



Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)

2022-2025 Action Plan

Introduction

Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Action Plan reflects our continued commitment to cultivate an environment that celebrates diversity, and is also equitable, accessible, and inclusive for all. Finding ways to work smarter and perform better is an integral part of Ripple Effect's culture and a differentiator in our client delivery. Diverse perspectives enable us to work smarter and perform better by enhancing creativity, innovation and collaboration which leads to better decision making and problem-solving. Working smarter is important because it helps us take on challenging problems and have a meaningful impact on society.

We know tackling issues of discrimination, privilege, and systemic bias will require continued self-examination, thoughtful action, and commitment from leadership. We will strive to be a model employer that attracts the best diverse talent and retains and also grows that talent through policies and systems that promote equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We will continue to foster a culture of belonging where people can bring their whole selves to work and will be treated with dignity and respect. We will accomplish our goals by getting at the root of problems, engaging in vital conversations, continuously improving, and using evidence to guide our path forward.

Background

In 2020, Ripple Effect published our first plan focused on actions we could take as an organization to internally improve and externally communicate our commitment to diversity and inclusion. At our 2021 leadership retreat, we decided to seek external input to guide our path forward and assess our current practices. As a result, we engaged an external third party, to conduct an assessment and make recommendations.

This 2022-2025 plan reflects 1) the outstanding items from the previous action plan; 2) recommendations from the external assessment; 3) staff input from, the leadership retreat, Wellness & Empowerment Committee, and internal survey; and 4) forward looking trends in the field of DEIA.

DEIA Vision and Framework to Guide Strategy and Actions

Our vision is to be recognized as a business leader in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and to make DEIA a fundamental component of our unique culture and business practices. Attaining equity through fair processes and systems for our entire workforce is at the heart of who we are, however, achieving equity requires us to recognize that we all start at different places, and our ability to take advantage of opportunities is unique. Therefore, the hard work of eliminating barriers and ensuring that every member of our workforce receives equitable access and support is key to this plan. Accomplishing our vision will help us attract and retain the best diverse talent and tackle challenging problems.



DEIA Maturity Model

Ripple Effect's organizational maturity is between Level 3-4 depending on the strategic area. Our goal will be to continually progress towards Level 5 through our actions.

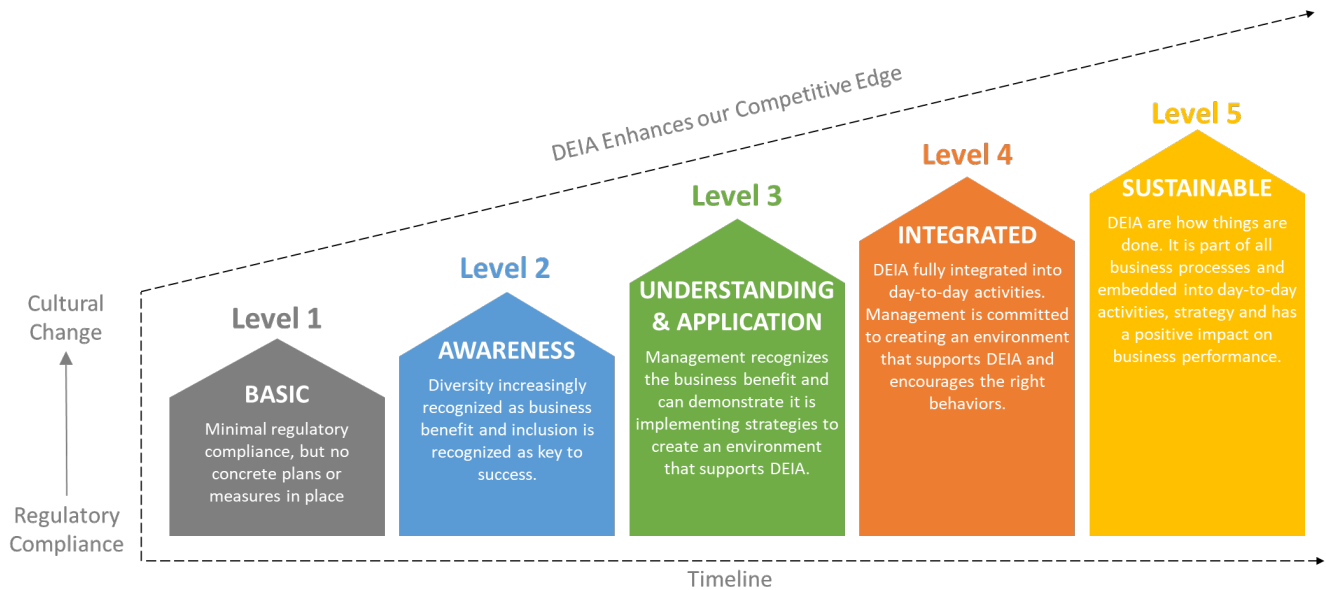


Figure 1. Adapted from Diversity & Inclusion Maturity Model (Source: AGA 2021 Professional Development Training, M101: Evidence-Based Solutions to Drive Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives)

