



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PARTICIPATION IN THE VIBRANT INDEX IS FREE AND OPEN TO ALL EMPLOYERS IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

Questions and technical issues should be directed to:

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE VIBRANT INDEX?

The Vibrant Index is an annual diagnostic tool that benchmarks and evaluates the diversity, equity, and inclusion practices of participating organizations in nine impact areas. This diagnostic tool was created to inspire organizations in the Pittsburgh region to incorporate and amplify best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion (hereafter “DEI”) into their respective organization. Each diagnostic pillar and best practice evaluated in each iteration of the tool is steeped in and supported by research in the industries of human resources, organizational/workplace psychology, and business.

The Vibrant Index helps organizations identify their strengths and areas of opportunity. Every participating organization receives a feedback report, with scores in comparison to their size cohort and industry, including tips for adopting best practices in the future. Organizations that are leading the way will be acknowledged as Vibrant Champions.

The designation of Vibrant Champion is awarded to employers scoring at least 95% in all nine Vibrant Index pillars. Organizations can also access a Vibrant Pittsburgh workplace diversity practitioner to further explore strategies and practices to advance DEI at their organization.

HOW CAN THIS INITIATIVE HELP MY ORGANIZATION?

Participating in the Vibrant Index provides your organization an opportunity to formally audit organizational practices in comparison to best practices with individualized feedback to support organizational improvement, development, and/or sophistication as it pertains to DEI.

WHO WILL SEE THE ANSWERS MY ORGANIZATION PROVIDES?

Participant information provided to the Vibrant Index is strictly confidential. Vibrant Pittsburgh adheres to the strictest of data security measures. The data collected in the Index will be used to: provide a feedback report to each organization, identify candidates for the Vibrant Champions list, and produce a summary report of the data for the public. No individual organizational responses or data will be shared.

HOW WILL MY ORGANIZATION'S ANSWERS BE USED?

Your organization's answers will be used to provide information on how your organizational practices compare to DEI best practices, the participant sample, and the participating cohort. The information will also be used to create a summary report for the region, as well as to calculate your organization's eligibility for inclusion in the Vibrant Champions list. We do not publish a list of employers that participate in the Vibrant Index but do not qualify as a Vibrant Champion. If necessary, non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) can be signed.

WHAT DO ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVE IF THEY ARE RECOGNIZED AS A VIBRANT CHAMPION?

Organizations that score highly, and are thus designated as Vibrant Champions, will be recognized with a press release and a Vibrant Champions seal for use in advertising, marketing, and recruiting; Vibrant Champions will also have opportunities to participate in Vibrant Index-related webinars and trainings. This seal tells diverse talent that you are committed to DEI work and have one of the most inclusive workplaces in the region.

WHAT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE VIBRANT INDEX?

All types: Publicly traded and private companies, large and small, nonprofit organizations, as well as government departments and agencies are all welcome to participate.

IS THERE ANY COST ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATING IN THE VIBRANT INDEX?

There is **no cost to participate** in any part of the process, from responding to the diagnostic, to receiving the feedback form, to receiving the Vibrant Champions distinction, and earning a copy of the seal to use in advertising and marketing. The Vibrant Index initiative is funded through Vibrant Pittsburgh and supported by its Community Pillar members.

HOW MANY DIAGNOSTIC RESPONSES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED PER ORGANIZATION?

Organizations must submit only one response, from an authorized representative, as we are not able to consider more than one response per organization. Please coordinate with other members of your organization to avoid submitting multiple responses.

HOW ARE QUESTIONS EVALUATED IF THEY ARE LEFT BLANK?

No question in the Vibrant Index diagnostic is required to be answered to complete the process; any question in the diagnostic may be left blank. However, we are only able to evaluate organizations based on the information they provide. The more data you provide, the better we can assess your organization's DEI efforts, which can help improve your organization's evaluation and potential Vibrant Champion status.

CAN I FILL OUT THE INDEX OVER MULTIPLE DAYS/SESSIONS?

The Vibrant Index diagnostic can be completed over multiple sessions; the individual completing the diagnostic will be returned to the last part of the diagnostic completed each time the unique organizational link is accessed. Upon opening the diagnostic tool, you will be able to pause, exit, and return to the diagnostic tool if you utilize your organization's link.

CAN I EDIT RESPONSES AFTER I SUBMIT THE DIAGNOSTIC?

