

# What is DEI?



## Why does WEF need DEI?

The “case” for DEI typically falls into the categories of the business case and the moral imperative.

The **business case** refers to the positive outcomes in productivity and innovation associated with an increase in diversity. As the demographics of countries change, diversity is growing as a crucial element to better serving customer needs. WEF is no different in that our members expect us to benefit from the greatest diversity of perspectives to solve for water. For WEF, that means making room for newer and different voices and listening better.



The **moral imperative** for diversity is tied to the concept of equity (see over). It’s based on the idea that it is the right thing to do to alleviate some of the long-standing historical injustices that marginalized communities have faced over time. WEF members expect us to respect and value **all** our members, independent of any ‘dimensions of diversity’; (see right).



## WEF DEI Member Feedback

In a 2020 WEF DEI member survey we learned that although many of you value your WEF interactions, some of you don’t always experience the respect you deserve. We are committed to learning and taking action.

People asking for change included engineers, operators, scientists, non-technical professions and emerging professionals as well as those from smaller utilities and companies. There are women fed up of proving their credentials, people of color tired of being asked where they ‘come from’ and largely invisible LGBTQ+ members tired of homophobic jokes. We can do better.

You don’t need a PE or PhD to be a valued WEF member or volunteer . Water is for all of us.

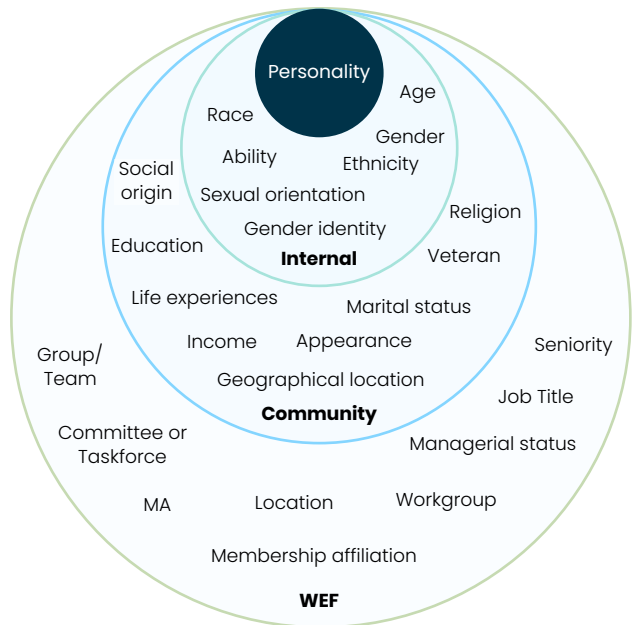


## How do we define Diversity @ WEF?

*Diversity encompasses the varying experiences, strengths, skills, perspectives, personal characteristics, cultures, and backgrounds represented by and within the WEF community.*

## Dimensions of Diversity<sup>1</sup> @ WEF

The model below shows some of the dimensions of diversity that are present at WEF. The internal dimensions are those that are typically associated with personal identity, the community dimensions are how we relate to society and are more easily changed, and the outer circle captures role, tenure and other membership categories within WEF:



**Note:** In any meeting or conversation, it is important to consider the dimensions in which you hold power, perhaps by job rank or seniority or through life experience.

Positions of power give extra weight to opinions and ideas, so be thoughtful about creating opportunities for everyone’s ideas and thoughts to be shared.

<sup>1</sup>2 Adapted from Gardenswartz and Rowe’s “Four Dimensions of Diversity”

 **And how about “Inclusion”?**

The act of **inclusion** embraces and celebrates the perspectives, voices, values, and needs of each individual to generate a culture where all feel heard, respected, valued, and included in the broader WEF purpose.

Inclusion is typically associated with **psychological safety**, or the intentional fostering of cultures that promote a free flow of ideas and an absence of fear. When we feel we belong we can generate our best work.

**Self-Reflection:** What makes you feel included?

*Generally, when we think of inclusive workplace characteristics we think of:*

Belonging	Value	Respect
Authenticity	Allyship	Vulnerability
Accessibility	Recognition	Professional Development

 **Why Equity instead of Equality?**


In committing to **equity** we mean a workplace where everyone can realize their full potential and no-one is disadvantaged due to their group identity or other socially determined circumstance.

Equity depends on (1) removing barriers and obstacles so that all can thrive in the workplace, and (2) allocating necessary resources in order to achieve fairer outcomes.

This graphic<sup>3</sup> shows the difference between **equality** -- everyone has the same bike and not all can ride -- and **equity**, where each person has a bike suitable for their needs so that all can ride.



Courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

 **Where can I go to learn more?**

[www.wef.org/dei](http://www.wef.org/dei) for WEF’s DEI Subcommittee

Book: *Reinventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community* by Howard Ross, 2013

Book: *Equity: How to Design Organizations Where Everyone Thrives* by Minal Bopaiah, 2021

SHRM’s Workplace Resources :  
<https://shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/hr-topics/Pages/diversity-equity-and-inclusion.aspx>

Othring and Belonging Institute @ UC Berkeley  
[\\*https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/upload/2018/06/Brookings-Metro-Renewing-the-Water-Workforce-June-2018.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/upload/2018/06/Brookings-Metro-Renewing-the-Water-Workforce-June-2018.pdf)

**Brookings Institute Water Workforce Report\***

In 2018, the Brookings Institute published a national review of the water industry workforce. The findings highlighted a growing talent shortage and an opportunity to offer well-paying jobs to new water workers. It also highlighted the lack of age, gender and racial diversity in certain key occupations, pointing to the need for younger, more diverse talent. It is worth reading the report to understand the dynamics in our industry.

“The story of water is a powerful one and it should compel everyone’s interest. I wish that I had heard it when I was a kid.”

African American woman, WEF Member