristin Lamoureax

Wesley Lucas

Yoshiko Maruyama

Nizar Moosa

Kelly Nagle

Angela Nelson

Nerissa Okiye

Jason Outman

Eric Paschal

Rachel Pearson

Rickey L. Thigpen, PhD

Nicole Picton

Sergio Piedra

Ellen Puffer

Katie Rhoads

Natasha Richards

Melissa Riggle

Mike Robinson

Erica Malanga Rodrigues

Emily Rolston

John Sage

Henry Sams

Gerardo (Gary) Sanchez

Ryan Shehu

Melody Smith

Tony Snell

Jake Steinman

Matt Stiker

Jessica Strasser

Roz Stuttley

Adriana Suao

Scott Sudduth

Marie Sueing

Cevat Tosun

Susan Tucker

Jennifer M Vacek

Ka Vang

Vimal Vyas

Jennifer Walker

Crystal Walker

Najauna White

Peggy Williams-Smith

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES THROUGH A WELCOMING AND BELONGING LENS

The shift toward topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion in 2020 in the United States prompted discussions that were well overdue for the travel industry (in the United States). While these topics should have been discussed prior to the tragedy that sparked on May 25th with the death of George Floyd, honest and difficult discussions have emerged about the importance of inclusion within our communities and how we welcome visitors of different backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. These discussions are not just US-centric, we are holding conversations with our membership around the world.

The most notable themes from these conversations are:

1. Feeling unsure about what to do when a destination is not diverse enough.
2. How to get started when introducing inclusive practices into a destination or within an organization.

The answers to these topics are critical to the development of a sustainable foundation that champions social inclusion and increases economic opportunities for a community anywhere in the world. To address these themes, we wanted to take a different approach than what we have been exposed to in the news and media outlets. We wanted to elevate this discussion beyond an acronym and beyond a mainstream concept. We wanted to humanize this work so people could understand how it pertains to them, and why it should matter to them.

How have we started to humanize this work?

As a start, we expanded our working definition of diversity beyond gender, race, and ethnicity—to include body size, life experience, age, and identity-related descriptors. We have also shifted discussions about what it feels like to be welcomed and to be treated like you belong—because every human being wants to feel like they belong.

These actions and conversations have started to shift mindsets with our membership around the world.

We recognize that destinations and organizations are at different stages in creating a welcoming environment; we encourage you to humanize this work, to reach out to us, to use our thought leadership, and to engage in intentional discussions that focus on welcoming and belonging as a means for social and economic prosperity.

DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL WORKING DEFINITION OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Destinations International is committed to creating spaces and places in the travel industry that promote a true sense of welcoming and belonging for people of all backgrounds and abilities. As human beings we can empathize with what it feels like to receive a warm smile, to connect, and to feel like you can safely and responsibly immerse yourself into the intricate fabric of a destination.

Using this mindset, we acknowledge the array of identities that exist in this world and that every person should be valued and treated in an **equitable** manner. To us, this means we recognize that each person has different life circumstances and abilities, and we will do our best to allocate resources to reach an equal outcome of opportunity and respect for all.

We realize that the world is constantly evolving with many diverse perspectives and identities contributing to this industry. To align with newfound knowledge, we will keep an open mind and acknowledge the mosaic of identities as they arise. Our working definition of **diversity** includes and is not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender identity and expression, sexual/romantic attraction, religious affiliation, political belief, dietary selection and preference, mental and physical abilities, neurodiversity, age, thinking styles, body size and appearance, hair texture, socioeconomic status, marital status, parental status, language, spoken accents, and educational levels.

As we recognize the importance of equity and the diverse identities that make up the world, we strive to create spaces where people feel **included**, respected, feel seen, feel heard, feel valued, and feel like they belong.

Our association is committed to transforming destination and member communities through the principles of welcoming and belonging, and social inclusion so their destinations and places of work are true reflections of their communities.

