

How to Shift Leadership Behaviors in Support of DEI

We asked WEF's Board of Trustees and DEI Committee Chairs to share their learnings and how they've shifted their behaviors to support DEI efforts.

We asked them to share concrete steps that they've taken to integrate DEI concepts into their leadership activities, both in their work and their WEF volunteer activities. What had they learned about creating deeper connection with people, challenging assumptions, and different ways in which to communicate, or include other people in their project teams or meetings? Read on for their responses.

Understand your position and relative power dynamics.

Every interaction with another person or group of people creates relative power dynamics. Be aware of what your position and power is in any given situation. Use these dynamics to address DEI in the way you lead.

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In order to create an inclusive and equitable environment for others, I **bring in allies** who can help advocate for the collective benefit of the community. I also go out of my way to **thank allies** for supporting and speaking up because I want them to know they are appreciated and that their inclusive leadership behaviors are noticed and acknowledged.

— **Megan Yoo Schneider**, Co-Chair DEI Committee

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I've learned the importance of empathy. While being an underrepresented racial minority affords me the opportunity to see DE&I from a valuable perspective, I've **learned to step back and listen** to others who may not match my demographic. It's not always about what matters to me but what matters to all of us as a collective.

— **Donnell Duncan**, Co-Chair DEI Committee

Examine your own biases.

To have bias is to be human, but that doesn't mean you have to let bias unconsciously drive your decisions. Take time to familiarize yourself with your own biases. Simply reminding yourself and others about bias can mitigate negative impacts of it. *[See Bias](#)

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My feeling is, “Who am I to lecture others about DE&I??” so I candidly admit that I **am an enthusiastic advocate and learner** about it, but I have had a privileged upbringing and that it is my responsibility to acknowledge this and let others understand that I am aware of it.

— **Diego Rosso**, Board of Trustees

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I am very intentional about **saying y'all vs. “guys” and partner over a gendered description**. Those are small inclusive ways to remind people everyone is welcome. It forces my mindset into the right frame for engagements in and outside our work.

— **Steven Drangsholt**, House of Delegates Chair

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“I am more **aware of microaggressions or unconscious bias**, again trying not to make assumptions.

— **Janet Hurley Cann**, Board of Trustees

Listen to understand.

Inclusive leaders listen to all the voices in the room in order to understand the concerns and challenges of others. A leader may not agree with everything they hear, but they respect that everyone has a right to have and voice their own opinion.

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I have definitely endeavored to **be a much more understanding listener**. I am more thoughtful in my listening to understand rather than respond and to take time to process rather than **providing a** primarily emotional instead of **thoughtful response**.

— **Aimee' Killeen**, Vice President

“How do you listen?”

A:

“(me in silence)”



Some within the WEF community who are not supportive of our DE&I efforts approach me with anticipation of a receptive audience. Fundamentally, these individuals **view DE&I as a zero-sum game** so as others gain in any way, they lose. I try to convey the message that the **WEF pie is not static but dynamic**, that it is organic **and growing** and that as each defined stakeholder group gains, all of WEF gains. This is a difficult message to convey.

— **John Troffater**, Board of Trustees



Invite Engagement

No one is the expert all of the time.

Continually speak to the value of incorporating a diversity of thought and voices, and act on it. Whether the meetings you're participating in or hosting are virtual or in-person, plan in ways to invite engagement from the largest number of participants. Host group breakout sessions virtually or in person. Develop online polls to get a quick read of a large virtual room. [*See Inclusive Committees](#)



[I]f we invite them to the dance, we need to invite them to dance. Don't just hire or invite people to participate on a committee, if you aren't going to engage them in something meaningful.

— **Janet Hurley Cann**, Board of Trustees



Integrate new practices

and behaviors into all aspects of your work. Incorporate DEI values into your personal approach. Examine written policy, protocols, agreements through a DEI lens. Are they adequate, or should adjustments be made?



I've learned how to be systematic and strategic in my approach to DE&I. If we don't have a clear DE&I strategy, all of our difficult conversations, trainings, initiatives, webinars, tools, etc. may raise awareness but won't bring us much closer to lasting culture change. We need to see the big picture, then paint it for others to see as well.

— **Donnell Duncan**, Speaker-elect House of Delegates



Act as an upholder—a facilitator and an example—of inclusive behaviors.

As a leader, it's important to be outspoken about what you do and why in your role. Down processes to hear from more people, or taking time to do quality outreach in order to build a diversified work group or team.



I am transparent about my own struggles and challenges, and I often explain my rationale and thought process to allow others to recognize the additional emotional and mental labor involved with being an inclusive leader and a woman of color.

— **Megan Yoo Schneider**, Co-chair DEI Committee



I actively avoid *manals* (men only panels). Even if the men have diverse backgrounds, I still opt out of them and suggest a woman to replace myself.

— **Steven Drangsholt**, Speaker House of Delegates



I've tried to be intentional about who I recruit, who I talk with, who I appoint or assign to committees and task forces, each time going beyond who I know and asking others to help me expand my connections. I also try to encourage others to do the same.

— **Lynn E. Broaddus**, President 2021



Act as a challenger, dissenter from traditional behaviors.

There is both a moral imperative and a business case for DEI at WEF—"water is life" for all of us. WEF leadership has made the commitment to challenge the status quo.



Talking about Equity, I have learned that it is a cultural change that implies get in the other's shoe, to know if we are providing something that fits to the needs of the recipient.

— **Gustavo Raymundo Gallo Chacon**, Board of Trustees

WEF Leadership is committed to shifting their behaviors to create a welcoming place for professional learning. The process requires intention and practice, and it is worth it. Will you join us?