



## A Framework for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DEI Team, City of River Falls

December 2021

The City of River Falls embraces a framework for inclusive growth through practices that reflect diverse values, promotes forward thinking leadership, and embraces continuous learning and improvement.

*The City of River Falls' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is guided by a framework that provides space in the organization for intentional conversations, personal and professional growth, and opportunities for reflection of practice and progress.*

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion** guide City staff to actively embrace human differences as vital assets that enrich the organization, learn about oneself, and strengthen the City's ability to make a positive impact within our culture.

The City began a formal journey in 2021 by forming the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team to start discussions and build a framework to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion within City practices and programs.

The process will remain fluid and will be guided by a framework that provides space in the organization for conversations to occur, time for personal and professional growth, and opportunities for reflection of practice and progress.

Work within the diversity, equity, and inclusion framework aligns around three identified goals developed by the team:

- **Develop and increase self and organizational awareness related to the value and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.**
- **Ensure programs, policies, and procedures are in place to build, develop, and foster a welcoming and inclusive culture.**
- **Include diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations as a priority when delivering municipal services and conducting business interactions.**

### DIVERSITY



of people and perspectives

### EQUITY



in policy and practice

### INCLUSION



of all voices and visions

## Leadership message

The City of River Falls has taken its role as an equal opportunity employer seriously. We cast our nets wide for qualified candidates, and we strive to be a welcoming workplace. We embrace diversity, knowing that our unique perspectives are what make us great and that our best solutions are found collectively.

While we have committed to doing our best, there is much room for improvement. We know that we need to move forward, reach higher, listen more, and do better when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. With this framework and the goals it contains, the support provided by our leadership, and the work of our internal team, I have no doubt we **will** do better.

It will take hard work. We must commit to looking inside ourselves and our organization to understand where we have come from as individuals, managers, employers, and community members and be clear about where we need to go. Then, we must carefully and thoughtfully plan how to get there. And, we must be guided by our values, specifically embracing change, putting people first, and considering future generations.

I want to thank our internal team for their time and willingness to work hard and dig deep. I want to thank our City leadership for committing to this exercise and providing support to the team, and I want to thank all our employees for taking this process seriously, making time to think and learn, and helping our organization be a change agent for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our community.

Thank you,



Scot Simpson  
City Administrator

## Purpose

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team was formed to help us better understand ourselves and accept and value differences in each other. We strive to help build a culture of belonging for those people who might otherwise feel excluded or marginalized.

## Vision

To work in a City that values all people, takes an active role in learning, makes diversity, equity, and inclusion a priority, openly accepts differences, speaks up for those when bias shows up in conversation and includes, invites, and welcomes everyone in.

## Mission

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team exists to help us better understand ourselves, our organization, and our community, as we continually find ways to value our unique differences.

Our team will work to create, and sustain, a culture of belonging for everyone as we continually strive to be an inclusive employer of choice.

## Values

In its work to welcome diversity, pursue equity, and strive for inclusion, the committee will emulate these City values:

- We put people first
- We pursue excellence
- We act with integrity
- We embrace change
- We serve our community
- We consider future generations

## Definitions

**Diversity** is defined broadly to encompass the range of human characteristics and experiences that comprises an individual's personality, knowledge, reactions, and perspectives.

Diversity can include, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, generational aspects, social class, physical ability or attributes, veteran status, educational background, work status, family status, religious or ethical values system, national origin, professional experiences, and political beliefs.

**Equity** provides for fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Action around equity requires the understanding of root causes of disparities, while taking positive steps in removing barriers to promote access and inclusion.

**Inclusion** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel and be welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

## DEI Team goals

- Develop and increase self, and organizational, awareness related to the value and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Ensure programs, policies, and procedures are in place to build, develop, and foster a welcoming and inclusive culture.
- Include equity and inclusion considerations as a priority when delivering municipal services and conducting business interactions.

## Why a “Framework”?

The City of River Falls’ work with diversity, equity, and inclusion goes beyond a single plan. The word “framework” was intentionally selected to describe and exemplify a flexible system that is being developed to support multiple plans needed to continue toward the City’s goals.

The strength of the DEI Framework provides opportunities to recognize the impact of existing activities, while providing structure to link new initiatives, recognize challenge areas, and celebrate successes throughout the organization.

### Time

There is no end date to the framework, but specific action plans will exist related to each goal. Organization cultures are not built quickly, and therefore lasting change requires adequate time to spread through an organization. Success takes time. Objectives that help accomplish the goals will be **SMART**:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ction-Oriented/**A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imebound

### Measured progress

The work will be held accountable through transparent milestones and measurable outcomes using qualitative and quantitative methods.

## Check-ins and evaluation

- The leadership of this organization will have an open-door policy for any team member who desires to talk about this framework and its execution.
- On an annual basis, the organization will formally evaluate progress in implementing this framework and will adjust accordingly to failures or gaps in implementation.
- The organization will ensure for institutional longevity for this framework’s success; thus, implementation and evaluation of the framework will not be dependent on any one/single team member, but rather will depend on a group of team members who will be equally charged with ensuring that the framework remains a core priority of the organization.

- When a team member leaves the organization, an exit interview will seek to determine the reasons for leaving and to ascertain how the organization could have been more welcoming/inclusive.
- As this framework progresses, and to the extent appropriate, the organization will utilize employee surveys to ascertain changes in attitudes relative to inclusivity.
- The organization will investigate various methods of evaluating workplace efforts toward greater diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

**DEI Team members**

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