

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TOOLKIT

CUWA agencies are committed to addressing systemic racism, promoting equity, and catalyzing change for marginalized communities throughout the water community. The CUWA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee developed CUWA DEI Policy Principles (Policy Principles), which the CUWA Board of Representatives approved in December 2020. This DEI toolkit compiles best practices from member agencies and provides guidance on implementation of DEI policies and practices with the intent of assisting others in developing their DEI programs. Implementation of DEI programs is a continuous process, and each organization is at a different stage of their DEI journey. To promote a shared understanding in the context of this DEI toolkit, working definitions are as follows:

- **Diversity:** The broad tapestry that comprises the organization's workforce, customers, and the communities that are served. Diversity includes both visible characteristics (e.g. race, gender identity, and age) and less obvious characteristics (e.g. personality, job function, and sexual orientation).
- **Equity:** The distribution of opportunities and resources such that everyone has equivalent access.
- **Inclusion:** The state in which all employees feel that they are a valuable part of the organization, that their voices and identities and beliefs matter and can be heard.



WHO IS CUWA?

Established in 1990, California Urban Water Agencies (CUWA) is a nonprofit corporation of 11 major urban water agencies collectively delivering drinking water to approximately two-thirds of California's population. Water delivered by CUWA's 11 member agencies is a lifeline supporting California's urban populations and powering the bulk of the state's \$3.2 trillion economy.

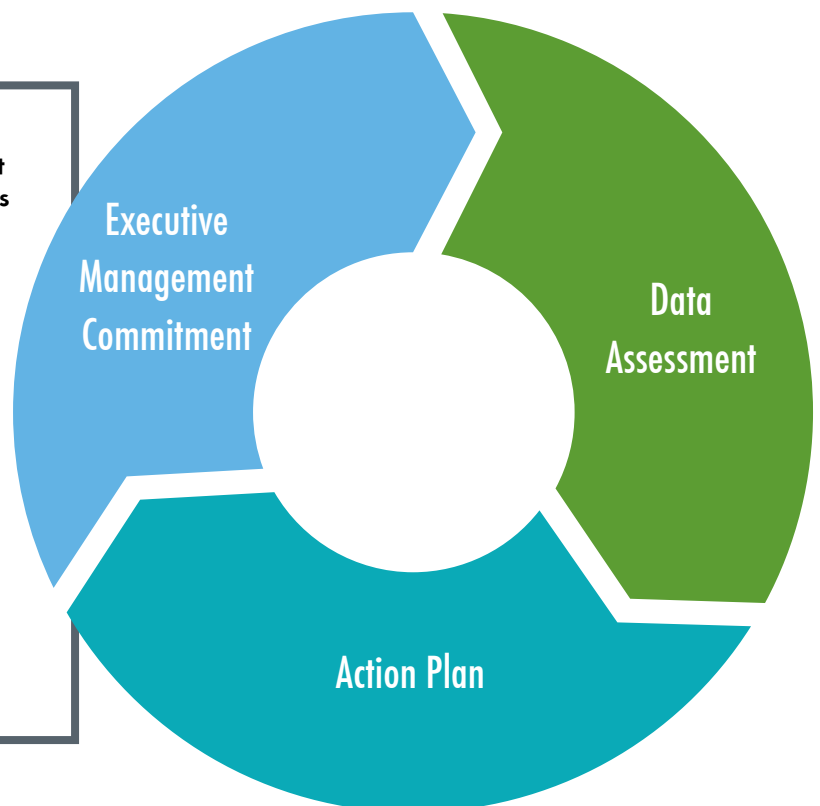
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This toolkit shares best practices and lessons learned to help benefit and improve CUWA agencies and the entire water community in their DEI efforts.

The relationship between Executive Management Commitments, Data Assessment, and Action Plans is interdependent and iterative.

Executive management commitments can necessitate the development of a data assessment. Results from a data assessment inform the development of action plans and associated recommendations often result in refined executive management commitments. This is an iterative process, as each element can be updated and refined to reflect new information and progress. Improving DEI in organizations is a dynamic process that requires long term commitment, balancing the desire for rapid progress with the creation of a solid foundation for long term change.

The documents included in this toolkit provide additional details on each of these elements.





This toolkit focuses on the following elements as initial focus areas and can be expanded to cover additional future focus areas. These elements are complementary to broader frameworks, such as the Racial Equity Toolkit developed by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). The elements highlighted here can be used as specific implementation examples to achieve the steps outlined in the GARE toolkit.

Initial Focus Areas

Executive Management Commitment

Policy statements, resolutions, procedures that direct executive leadership to take tangible action to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion based on stated mission/vision/values

RELEVANCE TO POLICY PRINCIPLES:

Leadership is responsible for setting a tone for a culture of respect that is embraced throughout all levels of the organization.

Data Assessment

Framework to determine employee demographic data, assess perspectives, routinely assess progress, identify gaps, and prioritize improvements for DEI at member agencies

RELEVANCE TO POLICY PRINCIPLES:

The organization remains accountable by routinely assessing progress, identifying gaps, and prioritizing improvements that lead to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Action Plan

Approach to determine scope of work, timeframe, and feedback mechanism for implementing DEI initiatives

RELEVANCE TO POLICY PRINCIPLES:

The organization should create an inclusive work environment where all employees feel welcome and comfortable (psychologically safe) sharing diverse ideas, approaches, and perspectives.

Potential future focus areas may expand upon the actionable categories of the Action Plan (e.g., Hiring Practices, Supplier Diversity) or extend beyond the organization to address environmental justice in the broader community.

References:

- [California Urban Water Agencies. 2020. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Principles.](#)
- [Government Alliance on Race and Equity. 2016. Racial Equity Toolkit.](#)

References will be updated on the CUWA website as more information and examples become available.