We do this by listening, developing brave spaces for discussion to take place, ensuring all verticals of our work incorporate these principles, collecting data and feedback to produce research, creating measurable tools to help our members implement initiatives with accountability, curating education and resources, partnering and collaborating with organizations and experts to offer niche programming, and tailoring facilitated dialogues, training, organizational assessments, strategic roadmaps, and related services to provide our members with trusted guidance for true economic and social transformation.

FIVE FACTORS THAT INFORM THIS STRATEGY

This new strategy takes five factors into account: our progressive history working on social inclusion topics since 2017, the hiring of our chief diversity officer and our related goals for this role in 2022, our annual research on destination organizations, EDI committee discussions, and results from the EDI Assessment Tool data.

Sophia Hyder Hock, Chief Diversity Officer

1. BUILDING UPON A FOUNDATION

In 2017 we not only started to discuss the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion but decided to take steps toward the development of actionable goals by defining what "E" "D" "I" means for our association, developing our 'why,' and creating a task force of members to provide their insight on how to move forward. Our work has continued to evolve through the participation of our committee, the leadership of our first chief diversity officer, and through the integration of social inclusion principles in each vertical of our association.

2. HIRING OF OUR FIRST CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

In February 2022, Sophia Hyder Hock joined our team. A substantial amount of time was used to listen to member perspectives across geographies and budget categories. She made it a priority to understand the context of each situation, answering top of mind questions asked such as, "How to get started on EDI initiatives in my organization?" and "What if my destination isn't diverse enough?" Common themes emerged from these conversations, and we will be addressing these topics by offering services, resources, and educational opportunities to support our members.

3. RESEARCH

The annual EDI Study on Destination Organizations has taken place since November 2020. Each year our team along with the research sub-committee takes time to evaluate survey questions for relevancy with global topics pertaining to social inclusion. Themes from this study are incorporated into our strategy to assist our members with implementation-related challenges.

4. EDI COMMITTEE

The EDI Committee has quickly become one of the largest committees at Destinations International with over 100 members and seven sub-committees (Accessibility, Career and Academic Pathways, CEO Engagement, Industry Partnerships, Legislative Education, Research, and Scholarships). Each sub-committee develops yearly goals to address industry specific challenges. This strategy is informed by conversations that take place at committee meetings.

5. EDI ASSESSMENT TOOL RESULTS

In 2022, Destinations International launched a groundbreaking tool to provide our destination members with insight on their EDI journey alongside their peers. The results from over 200 destinations have informed areas that need further improvement through additional discussion, education, services, and resources, and are incorporated into this strategy. We provide additional support and services to ensure destinations continue to work towards being more inclusive.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AT DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

To reach their full potential, organizations must develop their brand in a way that authentically represents every aspect of their destination and organization. This involves cultivating a unified community where everyone feels like they belong and are welcomed.

Our goal at Destinations International is to be your trusted resource in this industry, and to ensure you have the tools needed to implement meaningful impact with your teams, stakeholders, community, and visitors.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop reliable thought leadership, ongoing public facing advocacy, and consistent communication to drive awareness towards the economic and social importance of creating spaces that champion welcoming and belonging for all – inclusive of team members, stakeholders, communities, and visitors.

- Continue to identify, benchmark, and track metrics to measure growth and progress within member organizations to establish industry standards and promote accountability for best practices and initiatives related to social inclusion.

- Provide greater insight, data, and research to identify how to lessen barriers and create more opportunities for growth and empowerment.

- Develop and implement strategies to cultivate, foster, and leverage critical partnerships to further Destination International's social inclusion roadmap.

- Listen to our member needs and develop services, tools, and resources for all member organizations to adapt and implement.

- Share best practices, case studies, and lessons learned across member organizations to assist with implementation.

- Identify and implement welcoming and belonging principles across Destinations International verticals and daily operations to embody, lead by example, and reflect universal best practices and standards.