You will not be able to edit the diagnostic after officially submitting it. Please do not submit the diagnostic until you are certain that it is complete and accurate. Submitting the diagnostic is done by pressing the submit button on the final page of the diagnostic. Please only submit after you have had a chance to review your response summary and double-check the accuracy of your responses.

DOES EVERY ORGANIZATION THAT PARTICIPATES IN THE VIBRANT INDEX RECEIVE AN AWARD?

No, Vibrant Champion recognition is a competitive distinction designed to recognize organizations that are excelling at implementing DEI best practices.

Not all organizations participating in the Vibrant Index will be recognized. We only publish the names of organizations that are identified as Vibrant Champions and agree to be recognized. Those organizations that participate but are not given the Vibrant Champions distinction are kept completely confidential.

WHAT DOES 'UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS' MEAN?

The diagnostic utilizes the term “underrepresented groups.” Unless otherwise specified in a specific diagnostic question, “underrepresented groups” is defined as racial and ethnic minorities, such as African American/Black, Latino/Latinx/Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; LGBTQIA+ populations; women; people with disabilities; and veteran and military personnel.

HOW DO I COMPLETE THE VIBRANT INDEX DIAGNOSTIC?

To participate, [CLICK HERE](#) to complete our interest form. This will allow Vibrant Pittsburgh to better serve you as your organization prepares for the upcoming diagnostic period. When the diagnostic period opens (January 21, 2025) you will receive an email with a diagnostic invitation with a live link to the latest iteration of the Vibrant Index. Please do not forward this link outside of your organization — it is your organization’s distinct link.

If you have difficulties accessing the diagnostic, please contact:

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WRITTEN COMMITMENT & TRANSPARENCY

WHAT IS A PUBLIC PLEDGE TO SUPPORT DEI?

A public pledge to support DEI means your organization (or its CEO) has signed a pledge that was created by an outside organization, such as the Vibrant Pittsburgh DEI Pledge or made a public commitment to work on goals set out by a third party.

WHAT PLEDGES COUNT FOR THIS QUESTION?

Any public pledge to work on DEI issues that is hosted or created by an external organization or collection of organizations will count for this question. A public pledge to work on a set of goals such as the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals, which includes several key DEI goals, would be acceptable as well.

WHAT IS A WRITTEN NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY?

An organization’s non-discrimination policy declares what behaviors are intolerable or unacceptable and includes a reporting process for those who would like to report discrimination. Policies should be customized for your organization and must comply with federal, state, and local laws. Check with your legal counsel and human resource advisors to ensure your policy is compliant and reflects the culture and values of your organization.

EXAMPLE: [Organization Name] does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, veteran status, religion, or disability in its activities or policies.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE WRITTEN NON-DISCRIMINATION WEBSITE TO BE ON THE COMPANY'S WEBSITE?

One of the first places people go to learn more about an organization is their website. A commitment to DEI, an equal employment opportunity, or a non-discrimination statement provides your organization with an opportunity to convey to the public and job seekers that your organization values DEI. The more information your organization shares about its values, DEI efforts, external partners, awards, etc., and the more depictions of diversity that are showcased on the site, the more effective it will be in supporting organizational DEI strategies.

MY ORGANIZATION HAS DIFFERENT BENEFITS AND POLICIES FOR FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, AND/OR UNION WORKERS. HOW SHOULD I ANSWER QUESTIONS IN THE BENEFITS AND POLICIES SECTION?

Many organizations employ a variety of individuals who fall under many different classifications (i.e. exempt/non-exempt, union, non-union, etc.). When answering questions regarding organization policies and benefits, only consider the policies and benefits that apply to the majority of your workforce.

WHY DOES THE DIAGNOSTIC ASK ABOUT FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES?

These policies have been identified as promoting inclusivity of people who have children and other dependents.

WHAT DOES LGBTQIA+ MEAN?

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, etc.

WHAT ARE DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS?

This means that employees who have partners but are not married can still receive benefits for those partners.

WHAT ARE TRANS-INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE BENEFITS?

This means that employer-provided coverage includes treatment such as hormone replacement therapy and gender-confirmation surgeries.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PROVIDE FORMAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYEES TO EXPRESS PRONOUNS?

