



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Toolkit

America is changing. In order for businesses to adapt and thrive, the future of our workforce must be increasingly diverse.

The data shows that diversity in a business team leads to increased innovation, positioning the organization for increased growth. Fostering an environment where team members feel free to voice differing ideas and make decisions will ultimately encourage them to become more invested in the organization's success, as well as help retain top-tier talent.

Our toolkit highlights four key focus areas and accompanying strategies to help your business identify opportunities for growth in diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Expanding the profession through adaptation, innovation, and collaboration.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Toolkit

Why is diversity, equity, inclusion, and access vital to an organization's success?



A company with diverse teams is **45%** more likely to improve market share and **70%** more likely to capture a new market.



A company in the top **25%** for racial and ethnic diversity is **35%** more likely to have financial returns above respective national industry median.



82% of CFOs say they are concerned that cultural factors within their organization might stand in the way of their ability to implement automated technologies, workflows, etc.



Young people want to work for companies with strong values that reflect a DEI-focused approach to diverse teams, equitable and transparent promotional opportunities, and leadership accountability.

"Inclusion and diversity is critical for what we do and enables us to be innovative and solve problems for our people, our clients, and our communities every day. It matters for who we want to be and what we want to do as a company."

Julie Sweet, CEO, Accenture

Focus Area: Raise Awareness

Identify and mitigate unconscious bias so people of all backgrounds are recognized and valued.

Female

51% of population
62% of accountants
 and auditors workforce
23% of partners
 in CPA firms

LatinX

18.5% of population
8.9% of accountants
 and auditors workforce
2% of partners
 in CPA firms

Black

13.4% of population
8.5% of accountants
 and auditors workforce
1.0% of partners
 in CPA firms

Uncovering the blind spots of unconscious bias:

- Who is invited to be visible and valued for their unique perspective and ability?
- Who feels encouraged to be visible and valued for their authenticity, ethnicity, and gender?
- Who feels empowered to be heard and thoughtfully considered for ideas, solutions, and needs, based on merit not on personal identification?
- Who is elevated and rewarded with opportunities for differing contributions?

Business Imperative

Different perspectives enhance customer and client outreach, as well as enrich decision-making at all levels within an organization, and thus enhance performance, satisfaction, and results.

Strategies

- Implement periodic assessments to uncover organizational blind spots and personal filters.
- Initiate leader-led DEI&A committees and activities as well as employee-led affinity/resource groups that are empowered to provide DEI&A insights and suggested actions directly to leadership.
- Attend AICPA's Annual Accounting Profession Diversity Symposium.
- Collaborate with the CTCPA and other organizations on DEI&A initiatives and events.
- Formalize personal and organizational exposure to diversity by creating opportunities for mentoring, networking, and volunteer involvement with minority professional groups and cultural and community organizations.

Focus Area: Attract Diverse Talent

Promote the profession as a desirable career path for people regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, or LGBTQ identification.



39% of DEI&A survey respondents turned down or did not pursue a job because of a perceived lack of inclusion at an organization.



“As more companies have a need for U.S. tax consulting, they will choose firms that resemble their own teams. To ensure sustainability of firms, owners must consider minorities for recruitment and leadership development.”

BKR International

Business Imperative

Attracting, retaining, and promoting the next generation of leaders into the 21st Century is paramount to the long-term sustainable success of the profession.

Technological innovations, especially in data science and analytics, are becoming a more common part of the profession and are changing the way we do business and who we hire to do it.

The *AICPA Trends* report for 2019 found 58% of new accounting graduates – and 71% of those graduates hired by U.S. CPA firms – were white, underlying the need for programs designed to increase awareness of the profession to racially and ethnically diverse groups.

Strategies

- Prioritize establishing an end-to-end diverse talent pipeline.
- Build diverse candidate pools with outreach to diverse business schools and educate youth from untapped communities:
 - AICPA Real CPA Pipeline Campaign
 - AICPA *HBUC (Historically Black Universities and Colleges) Toolkit*
- Update recruiting policies that welcome diverse expressions of thought and qualifications, replace interview bias with objective criteria, and include proactive candidate searches in diverse schools and work hubs.

Focus Area: Drive Career Promotion

Take specific steps to ensure that people of diverse backgrounds have equitable access to the factors that enable career advancement.



Companies with greater diversity in leadership roles and promotions generate a more positive experience for all employees.



“A lack of DEI&A directly affects the talent pipeline and public’s trust in the profession’s ability to timely adapt to business change.”