SIX CORE PRIORITIES

The six core priorities for this strategy are critical to growth, innovation, and creating spaces and places that champion welcoming and belonging. They also incorporate gender equality, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities, the three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) that are in alignment with our strategy.

We have made some measurable strides since the release of our 2021 strategy through EDI committee goals, partnerships, and industry dialogues; these actions have elevated the need to continue to advocate for underrepresented people and populations, and to continue to create intentional avenues of genuine human connection.

> **NOTE:** Some of our insights and action items will overlap; this is intentionally designed to ensure the sustainable development of our strategic approach.

1. SELF-AWARENESS, MENTAL WELLBEING, AND PERSONAL INVESTMENT

A person's mindset is the key to growth, innovation, and change; and every person is a change maker. This priority encourages people on every level of their profession to understand their own value, the value of their commitments to creating a more inclusive environment, and provides tangible ways to act toward learning, committing their time and thought leadership, and to acknowledge the importance of mental wellbeing. More Info below.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

We recognize that getting started can be the most difficult step to take. We aim to meet organizations where they are at – to create destinations and spaces that champion welcoming and belonging for all -, by assisting and encouraging progress through adaptable ideas on how to get started or to enhance their current efforts in ways that align with their enabling environment. More info below.

3. EDUCATION & AWARENESS BUILDING

Well-rounded knowledge and awareness about people of different backgrounds and abilities, understanding their lived experiences, and ways to navigate different perspectives of this world through our industry is another key to growth. Destinations International is committed to creating educational opportunities that allow for people to have open and honest dialogue, to share personal experiences, best practices, and ways to create meaningful impact. More info below.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Impact can be measured in many ways, through personal action, feedback, and tangible metrics. Our priority is to create multiple mechanisms to receive feedback and to create accountability measures that inspire our industry to do a better job of including people of all backgrounds and abilities within their teams and externally for their clients, visitors, and respective audiences. More info below.

5. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The current workforce challenges in our industry highlight a critical need to develop more human centric ways to connect with prospective talent. This priority focuses on assisting our industry to think and act in creative ways; to plan short- and long-term strategies to reach a variety of generations and abilities in the workforce. More info below.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community in every sense of the word is critical to the success and wellbeing of this industry. We have many communities in which we belong to - including the communities we live in, our own DI online community, our professional community, and communities from our lived experiences. All these connections are valuable and need to be nurtured. This priority aims to encourage dialogue and provide guidance toward creating and nurturing new and seasoned diverse relationships. More info below.

Read on for in-depth information for each priority.

SELF-AWARENESS, MENTAL WELLBEING, AND PERSONAL INVESTMENT

A person's mindset is the key to growth, innovation, and change; and every person is a change maker. This priority encourages people on every level of their profession to understand their own value, the value of their commitments to creating a more inclusive environment, and provides tangible ways to act toward learning, committing their time and thought leadership, and to acknowledge the importance of mental wellbeing.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Continue to develop and integrate thoughtful discussions that address the core of what constitutes a welcoming environment; including mental health and wellbeing. Provide perspective on the importance of keeping an open mind, listening, and learning through the sharing of information and stories.

These attributes above will be used (and not limited to) our speaking engagements, and professional development sessions, focusing on diverse representation of speakers and voices through our educational avenues and events.

Board diversity is an area that will be addressed in further depth, to unpack biases about finding diverse board members.

Our Inclusive Leadership Pledge is an example of how leaders can personally commit and invest their time through our five pillars and suggested accountability mechanisms.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

The EDI committee is comprised of approximately 100 members, spanning 20+ roles in the industry. The seven sub-committees span topics pertaining to Accessibility (added in 2023), CEO Engagement, Industry Partnerships, Career and Academic Pathways, Scholarship, Research, and Legislative Education with yearly goals for members to navigate and collaborate upon.

Monthly EDI committee meetups have served as a healthy and brave outlet to ask advice on various topics, get support, ask questions, and to learn and connect with colleagues in the travel industry.

