



Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

2024 Position Statement



The Issue

The world urgently needs more diverse and inclusive leadership, and having a Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (JEDIB) mindset is essential to leading in complexity. Our global population comprises a diversity of identities and perspectives. However, decision-making power has traditionally been concentrated within a narrow, homogeneous demographic group.

Considering several of the JEDIB dimensions in the workplace, the gaps are notable. In the US less than 10% of C-level executives at large corporations are people of color (Smith, 2021). Regarding gender, women hold only 25% of senior management roles globally (Jones, 2022) and only 7.4% of Fortune 500 companies had female CEOs as of 2021 (Glass Ceiling). Only 0.3% of Fortune 500 CEOs openly identified as LGBTQ+ and a significant percentage of LGBTQ+ employees report feeling the need to hide their identity at work for fear of discrimination. In many countries, the employment rate for individuals with disabilities is less than half that of those without disabilities. Very few leaders with visible disabilities are represented in top leadership positions across various sectors. The evidence of these levels of underrepresentation in the workforce and leadership is by no means exhaustive.

These issues are historical and systemic, building on generations of inequality, inequities, colonization, and oppression, globally and nationally. There are significant barriers that make it difficult for marginalized groups to attain senior-level positions. Additionally, existing organizational cultures are often not set up to support diverse leadership once they are hired. For instance, 35% of LGBTQ+ employees have reported feeling the need to hide their identity at work for fear of discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Emerging marginalized leaders struggle to overcome visible and invisible barriers and hardships on their path to flourishing as human beings. This dynamic manifests largely in qualified individuals not given equal opportunity to be in leadership positions, or even given positions at all. The outcome is the perpetuation of homogeneous leadership teams, with biases that go unchecked and the status quo maintained. The risk of organizations not being JEDIB-led is continuing to have a society where key parts of the population remain unrepresented in key roles and where we lack the diversity of talent and perspectives needed to address the greatest socioeconomic and environmental challenges of our times. The impact is catastrophic, breeding a culture of exclusion and lack of belonging.

While immediate actions may address visible issues, they often overshadow more sustainable and relational approaches essential for fostering genuine inclusion and belonging. We must be aware of any quick, short-term interventions and their potential risks. Marginalized leaders and professionals may be put in positions where the enabling conditions for them to thrive haven't been created or even considered. Organizations that focus solely or too much on the obvious, predictable, and short-term activities run the risk of excluding important voices and issues, which may unintentionally jeopardize the long-term success of JEDIB efforts.

JEDIB must be consciously integrated into core leadership competencies and strategies to break this cycle. It's not just a goal or an external consideration, but a fundamental aspect of effective leadership that needs to be woven into the fabric of each organization. This requires addressing biases and discriminatory practices, while also fostering genuinely inclusive cultures focused on belonging, growth, and community. Our challenge is to make diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging a reality, ensuring that all aspiring leaders and members of society have an equal chance to thrive and contribute to our collective success.

At Cultivating Leadership, we hold that fostering sustained Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (JEDIB) requires reshaping decision-making structures at all organizational levels over the long term. Marginalized groups cannot fully contribute if cultures propagate exclusion and bias persists among homogeneous teams. Quick fixes are inadequate and time, resources, and collaboration are needed. Our strategy as a leadership development organisation recognizes that enabling belonging and diversity in leadership are interdependent. Within the operations of our organization and our work with clients, we see JEDIB practices as core to the way we show up, what we espouse, and how we engage in the world in service of developing ourselves and leaders, as well as creating the world we imagine.

Fostering more Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in our workplaces

We hold JEDIB at the heart of our values and practice. Cultivating Leadership Colleagues are committed to embracing diversity, cultivating inclusion and belonging, and seeking social justice as core values. Belonging is embedded in the culture of Cultivating Leadership. Our core colleague agreement highlights: "CL is committed to creating a community in which everyone has (and feels they have) an equitable opportunity to belong."

We care deeply about establishing the enabling structures that support diversity and belonging. We create spaces for connection, celebration, input, ownership, leadership, mindfulness, and collaboration. We seek out others who might offer different perspectives from our own. We continually review our policies and practices for bias. We cultivate a trusting and safe work environment where everyone feels they matter and where all ideas are heard and taken seriously without minimization. In our colleagues' agreement, we have practices in place to address interpersonal challenges and are committed to "no one standing alone" in a difficult conversation with other colleagues. We assume positive intent, listen to learn to understand each other's needs, and affirm each other's differences.

Tracking and Measuring Progress: Identifying Our Baseline and Commitments to Reach our JEDIB Objectives

As a global network of colleagues, we are currently tracking the self-declared diversity of our existing team and setting clear goals and guidelines to reach our objective of having a leadership team that represents diversity across nationality, race, geographic location, gender, abilities (mental and physical), and sexual orientation. In our recruitment process, we ask, "Is this person adding to our diversity? Are there any imbalances we need to address?"

