



Leadership and Governance Toolkit

Tool 2: Creating Excitement around DEI Change

DEI is often met with much mental resistance in organizations. For many people from non-equity-seeking groups, it feels angry, anxious, and often too progressive. For members of EDGs, it can often feel cautious, shy, and instrumental. However, it rarely feels joyful or exciting¹. Can leaders of organizational DEI change be successful when DEI feels so different for so many internal stakeholders? For community-based organizations, these feelings are even more exacerbated on both sides given the realities of hiring and firing pre and post pandemic. How does one even go about creating excitement around DEI change? Excitement means fostering positive deeply emotional feelings around DEI change. This requires storytelling on the part of DEI leaders from EDGs but also on the part of leaders from non-EDGs.

Story telling sessions must be held across the organization that ask participants what kind of organization they want to work for? In most community-based organizations 4 stories are usually at play: (1) White Fragility: Members of non-equity seeking groups feel insecure about their future at the organization, (2) Microaggressions: Members of EDGs have DEI-related experiences that make them feel like they don't belong and cannot grow a careers at the organization, (3) Systemic Discrimination: Members of EDGs simply have not had the same opportunities as other members from equity-seeking groups, and (4) Leadership Unpreparedness: Leaders who have seen DEI challenges, but have not been prepared to deal with them in ways that were fair and equitable.

DEI Leaders must identify these four stories in their organization and then prepare an organizational culture session where these 4 stories are leveraged to improve understanding of DEI, create empathy, and emotional buy-in around the DEI values that staff want to see reflected in the organization's culture. Identifying and showcasing these core DEI stories will allow DEI leaders to explore their own intersectionalities and forms of privilege, which are important elements of discussion with staff demonstrating the DEI change is a WE endeavour.

challenge. Demonstrating DEI is a WE challenge is even more important when the individual responsible for driving change is from an EDG.

¹ <https://roger.livewireinc.com/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-is-about-radical-joy/>