This means that employees are invited to share their pronouns with other employees and the public, which encourages others to share their own pronouns. Organizations signal a welcoming environment for people that are gender nonconforming, transitioning, or transgender by showing awareness and taking proactive steps that expressly allow people to share their gender identity.

WHAT ARE FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS?

This means that hours are not strictly 9 to 5, but that employees can have flexibility in their scheduling to attend doctor's appointments, parent-teacher conferences, and other life events. Flexible work arrangements may also include opportunities to work remotely.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A DRESS CODE THAT DOES NOT RESTRICT OR PROHIBIT CLOTHING THAT REFLECTS ETHNICITY OR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, HAIRSTYLES ASSOCIATED WITH A PARTICULAR RACE OR ETHNICITY, NONBINARY GENDER EXPRESSIONS, AND/OR RELIGIONS ACCESSORIES?

Dress codes are most inclusive when a variety of people from different backgrounds can feel comfortable coming to work with clothing and/or hairstyles that are consistent with their culture, gender expression, or religion. Dress code policies that do not restrict these expressions or have gendered language are considered most inclusive.

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

I HAVE HEARD A LOT OF DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS (ERGS), AND BUSINESS RESOURCE GROUPS (BRGS). WHY ARE THEY INCLUDED IN THE DIAGNOSTIC?

Vibrant Pittsburgh recommends Employee Resource Groups and Business Resource Groups (hereafter “EBRGs”) as a way for employees to connect with networks that will help support and connect them to information, opportunities, and resources that are critical to engagement, advancement, and retention in the workplace. EBRGs also provide organizations with critical insights into different communities and cultures to learn better ways to create more inclusive environments. We recognize that EBRGs are not appropriate for every organization and that the success of EBRGs is dependent on organizational climate, size, and practices around EBRGs.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY “IDENTITIES REPRESENTED BY EBRGS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION”?

This refers to the groups represented by EBRGs. This may include women, people with disabilities, African Americans, parents, etc. Please note that all EBRGs should be open to allies who wish to support and participate.

WHAT IS A “MULTI-IDENTITY GROUP”?

In companies that do not have enough employees to create EBRGs around identities, employees may group together in a multi-identity group to learn about and from each other and to support each other. Similarly, multi-identity groups help inform an organization’s approach to its market and workforce.

WHAT ARE “EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL AFFINITY GROUPS”?

These refer to groups that are external to your organization and bring people together that share a common identity. These groups represent people that are underrepresented and/or marginalized. Some examples of these groups are the National Society of Black Engineers, Society of Women Engineers, OCA–Asian Pacific American Advocates, and Association of Latino Professionals for America.

WHAT IS EBRG EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP?

This means that a high-ranking employee with influence, such as the CEO, advocates for, participates in, and secures funding and visibility for EBRGs, its members, and its activities.

LEADERSHIP

WHAT IS A CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER?

A Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) is an executive who oversees and drives the DEI strategy in your organization. While an organization may not have a position directly titled Chief Diversity Officer, it is best practice to have the organization head of DEI report directly to the CEO and/or C-suite executives. Depending on the type of organization, the CDO role may be focused on the workforce or marketplace including product development, external partnerships, customer service, supplier diversity, or a combination of these focus areas. The CDO may be employee-facing or focused on outreach.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY “EMPLOYEES WHOSE PRIMARY JOB RESPONSIBILITY IS TO ADVANCE DEI ISSUES?”

There are many titles for employees who work to promote DEI in an organization. Some titles may not include the terms “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and other employees may have DEI as a portion of their responsibilities. Please identify employees whose main body of work includes advancing organization-wide DEI initiatives. This would not include employees who participate in a DEI council or committee.

TRAINING & EDUCATION

WHAT IS IMPLICIT OR UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

Implicit or unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from everyone’s tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

This is the ability to conduct yourself in a respectful manner with people from other cultures.

WHAT IS BIAS AWARENESS?

This training involves exercises that make us more aware of our biases, such as taking tests through Project Implicit.

WHAT IS BIAS REDUCTION?

This refers to the actions taken after bias is considered. It involves becoming aware of biases and employing tactics to reduce the harm they can do.

WHAT IS EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) COMPLIANCE TRAINING?

This training will include how to do EEO reporting and how to comply with EEO guidelines.

WHAT IS ‘BELONGING’?