DEI&A Survey, 2021

Business Imperative

Although Bureau of Labor Statistics shows an average rate of growth for accounting and auditing through 2030, large numbers of today’s CPAs will be eligible to retire in the next 15 years; therefore, retaining, reskilling, and upskilling talent will be critical to meet evolving business demands.

On average, less than one-third of nonwhite, Hispanic, Latino, female, and LGBTQIA respondents view that their particular demographic group:

1. Has access to the same opportunities, information, support, and resources as its non-Hispanic, white, male, and non-LGBTQIA counterparts, and
2. Is provided with an inclusive environment by senior leaders in their organizations.

Strategies

- Develop specific support, financial resources, and mentorship to ESL and minority employees to achieve the CPA certificate and licensing.
- Promote innovation, responsibility and visibility by educating and delegating business and leadership roles to diverse thinkers.
- Cultivate technological leaders to build and leverage technologies that enhance their work and advance the firm’s value to business and customers.
- Elevate staff skills and aptitudes with a training culture that supports different learning styles.

Focus Area: Increase Accountability for Progress

Identify DEI&A metrics linked to performance measures and transparent reporting.



Companies with leadership structures that support diversity, such as a Chief Diversity Officer, are perceived to be more inclusive by employees.



“Without targeted and coordinated efforts to improve diversity, recognize talent equitably, and foster an inclusive environment, the profession may risk losing the race for relevancy.”

DEI&A Survey, 2021

Business Imperative

Taking prominence in corporate decision-making, reporting, and governance, DEI&A matters have become highly relevant to the profession’s clients and constituents. More broadly, investors are calling for more disclosures about how corporations are responding or contributing to resolving social justice issues.

Strategies

- Institute process and policy changes that tie DEI&A accountability to leader objectives, HR practices, and supplier relationships. Metrics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Recruitment, retention and promotion rates,
 - Salary parity,
 - Performance review trends.
- To ensure that there’s alignment at the top, an organization can form a DEI&A council composed of a handful of senior leaders to oversee the strategy. Initiatives need positional and organizational power.
- Managers are the change agents and should be considered a key element of the DEI&A success formula. Firms should ensure managers have the tools, resources, and training to support DEI&A efforts.
- Evaluate the company’s promotion process to minimize subjectivity and to provide transparency of form and function, including required competencies for job roles.

End Notes

- ¹ United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, “Population estimates, July 1, 2019,” 2019, bit.ly/35EomYY
- ² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey,” 2019, Household Data Annual Averages, Table 11: Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, bit.ly/2fky4Dv.
- ³ “2019 Sitting CFOs of Fortune 500 and S&P 500 Companies,” Crist | Kolder Associates, 2019.
- ⁴ “2018 Partners in Accounting/Finance Functions of U.S. CPA Firms, AICPA, 2019.
- ⁵ “Innovation, Diversity and Market Growth,” Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall, and Laura Sherbin with Tara Gonsalves. Center for Talent Innovation, 2013, bit.ly/2LXsxru.
- ⁶ “Why diversity matters,” Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince. January 1, 2015, bit.ly/2o8MVVo.
- ⁷ 2021 State of Accounting Staffing: Digital Transformation and Diversity, 2021, <https://bit.ly/3FIClXh>.
- ⁸ IMA/CalCPA DEI&A Survey Report, “DIVERSIFYING U.S. ACCOUNTING TALENT: A Critical Imperative to Achieve Transformational Outcomes,” bit.ly/3DxqwrK.
- ⁹ AICPA, “2019 Accounting Graduates Supply and Demand Report,” 2019, Table 1.4: Growing diversity in the CPA profession 2018, bit.ly/3bEdw8S.
- ¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, bit.ly/30bhORs.
- ¹¹ IMA/CalCPA DEI&A Survey Report, “DIVERSIFYING U.S. ACCOUNTING TALENT: A Critical Imperative to Achieve Transformational Outcomes,” bit.ly/3DxqwrK.
- ¹² CPA Practice Advisor, “Greater Diversity in Leadership Creates More Positive Employee Experience,” analysis of Willis Towers Watson survey and Bloomberg Gender-Equity Index. 2020, bit.ly/3lyXrpy.
- ¹³ CPA Practice Advisor, “Greater Diversity in Leadership Creates More Positive Employee Experience,” analysis of Willis Towers Watson survey and Bloomberg Gender-Equity Index. 2020, bit.ly/3lyXrpy.