DCBS Inclusive Language

Specific and careful use of language respects and honors our diverse communities in Oregon.

Inclusive language is communication that actively uses words, phrases, and expressions that are welcoming to everyone. When possible, avoid assumptions and stereotypes that may exclude people one way or another. The exclusion may be inadvertent, but it can have a negative effect on people. To create an equitable and inclusive community in which everyone feels valued and recognized, it is necessary to exercise the usage of inclusive language in our everyday communication such as in person interaction, emails, letters, marketing material, websites, social media, and other forms of communication.

The current DEI Action Plan by the Governor's Office defines historically and currently underserved and underrepresented communities. These include Oregon residents that identify as:

- Native American, members of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes, American Indian, Alaska Natives
- Black, African, African American
- Latina, Latino, Latinx, Hispanic
- Asian
- Pacific Islander (including Compact of Free Association citizens)
- Immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, deferred status holders, temporary protected status
- Undocumented, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, "dreamers," nonimmigrant visa holders
- Linguistically diverse, English language learners (ELL)
- Economically disadvantaged
- People with disabilities
- LGBTQIA2S+
- Farmworkers, migrant seasonal workers

State of Oregon's Definition of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Diversity is the appreciation and prioritization of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences, collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for representation of communities that are systemically underrepresented and under-resourced. These differences are strengths that maximize the state's competitive advantage through innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability.

Equity acknowledges that not all people or all communities are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is

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the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities.

Inclusion is a state of belonging when people of different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision makers, collaborators, and colleagues. Ultimately, inclusion is the environment that organizations create to allow these differences to thrive.

We must be aware that inclusive language best practices are constantly changing. We want to ensure we are welcoming employees and providing accessible services for our communities. We would fulfill this by remaining up to date with the latest language evolutions and preferences. It will help us keep current when communicating among ourselves and community members.

We have created this document to be supportive of the diverse communities in Oregon.

Recommended language

Using gendered language reinforces narratives about gender roles; it goes a step further to suggest that the choice to use these specific words could be unconsciously driven by harmful stereotypes. Nonbinary colleagues struggle to be accepted in workplaces that haven't adopted pronouns and other vocabulary that affirms their identities.

When possible try to name the specific community you are addressing, create an inclusive environment by introducing yourself with your preferred pronouns (e.g., I am (use your name), the pronouns of she/her, he/him, or they).

Take active measures against discrimination, racism, xenophobia, stigmatization, violence, and hate crimes and protect civil rights for all Oregon residents. Below are some examples of inclusive language:

Age

Avoid referring to someone's age, unless it's relevant to what you're writing about. Some examples of biased language are "elder" or "elderly," "senior," or "the aged."
- Terms such as "older persons," "older people," "older adults," "older customers," "older individuals," "people 65 years and older," and "the older population" are preferred.

Citizenship
- The term "minority" is not accurate when describing nonwhite communities. Instead, use phrases depending on the context or the group; appropriate terminology includes

communities of color, marginalized communities, underserved, underrepresented, or even emerging majority when referencing statistics and data.
- When referring to a person's race or ethnicity, use adjectives, not nouns (for example, a Russian person, not a Russian).
- Avoid terms such as "guys" for everyone and use instead gender neutral terms such as staff members, volunteers, visitors, or members.
- Hispanic represents descendants of all Spanish speaking countries. Latino/Latina/Latinx represent people from Latin American heritage, which are broad and masculine, feminine, and nonbinary.

Disability

Every person is a whole person — no matter how they interact with the world. Inclusive language is a key tool in combating ableism in our everyday communication. People-first language is the most widely accepted language for referring to people with disabilities.
- People-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability, by placing a reference to the person or group before the reference to the disability for example describing people as disabled or handicapped instead placing the person first as staff with disabilities or women with intellectual disabilities.
- The people-first rule does not necessarily apply to all types of disabilities. There are some exceptions. For example, when referring to people who are blind, we can say either "blind people" or "people who are blind", and the same applies to deaf or deafblind people.
- However, phrases such as "blind as a bat" or "deaf as a post" are unacceptable and should never be used, even in informal contexts. You should also be careful with metaphors like "blind to criticism" and "to fall on deaf ears."

Gender

Every person has the right to describe themselves as they feel. Understand that not everyone wants to share their identity. It is important to ask people what terms they use to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression before assigning them a label.
- Instead of assumptions about biological parents and assuming that there is a mom and dad to instead say parent, caregiver, grownup, or responsible adult.
- Ask in advance if you are not sure of something. It's fine not to know something, but find out where to go to get reputable answers.

Knowing that "they" can be used to refer to individual people allows us to avoid defaulting to he in regular use. It is also important for people whose genders are neither male nor female.

- Using "they" as a singular noun
  They has been officially recognized as correct by several key bodies, including the Associated Press, which is the style DCBS uses for writing.

	Subject	Object	Possessive	Pronunciation	Example
Gender Binary	She	Her	Hers	As it looks	She is speaking.
	He	Him	His	As it looks	He is speaking.
Gender Neutral	They (Sing.)	Them	Theirs	As it looks	They are speaking.
	Ze	Hir	HIrs	Zhee, Here, Heres	Ze is speaking.
	Ze	Zir	Zirs	Zhee, Zhere, Zheres	Ze is speaking.
	Xe	Xem	Xyr	Zhee, Zhym, Zhyre	Xe is speaking.

Using gender neutral honorifics

The gender-neutral Mx. is used as a title for those who do not identify as being of a particular gender, or for people who simply don't want to be identified by gender. When possible, it is best to ask what honorific a person wants to be addressed by. When this is not possible, address them by their first and last name, professional title, or the gender neutral Mx is recommended.

Resources:

- Governor's Office A Roadmap to Racial Equity Belonging
- Racial Equity Tools- Glossary
- Mx. Gender-Neutral Honorific | Merriam-Webster
- 18F Content Guide: Inclusive Language
- Conscious Style Guide
- Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio Pronounce: A How-To
- Purdue University: Gendered Pronouns & Singular "They"
- American Psychological Association: Bias-free language: Racial and ethnic identity
- Insider An anti-racist's dictionary: 19 words on race, gender, and diversity you should know
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists: To drop the use of "minority" when referencing communities of color