Defining our DEIA Terminology

As we refine our action plan for the next three years, it is important to articulate the definition of the following terms for Ripple Effect:

- **Diversity** – Workforce diversity includes all the individual and demographic group identities, including differences of thought and life experiences, that contribute to differences among people. Diversity fuels success in the workplace, improves the employee experience and contributes to better and fairer decision making.
- **Equity** – Equity is a shared responsibility to promote fair, objective and positive outcomes for our workforce. We work towards equitable systems by understanding root causes, clearly documenting expectations, implementing consistent practices, training the workforce to reduce biases, and by removing barriers that prevent employees from historically marginalized groups from thriving.
- **Inclusion** – Inclusion is fostering an environment that respects and cultivates diversity and connects each employee to the organization. Inclusive practices encourage collaboration, flexibility, transparency, and fairness and thus welcomes relevant diverse perspectives while enabling individuals to contribute their full potential and actively participate in decision-making processes.
- **Accessibility** – Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience and removing barriers to participation from communities that may have been historically marginalized.



Five Strategic Areas

Our plan is organized into five areas, each with defined actions and metrics to inform our approaches.



Talent Lifecycle

Recruiting, vetting, hiring, compensation, promotions, succession planning, retention, performance management

The talent lifecycle encompasses all the stages in the career of an employee at Ripple Effect, beginning with recruitment. Each stage plays an important role in attracting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. At each stage we will continually assess if we are recruiting & retaining diverse talent, creating processes free from bias, communicating expectations clearly, and providing opportunities for all to succeed. We will use data to improve our understanding, calibrate to reduce biases, and achieve equity. We will demonstrate our commitment to equity through written processes and training to improve understanding by those in positions of leadership or influence, reduce unfair advantages, standardize systems to minimize implicit bias where possible, and signal that everyone can thrive.

Employee Experience

Organizational culture including policies, onboarding, facilities, listening, benefits, and employee development

Employee experience is the sum of what an employee learns, does, and experiences at a company including their interactions with coworkers, leaders, human resources, technology, and their physical environment. The sum of these experiences should ensure that employees feel valued and can fully engage in the workplace. Our approach will consider the physical, mental, and emotional needs of employees to increase feelings of belonging. We understand that the employee experience is dynamic and must adapt to changing needs of society and our diverse workforce, and we will adapt by listening to our employees and fostering a feedback culture. We will use this feedback, best practices from industry and data to continuously improve the employee experience through our employee development, policies & processes, facilities, technology tools and benefits offerings. In today's environment where most employees are in a hybrid or fully remote working environment, the ability to limit distractions, have adequate technology, and maintain appropriate social connection is more important than ever. We are committed to enhancing a sustainable remote work environment, developing added flexibility to our work/life benefits that enhance dynamic equilibrium, building awareness about our diversity, enriching our employee feedback culture, and increasing technological options for our workforce to facilitate collaboration and connectedness.



External Influence

Branding, communications, philanthropy, company mission and suppliers

Economic, financial, geographical, social, legal, political, technological, and market conditions are just a few of the ways in which we are impacted by outside influences. We are committed to furthering DEIA in our community both in how we impact our community, where the actions we take can make a difference, and how we are impacted by it, by being clear on where we stand on DEIA. We want to be clear about our belief in DEIA standards, whether internal or external to the organization.

Leadership Involvement

Training of leaders, modeling, budgeting, and communication from leaders

Our commitment to DEIA begins with our leaders. Leaders demonstrate that commitment by articulating that DEIA is important and “why” it is important. Leaders also demonstrate their commitment by creating a budget for DEIA activities and modeling the supportive, equitable and inclusive behaviors in our business environment. We are committed to providing our workforce with access to educational resources that foster awareness of DEIA and enable them to build their capacity to lead on these issues. We will encourage our workforce to not only lead on these issues internally, but also in our community.

Employee Representation

Representation of diverse groups at all levels in our growing workforce

Employee representation will be the result of our actions across the four other strategic areas – talent lifecycle, employee experience, external influence, and leadership involvement. Our goal is to attract and retain a workforce, at every level, that better reflects the diversity of our nation. Our actions in this strategic area will narrowly focus on understanding our demographic data over time, comparing that data to the representative workforce, and identifying the root causes that may contribute to those outcomes. We understand achieving employee representation will be an evolutionary process and needs to be dynamic to reflect changes in society.

Conclusion

Ripple Effect is a progressive company that believes each member of our workforce contributes unique and valuable qualities to the solutions we bring to our customers. Reflecting DEIA is an essential element of who we are.

Change starts at the top so anyone who has recommendations or suggestions to improve this plan should contact our CEO, Amy Bielski (abielski@rippleeffect.com) or any member of the executive team or HR team. We value your feedback!