ACTION

SERVICES

All DI services are curated using a **human-centric** approach, to meet people where they are without judgment, to identify the root causes of the issue at hand, and to cultivate an environment built upon trust, connection, and empathy. We tailor all our offerings to ensure self-awareness and mental well-being are considered in the context of the destination environment and organization.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Sharing best practices on **board diversity** along with an updated matrix for our members to use when recruiting new members and new viewpoints.

The **Annual Inclusion Study on Destination Organizations** is a study that collects inclusion-related perspectives from individuals working in destination organizations. This information serves as a basis to understand areas that have progressed through a welcoming and belonging lens and challenges that need to be addressed through the creation of supporting resources and partnerships

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- Increase number of member organizations addressing the importance of mental health and wellbeing.

- Increase in diverse representation of board members in member organizations.

- Increase in diverse representation and perspective sharing at DI events.

- Increase in number of leaders committed to learning, growth, action, and accountability through the inclusive leadership pledge.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recognize that getting started can be the most difficult step to take. We aim to meet organizations where they are at – to create destinations and spaces that champion welcoming and belonging for all – by assisting and encouraging progress through adaptable ideas on how to get started or to enhance their current efforts in ways that align with their enabling environment.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Continue to unpack two very complex questions, "What if my destination isn't diverse enough?" and "How do I get started?" on a global scale, keeping nuances of each destination in perspective and providing in-depth guidance on how to develop a strong foundation for sustainable growth.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Language for the CEO EDI pledge has been renamed and revised to become the **Inclusive Leadership Pledge** with feedback from the **CEO Engagement and Industry Partnerships** subcommittees. The messaging in the pledge will be updated for all organizational leaders to sign and will include adaptable measures of action and accountability.

The newly named and revised Inclusive Leadership Pledge, EDI Assessment Tool, and other associated tools/services are being assessed through the **Industry Partnerships** subcommittee to evaluate how our non-destination members can be supported in their social inclusion related implementation efforts.

The **CEO Engagement** subcommittee will be addressing implementation-related challenges through topic specific toolkits.

ACTION

SERVICES

Our in-depth **organizational assessments** use staff sentiments, internal and external practices, interviews, and EDI assessment reports to create a tailored 3-year implementation roadmap that takes the nuances of the travel industry into account.

A certificate associated with the implementation workbook (further detail mentioned below) will include modules focused on identifying and understanding community demographics and underrepresented voices, defining what the welcoming environment looks like for your organization, improving human resources practices, and developing an inclusive sales and marketing plan.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Data from the **EDI Assessment Reports** provide a basis for destination organizations to understand what they have accomplished and how they can improve upon their implementation strategies.

The **implementation workbook** will provide destination members with a roadmap on how to get started, how to enhance current strategies, and how other organizations have implemented successful social inclusion strategies.

CEO toolkits will be developed to assist leadership with implementation. Topics for the toolkits will be based upon feedback from members who have signed the Inclusive Leadership Pledge, and from the CEO Engagement subcommittee.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- Increased number of people who sign the Inclusive Leadership Pledge and who are committed to long term growth.

- Increased number of people who provide feedback on their successes and challenges.

- Increased use of the EDI Assessment Tool and reporting features to improve upon social inclusion metrics for the organization and community.

- Increased use of implementation workbook upon release.

EDUCATION & AWARENESS BUILDING

Well-rounded knowledge and awareness about people of different backgrounds and abilities, understanding their lived experiences, and ways to navigate different perspectives of this world through our industry is another key to growth. Destinations International is committed to creating educational opportunities that allow for people to have open and honest dialogue, to share personal experiences, best practices, and ways to create meaningful impact.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

The working definition of social inclusion through a welcoming and belonging lens creates ample space for adaptation and dialogue among member organizations in the industry. We encourage members to review, discuss, and use this definition as appropriate for your organization.

Continued discussions will be held at DI and industry events about our working definition, the importance of creating spaces that champion welcoming and belonging for economic growth, and the importance of understanding the built environment as it relates to welcoming people of different backgrounds and abilities.