Currently,¹ as of December 2023 our full team is composed of 58% women, 12% BIPOC, and 8% LGBTQ. Our leadership team is 19 people, 58% of which are women, 21% BIPOC, and 5% physically disabled. We are committed to tracking and reporting these numbers annually to ensure that we maintain a leadership team that is made up of underrepresented members across nationality/race, geographic location, gender, abilities (mental and physical), and sexual orientation.

Commitment to growing our diversity of colleagues across ethnicity/race, gender, people with disabilities, and sexual orientation by 10% of total recruitment by 2025.

- Our recruitment will include a minimum of 25% recruits from diverse backgrounds.
- We are committed to offering bi-annual learning opportunities for all colleagues on topics such as equity, inclusive design/facilitation/leadership, diversity, and psychological safety and belonging.

Commitment to Analyzing and Closing the Pay Gap across Diversity

Beginning with the Managing Director's report, we commit to conducting a pay gap analysis, based on demographics. And tracking the type of diversity through surveys comparing colleagues' and catalysts' remuneration, status, and pay bands.²

- We commit to paying all colleagues above the legal living wage for their respective jurisdictions.

¹ Diversity refers to all the differences between us where we experience advantages or encounter barriers to opportunities. Diversity isn't just about racial differences. At the same time, we do emphasize racial, gender, and country of origin dimensions of diversity.

² As a baseline, we also might want to differentiate how many people rely on Cultivating Leadership work as the biggest part of their income (say, 80% or above) versus more part-time or less regular Cultivating Leadership consultants with other streams of income.

- We are committed to tracking and reporting on pay equity by race/ethnicity, geographic location, and gender, and, where necessary, implementing more opportunities to foster more equitable compensation plans.

Steps include:

- Come up with tools to track who is making what money, based on demographic
- Research and experiment with ways to increase equality and improve equity
- Once we have assessed any pay gaps across diversity, we commit to creating our own JEDIB standardized practices aimed at reducing any pay gaps across diversity by 2025

Acknowledging 'Hidden' Labour in our Workplace

We acknowledge invisible labour and make the different forms of labor that exist transparent, in particular, as it relates to JEDIB and noting that women tend to perform disproportionate amounts of that labor. We are committed to assessing the invisible forms of labour that currently exist within the organization and taking steps towards valuing and remunerating these types of labour. Currently, Cultivating Leadership recognizes the hidden work of our leaders (their skills, effort, and time in leading a team) and we compensate for their leadership work through a reduced contribution rate on client work, paying 15% compared to the standard 25% contribution.

The Work We Do with Our Clients

Our everyday ways of working with clients attend to JEDIB at every level. We do this by including JEDIB considerations in our client proposal, diagnostic, design, delivery, and evaluation. As leadership practitioners, we include core concepts, practices, and applications of JEDIB in all our programs. We do not distinguish JEDIB work from other leadership work – JEDIB work is leadership work and leading well is fostering JEDIB. Practically, this means we incorporate core concepts and approaches, e.g. explorations of power and rank; intercultural awareness and responsiveness; and polarity management in our core programs, which allow us to see, name, and work with JEDIB patterns. We model our approach to JEDIB principles through our written and verbal communications with clients and our digital presence.

We also have a number of clients that we support with direct JEDIB initiatives. For example, we actively work with indigenous communities, and school systems and have public JEDIB offerings - one focused on race and the other called Flourishing Gays focused on LGBTQ+.

Our objective is to increase our client work that includes a JEDIB component. We commit to growing the percentage of facilitators who lead JEDIB projects and diversify the faculty, so it's not the sole responsibility of our faculty from marginalized identities to lead JEDIB work. By 2025, we commit to representing and serving 20 % of clients from underserved communities, of our total client base.'

In summary, a welcoming culture and good intentions to take action on diversity to make a workplace more inclusive are not enough. It also takes an ongoing commitment to specific actions. As part of enabling real steps towards being the diversity we want to see in the world, we will test the measurement/assumptions in this statement against full year 2023 data in January 2024 and then build out an action plan based on our results. We also acknowledge that we still have so far to go. There is much that we haven't done. For example, grappling with how to be inclusive of indigenous cultures in the different countries we operate in and understanding how the pervasiveness of predominantly US commentary on issues of diversity can drown out the very diversity it is advocating for. We are trying, and it is messy.

The Belonging Team are the stewards of this position statement and will continue to oversee and review the implementation of our commitments to Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

With commitment, Cultivating Leadership

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Name _____

Date _____