



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Frequently Asked Questions

1) Why is DEI important and needed in animal welfare?

It is our belief that DEI is important everywhere in our society. Animal Welfare has largely been a white dominant movement that has not connected to the 40% of Americans who are not white. By engaging the BIPOC community, we will make our organizations more responsive, more creative and better reflections of our communities by listening to diverse voices. By engaging a broader community, we have more opportunities to help animals. DEI is important everywhere but given that animal welfare has largely not been diverse, inclusive, or equitable, it is especially important that we work to correct this and engage a broader audience in the work we do.

2) Why are we doing this?

As leaders we understand our work is as much about the people in our communities as it is about the animals. Both the association and its member organization play a critical role in transforming how we create greater understanding and ultimately action that better the lives of our people and our animals. Because it's the right thing to do. We work with people just as much, if not more than we work with animals, so it's essential we are able to connect in meaningful, sustainable ways.

3) In what way is the Association doing work around DEI?

The Association formed a DEI Committee in 2019 made up of a diverse group of Association members and volunteers. We have issued a statement on The Association's position on DEI and a glossary of relevant terms to help move the conversation forward. We have issued an RFP for a DEI consultant to work with The Association staff and members to create a path for our entire industry to address DEI issues.

4) What is the Association's ultimate goal associated with DEI?

We want to envision a diverse animal welfare movement with organizations across the country having diverse boards, leadership, staff, volunteers and clients. We want animal welfare organizations to be part of entire communities and will achieve this by being more inclusive, listening to diverse voices and stepping aside to lift up new leaders for diverse backgrounds. This is ongoing and never-ending work.

5) What resources are available to help my organization?

In this virtual exhibit booth, we have several presentations, webcasts, blogs, presentations, podcasts, and reading material available for download and/or viewing.

6) Can I get involved with the committee work around DEI?

As we start working with a consultant, we anticipate engaging a larger audience in this work which will evolve over the course of the next 9 months to a year.

7) I'm a rural, all-white community, why is it important to me?

There are few communities that are truly all white, but it is common in those communities for the small number of BIPOC people to remain unheard. Often those same communities have historic roots where indigenous communities once existed. This effort is critical in understanding where we are, where our communities have come from, and most importantly, for being intentional about what values propel your community forward. You will improve your organization by reaching out to them. East Asian and Latino populations are growing faster than any others in the U.S. If you are in an all-white community, it is likely that your population is shrinking and ignoring BIPOC people is not sustainable.

8) Is DEI a political issue – why is the Association getting involved in political issues?

DEI is not political. Calling it political is a strategy engaged by some to try to stifle the conversation because talking about politics is considered impolite or controversial. DEI is an effort to bring all people together, not elevate one over another, but to recognize that some have been marginalized. The Association isn't choosing a political party or taking a political position, we are taking the position that all people should be able to engage in our work.

9) If I live in a very conservative, white community – how do I bring this up in my community?

There is no quick fix to this issue, especially in this type of community so recognize that this work will take time, you will make mistakes, and you will receive pushback. Start first with yourself doing the work to grow your self-awareness. Work with those closest to you, board, staff, volunteers. Be intentional in bringing in diverse representation of your community within that group. Make sure you have a support system and people who you can have open discussions with about your approach. The Association plans to have more information and practical tools to support your DEI work in the coming year.

10) How many BIPOC members are included in the Association's work? How do they fit into the work?

Our DEI Committee has 28 members, including LGBTQIA+ people, and 17 BIPOC committee members. On the committee we are including all marginalized people. We recognize that there are BIPOC members throughout this industry whose voices and experiences need to be heard. We are actively seeking participation and open the invitation to our members.

11) Is this a Best Practice Committee? Will there be a paper issued?

It is not a Best Practice Committee. We plan to release practical tools that will help organizations advance their DEI work. We're not sure yet exactly what form those tools will take.

12) How do I get my leadership interested?

We are sharing resources in the forms of blogs, presentations, webcasts, and articles that are easily shared with Board members, leadership, and other colleagues.

13) How do I engage my Board in this issue?

You know your board and should look for individuals who are likely to be allies. It might be effective to ask a few board members who would be the strongest advocates to form a committee. Those board members then presented the case for working on DEI to the rest of the board. Similar to leadership, start with data that has already been collected that shows how many people who are left out. Understanding how your board organizes its work can give you ways to incorporate DEI. How does your board reflect on their composition in relation to the makeup of your community? How do they think about strategic growth and priorities? How does your budget reflect DEI initiatives?

14) Are there resources available for our Board?

There are several websites and online resources for Board members to utilize including:

<https://boardsource.org/research-critical-issues/diversity-equity-inclusion/>

<https://bloomerang.co/resources/dei/>

15) Can you refer me to other animal welfare organizations that are doing this work?

This is a short list of just a few organizations currently working on DEI:

- American Pets Alive! HASS program (Human Animal Support Services)
- Animal Protective Association of Durham
- Best Friends Animal Society
- CARE (Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity)
- Columbus Humane
- Dallas Animal Services
- Humane Rescue Alliance
- Los Angeles County Animal Care and Control
- Multnomah County Animal Service

16) Do you have a timeline for the project?

9 months to a year for completion, but we will continue to release content that features BIPOC people on webinars, blogs and podcasts.

17) What, if any, new opportunities will come for career advancement because of this work?

We see a future where DEI is going to be an essential part of every organization's fundamental values. Those who are aware and practiced at building inclusive communities will be more valued by organizations. Additionally, by incorporating equity and inclusion principles into operations, decision-making processes, hiring/recruitment, and customer service, you are positioning yourself to gain insights and perspectives that will be more impactful on your personal growth and development than many advanced degrees or certifications will offer. This work will also create more accessible channels for advancement within animal welfare for many people who previously may have stagnated at certain levels. With an increase in professional growth, we may see more movement in the field overall and more opportunities for advancement for all. For larger organizations, it is likely that roles specific to DEI principles and values (as well as other social justice focuses) will be created.

18) How do I assess where my organization is right now?

Start benchmarking. Data is a starting point. Consider your EEOC report. What does it tell you about the makeup of your teams? Of your leadership? Who are your donors and clients? How are you bringing different voices into your vision and strategy?

19) What resources can I give my team?

The resources available through The Association can be found in this virtual exhibit booth and include blogs, presentations, podcasts, articles, etc.

20) I just stopped by the booth...

Cheers for showing up. Take this opportunity to learn, grow and respond to those in your organization who need this even if you don't think you do. Marginalized and underserved communities are integral parts of our society and being a support for them ultimately supports animal welfare goals. We can't support the overarching goals of animal welfare if we do not intentionally engage in meaningful dialogue and relationships with diverse communities.