Events will be more accessible for people of different abilities, more information about accessibility will be included, and information on how to experience the diverse landscape of a destination will be provided to attendees. A land acknowledgement will be included online as appropriate and as applicable to recognize and show respect to indigenous peoples.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Our Career and Academic Pathways sub-committee is building templates explaining the various roles of the industry for member organizations to use for outreach to schools ranging from elementary school

through vocational / technical levels in the United States. These school outreach templates can be adapted to use at schools outside of the United States.

The **Scholarship** sub-committee has collected over $225,000 in pledges over 3-years to support rising juniors majoring in hospitality or tourism majors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Through the support of the Destinations International Foundation, this program is designed to provide monetary support and year-round exposure to industry leaders, networking and leadership sessions. Ample opportunities exist in the future to support the growth and development of underrepresented students.

The **Legislative Education** sub-committee was formed in 2023 to create greater awareness pertaining to legislation that affects EDI-related topics. Members will be informed about the various acts in an unbiased manner.

Aligning industry thought leadership pertaining to social inclusion and understanding how to better support non-destination members with accountability and their implementation-related goals are primary objectives of the **Industry Partnerships** sub-committee.

An Accessibility sub-committee will be formed in 2023 to meet members' growing needs on how to develop a strategy within a destination

ACTION

SERVICES

Continuing educational opportunities such as a **self-paced certificate** focused on foundational elements of creating a welcoming environment and emotional intelligence will be available for individuals.

Facilitated dialogues and **curated training and workshops** focused on applied learning, interactive discussion, and travel-specific scenarios are services available for member organizations.

Trusted referrals to business members and partners who specialize in niche social inclusion topics ranging from conducting accessibility assessments to cultural etiquette are available. Click here to learn more about our current business members.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

The social inclusion study on destination organizations is a resource for individuals and organizations to review and discuss successes, barriers, and opportunities toward creating a more well-rounded welcoming organization.

A **vendor diversity portal** for member organizations seeking to find a variety of businesses applicable for their operational needs and events will be created and supplemented by guidance on how to incorporate language in an RFP that holds vendors accountable toward creating a more inclusive culture.

WEBINARS highlighting a variety of member driven topics will be scheduled year-round and will include partner insights and perspectives of people who offer guidance on how to create spaces that champion belonging. Past webinars are available on the online educational portal available here.
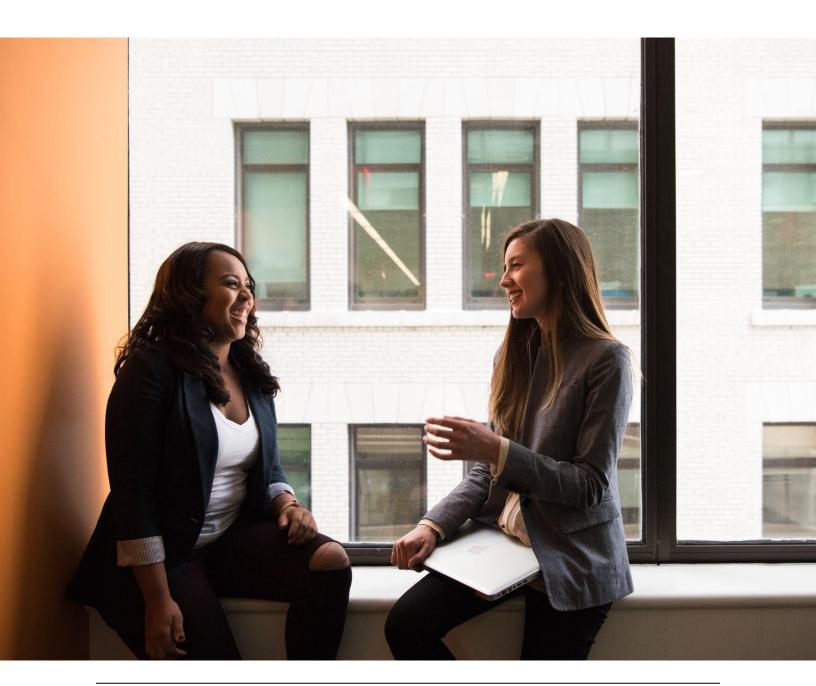
Destinations International Learning Center: Home
(Members have their own username and password to log in)

PARTNERSHIPS are critical to growth, and our association actively seeks organizations that specialize in areas that create welcoming spaces for all. Click here Learn more about becoming a partner.