Belonging training is designed to help organizations create environments where people feel a deep sense of acceptance, inclusion, and connection.

ACCOUNTABILITY

WHY DOES THE DIAGNOSTIC ASK ABOUT DATA?

Gathering data about who is hired, how long they stay, and how much they are paid can reveal a lot about whether your organization’s DEI practices are working to attract a more diverse workforce to our region. Reviewing this data can reveal if bias is playing a part in your organization’s operations. Being aware of the numbers is a best practice in and of itself.

WHAT CAN WE DO IF THE NUMBERS AREN’T WHAT WE WANT?

If your organization has gathered data and wants to implement change, reach out to Vibrant Pittsburgh for assistance.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY?

A comprehensive recruitment strategy is a concerted effort on the part of an organization to engage a wide applicant pool from a diverse representation of demographic groups. A comprehensive recruitment strategy is a concerted effort an organization takes to attract a broad and diverse pool of applicants. This may include but is not limited to, intentional engagement and recruitment of underrepresented groups while ensuring the organization's workforce reflects the demographic diversity of its surrounding community or industry.

WHAT IS AVAILABILITY DATA?

Availability data is descriptive data that indicates the demographic diversity of a field or profession. It may include information about graduation rates, demographics of a field or industry, as well as workforce data. Availability should be calculated to develop realistic goals and assess progress.

WHAT COUNTS AS A CONVENTION OR EVENT ORGANIZED AROUND AN UNDERREPRESENTED GROUP?

For this question, it is any event that is centered around a group of convention attendees that share a common identity and a common industry, profession, or degree. Some examples include the National Black MBA Association Annual Conference, the Prospanica Annual Conference, and Career Expo, and the Society of Women Engineers Annual Conference.

WHAT ARE ANONYMIZED RESUMES?

Removing or obscuring information (like name, age, and gender) on resumes is a technique for limiting the effects of bias during the hiring process. For example, studies have shown name interpretation affects callback rates on resumes with identical qualifications. In other studies, gender has been shown to affect assumptions around the competence of candidates with identical qualifications.

WHAT ARE BLIND/WRITTEN INTERVIEWS?

Blind interviews are methods employers use to limit bias during the interview process. It generally means that the employer does not see and sometimes does not speak to the candidate during the interview component of hiring. Organizations use creative means to assess candidates including written responses, testing that allows candidates to showcase skills, and other mechanisms.

WHAT ARE STANDARDIZED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS?

Using a standardized set of interview questions for all candidates for a position is a technique for reducing bias. For example, research has shown that gender affects the rate at which competence questions are asked in an interview for the same position. Asking identical questions provides a fairer basis on which to compare candidates.

WHAT ARE HIRING PANELS?

Using a hiring panel instead of a single interviewer can also reduce bias, especially when panelists are asked to justify their answers.

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY

WHAT IS A SUPPLIER DIVERSITY PLAN?

A supplier diversity plan is a deliberate strategy on the part of an organization to increase the diversity of vendors from which organizations procure services and goods. Supplier diversity programs are generally established for minority, women, LGBTQIA+, veteran, and disability owned businesses.

WHY IS THERE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN DIVERSE SUPPLIER TYPES?

Supplier diversity initiatives should be viewed as similar to any other diversity program in that they should be inclusive of all types of individuals. The distinction between the groups is included to assess the complexity and thoroughness of your organization's supplier diversity program.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY DIVERSE COMMUNITY PROJECTS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR INITIATIVES?

This might entail supporting diverse nonprofit organizations and other external partners by serving on boards, raising funds, volunteering on projects, and hosting or sponsoring events for community members that benefit the communities and markets where the organization operates.

WHAT COUNTS AS PUBLIC EVENTS SUPPORTING NON-MAJORITY POPULATIONS AND COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS PARADES OR CULTURAL FESTIVALS?

This could be anything from Lunar New Year festivals, a Pride parade, African American Heritage Day Parade, a community celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations, ReelAbilities Film Festival, etc.

NEXT STEPS

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO ORGANIZATIONS AFTER WE RECEIVE FEEDBACK?

Organizations that participate in the Vibrant Index will receive a feedback report and the opportunity to receive a **FREE** 60-minute consultation with a Vibrant Pittsburgh Workplace Diversity Practitioner for additional DEI advice, education, and strategic planning.

Questions and technical issues should be directed to:

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