Our professional development offerings and programs will be reviewed and updated through a social inclusion lens and will reflect the needs of our global membership.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- Increased outreach with youth in schools ranging from elementary through vocational / technical college about the variety of professional opportunities available in the travel industry.

- Increased understanding of welcoming and belonging principles.

- Increased adoption and application of social inclusion principles in strategic initiatives.

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Impact can be measured in many ways, through personal action, feedback, and tangible metrics. Our priority is to create multiple mechanisms to receive feedback and to create accountability measures that inspire our industry to do a better job of including people of all backgrounds and abilities within their teams and externally for their clients, visitors, and respective audiences.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Pledge signees will have the opportunity to provide feedback on lessons learned and areas where challenges arise as means for Destinations International to share best practices across our membership and develop resources to support our signees.

All **DI-hosted events** throughout the year will take accessibility and inclusion into account when mapping the layout of the event, curating content and topics, and finding speakers to represent different perspectives. The Events, Professional Development, and EDI departments work together to improve this process each time through feedback from members to ensure all people feel welcome at our events.

Our **EDI Summit** focuses on addressing challenges and learning new ideas through a welcoming and belonging lens. The main goal for this summit is to connect with and support our community to create more inclusive spaces, discuss implementation and accountability methods, and to inspire our members to act across all geographic areas and budget categories. Summit topics originate from EDI committee discussions.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Research: This subcommittee reviews questions included in the EDI Assessment Tool and annual Inclusion Study on Destination Organizations for relevancy and accountability. This subcommittee will also review and provide information about EDI related research that exists to create awareness about gaps in data and where we need to improve as an industry.

Industry Partnerships: Members of this subcommittee will evaluate what accountability looks like for their organizations and how DI tools and offerings can be adapted to hold our industry partners accountable.

ACTION

SERVICES

EDI Assessment Tool: This tool serves as a trusted baseline assessment for destination organizations to understand their internal/external progress in relation to their goals. Yearly use of this tool helps destinations track their progress, with the capability to report areas that have improved and where greater improvement is needed.

EDI Organizational Assessment: Our team is equipped to provide in-depth organizational assessments which include conducting an anonymous team survey to assess various perspectives and reviewing internal and external practices, resulting in recommendations and the development of a road map that prioritizes yearly actions. It is highly recommended to incorporate data into the EDI Assessment Tool prior to this assessment for the best results, however it is not necessary to do so.

EDI Certificates: Two certificate programs are scheduled to be developed; one focuses on fundamental concepts related to welcoming and belonging. The other certificate is associated with the Implementation Workbook – aligning education, applied learning, and hands-on practice together. Participants will be guided through each part of the workbook with the goal of understanding the value of various destination roles, taking intentional action toward building community connections, and developing and implementing thoughtful social inclusion activities in their destination.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Implementation Workbook: Designed to answer the two pressing questions asked by our destination members, "What if my destination isn't diverse enough?" and "How do I get started?" This workbook will provide users of all roles and professional levels information on how to develop a strong foundation that engages community, partners, and visitors.

Educational Webinars: Information gathered from members and pledge signees about their lessons learned will be used to share and educate our broader membership on applied ways to integrate social inclusion principles into their organization.

Written content: Case studies, best practices, and lessons learned will be shared with our membership to assist with implementation and accountability toward creating a more welcoming environment for all.

Succession Planning: Data from our Inclusion Study on Destination Organizations (among other studies) shows there is diversity among entry level positions, yet diversity is lacking at leadership levels. Education and support will be developed to address this critical need.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- Increase in signees of inclusive leadership pledge agreeing to commit to accountability measures and sustainable action.

- Increase in use and purchase of EDI Assessment Tool.

- Increase in participation of certificate programs.

- Increase in sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and challenges.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The current workforce challenges in our industry highlight a critical need to develop more human centric ways to connect with prospective talent. This priority focuses on assisting our industry to think and act in creative ways; to plan short- and long-term strategies to reach a variety of generations and abilities in the workforce.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Addressing the short- and long-term pipeline:
In the short term, DI uses data from our Inclusion Study on Destination Organizations to highlight pressing topics that should be addressed to improve workplace conditions; the DI Compensation and Benefits Platform is available for members to input their data to understand competitive industry-wide wages and compensation packages. In the long term, we are developing templates for members to use when explaining industry specific-professional roles to youth in grade schools, and to young professionals in vocational and technical schools.

Internal improvements, reducing bias, and sharing of lessons learned: An ongoing initiative of our internal team is to ensure we are hiring a diverse, multi-generational workforce and to create an internal culture of belonging. This includes developing methods to remove bias through the entire hiring cycle, improving our onboarding processes, and fostering a healthy remote work environment. As we refine our process, we will share best practices with our membership.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Career and Academic Pathways:
Subcommittee goals focus on supporting future and current professionals through the creation of educational templates, developing ways to provide practitioner-based learning to students attending institutions that have tourism and hospitality programs, supporting our internal mentorship platform, and providing greater insight on pay equity for women in the travel industry.

Scholarship subcommittee: The Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) scholarship initiative offers a well-rounded opportunity for rising sophomores and juniors to receive monetary support, networking opportunities, exposure to industry thought leadership, and internship/job prospects.

ACTION

SERVICES

Apprenticeship Program: In partnership with Tourism Diversity Matters, this program is designed to provide hands-on working experience to diverse professionals interested in pursuing a career in the tourism and hospitality industry. To learn more, click here.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Mentorship program: This unique online networking and career development tool, helps you find, connect, and share experiences with others. Your mentor or mentee can be in the same city or on the other side of the world. To learn more, click here.

Templates: A series of templated presentations will be developed for member organizations to use for school outreach efforts.

30 under 30 program: 30 individuals under the age of 30 are selected annually to gain valuable industry networking opportunities and increased thought leadership throughout the year. A 30 under 30 alumni council has been formed to cultivate ways to attract and retain young professionals in the travel industry.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS:

- Increase in diversity within leadership positions.

- Increase in diversity of talent and perspectives across the travel industry.

- Increase in youth awareness and interest in choosing the travel industry as a viable long term career path.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community in every sense of the word is critical to the success and wellbeing of this industry. We have many communities in which we belong – including the communities we live in, our own DI online community, our professional community, and communities from our lived experiences. All these connections are valuable and need to be nurtured. This priority aims to encourage dialogue and provide guidance toward creating and nurturing new and seasoned diverse relationships.

INSIGHTS INTO OUR STRATEGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

To establish a greater understanding and sense of community we have illustrated our working definition of welcoming belonging through a social inclusion lens for all our member organizations to use and adapt. We believe it is important to recognize the vastness of perspectives that exist in the world beyond the common definitions of what people perceive diversity to be - race, ethnicity, and gender.

Everything we have outlined in our strategy is motivated by our community; to strengthen and empower our members so their organizations excel.

EDI COMMITTEE INITIATIVES

Monthly EDI meetings were established in 2022 to ensure committee members can connect and discuss top of mind issues in a safe and brave space beyond quarterly and subcommittee meetings. These meetings have proved to be useful for all that join to learn and support each other.

ACTION

SERVICES

Facilitated dialogues: This specialized service is offered for internal and external community audiences to discuss sensitive topics through an unbiased lens.

Tourism for All Pilot: This program is designed to proactively engage local entrepreneurs, leaders, and members of the community in the travel ecosystem to discuss and pledge to create a more welcoming environment for all – community and visitors alike. This pilot program is currently taking place in Charlottesville, Virginia with the intent to offer this program to other destinations.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

The DI Online Community: This platform is available for all members to ask questions, share lessons learned, and to connect beyond committees and DI events.

EDI Summit: This summit is designed for all member organizations to come together to learn, discuss, and be inspired by the ideas and topics that are uncovered through industry thought leadership, interactive content, and destination immersion.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

- Member organizations discuss and adapt our working definition of welcoming and belonging into their own strategic design.

- Increased use of community platform and connection beyond DI events and committee meetings.

- Increased attendance at the EDI Summit beyond the inaugural year (October 2023).

- Increased use of facilitated dialogues to connect community sentiments with tourism initiatives through a shared welcoming and belonging lens.

DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

SIX CORE PRIORITIES

Self-awareness, Mental Wellbeing	Implementation	Education & Awareness Building	Accountability Mechanisms	Workforce Development	Community Engagement

SEVEN SUBCOMMITTEES

- Accessibility
- Career & Academic Pathways
- CEO Engagement
- Industry Partnerships
- Legislation Education
- Research
- Scholarships

Destinations International has prioritized social inclusion as a strategic goal for the association.

DMO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Snapshot from the 2022 EDI Study

78%	**65%**	**72%**	**11%**	**4%**
Age 33-65	Female	Caucasian	Non-heterosexual	Disabled

C-SUITE

80% Caucasian	20% Other

54% Female	46% Male

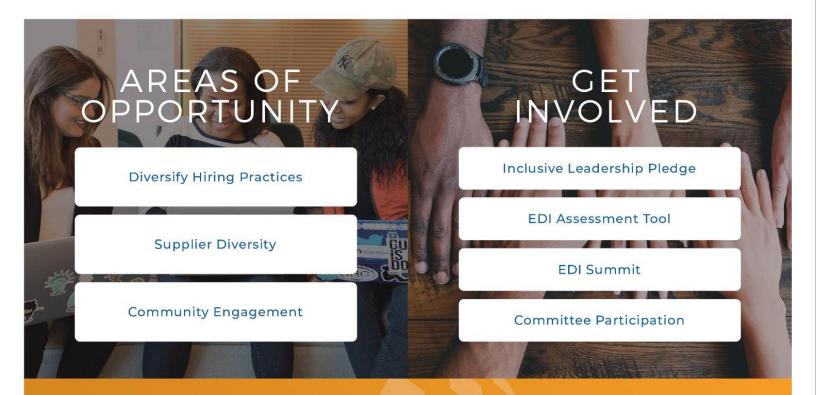| **78%**	**58%**	**60%**	**34%**
Want to see more cultural diversity.	Agree their destination organization does a good job of hiring in a diverse workforce and being inclusive.	Agree their destination organization embodies equity, diversity and inclusion.	Our destination organization has a diverse vendor policy for procurement.

EDI MARKETING INCLUSION

79% Utilize diverse representation.

74% Reflect the diversity of the community we represent.

View the full 2022 EDI Study here.

https://destinationsinternational.org/sites/default/files/DI22_EDIStudy_1.4.pdf

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Diversify Hiring Practices

Supplier Diversity

Community Engagement

GET INVOLVED

Inclusive Leadership Pledge

EDI Assessment Tool

EDI Summit

Committee Participation

EDI ASSESSMENT TOOL

"Destinations have the opportunity to assess workplace dynamics, operations and policies, vendor selection, community engagement, and accessibility related strategies through a welcoming and belonging lens.

Tailored Inclusion Services:
- Top line – services – organizational assessments.
- 3 year strategic inclusion roadmaps.
- Facilitated dialogues, interactive workshops and trainings, curated offerings.

EDI SUMMIT
October 10-11, 2023
Little Rock, AR, USA

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