![asae The Center for Association Leadership]

DIVERSITY + INCLUSION CASE STATEMENT

Background

In August 2011, the board of directors of ASAE approved a three-year D+I Strategic Plan that was developed by the Diversity + Inclusion Committee.

Our main goal is to be a credible model of D&I for our members by building our internal organizational capacity in D&I while we assist our members with doing the same within their organizations.

ASAE's FY'12 Diversity + Inclusion Committee developed a definition for diversity, inclusion, and "Diversity + Inclusion" for adoption by ASAE as official terminology for its scope of work. The case statement below is the first of its kind for ASAE. It outlines benefits of the direct connection between D+I and organizational outcomes and offers research to support claims.

The case statement includes:
• A vision for D+I
• Terminology
• Reasons associations pursue D+I
• Key proven advantages for D+I initiatives

The ASAE Board approved and adopted the following Case Statement as a model and sample for any association professional seeking to start D+I action in their association:

A Case Statement for Diversity and Inclusion in Associations
An Organizational Tool

A Vision for Diversity + Inclusion (D+I)

A diverse and inclusive organization is one that can attribute high performance to composition, culture, and infrastructure for collaboration.

Such an association is distinguished by its **composition** (members, volunteer leaders, staff, suppliers, vendors, etc.), a workforce and group of contributors who vary across demographic dimensions, including but not limited to ability, age, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, learning styles, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, veteran's status, etc. Its **culture** requires collaboration and teamwork, effective management of conflict, transparency, open communication, and skill-building to enhance interpersonal and working relationships. Its **infrastructure** gives rise to identity safety for improved problem solving and the generation of ideas, innovation, employee and member engagement, an entrepreneurial spirit, and generally increased options and better solutions.

As a result, in a diverse and inclusive association:
- We eliminate barriers to participation
- We extend opportunities across all stakeholders
- We ensure that our practices and policies do not allow, condone, or result in discrimination

Terminology
Diversity
Diversity refers to the **composition** of a group of people from any number of demographic backgrounds, identities (innate and selected), and the collective strength of their experiences, beliefs, values, skills, and perspectives. The variability in a diverse group is apparent in the characteristics we see and hear as well as through behaviors and expressions that we encounter and experience in our workplaces and organizations. **Diverse organizations are not by definition inclusive.**

Inclusion
Inclusion is the **act of establishing philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures** to ensure equal access to opportunities and resources to support individuals in contributing to the organization's success. Inclusion creates infrastructure for allowing the diversity within the organization to exist and thrive in a manner that can enhance innovation and problem solving. **Inclusive organizations are by definition diverse at all levels.**

Diversity + Inclusion (D+I)
D+I refers to an organization's strategy, scope of work, and pledge to advancing diversity *and* inclusive excellence.

Reasons for D+I in Associations
There are many valid reasons for membership-based associations to pursue a D+I strategy. Here are two key reasons:

1. The Mission Case. **Diversity and inclusion directly and indirectly enhances an organization's mission**. A diverse group of internal and external constituents working in an inclusive culture are empowered to speak up, take risks, and think big, and are more likely to co-create and participate in needed solutions – all to the benefit of your mission as strategic organizational decisions are made. Diversity also helps foster new talent and generates ideas to keep organizations relevant to stakeholders.

2. The Revenue Case. **Diversity and inclusion has positive financial implications for associations as well.** One of the most basic claims in the business case for diversity is that diversity is profitable.[1] Improved productivity and creativity, better market connections, loyal members who pay dues year after year and reduced costs from turnover are all said to positively affect the bottom line resulting in an improved competitive position relative to less diverse organizations.

---

[1] Segal, J. A. (1997) Diversify for dollars HRMagazine, 42: 4: 134-140.

<u>10 Key Advantages of Diversity and Inclusion in Associations</u>

1. **Creates a competitive advantage for the organization.** Greater diversity brings more potential links to sources for identifying trends and opportunities. Organizations can take a better pulse on the environment the more communities it is tapping through its employee and volunteer base.[2]

2. **Lowers organizational risk of litigation**. Real and perceived discrimination can undermine the work climate[3]. The association can be used as a setting to address societal biases and inequities.[4]

3. **Achieves a high quality, satisfied and dedicated workforce.** Employees that feel better about their work environment, and their relative status within it, are likely to have lower absenteeism and turnover, contributing to a workforce of exceptional personnel and reducing recruitment costs.[5]

4. **Reduces the potential for "groupthink."** A diverse team is more likely to have members who will challenge conventional wisdom and be willing to advocate unpopular or less well-known positions.[6]

5. **Supports innovation and problem solving.** Diversity can improve analytics and result in more creative solutions.[7]

6. **Enhances the organization's reputation**. Members feel an affinity with an organization that appears to value them, some scholars and diversity practitioners argue that they also prefer to buy from it.[8]

7. **Increases sales and market share**. Diversity is said to expand organizational reach and relationships in new markets and bring insight and cultural sensitivity to marketing efforts.[9]

8. **Facilitates connections and community**. People are likely to be more drawn to the organization, and satisfied with their experience with it, if they can connect with organizational contacts who understand their values and interests. [10]

---

[2] Tschirhart, M. (2008) Diversity and Inclusion in Associations. American Society of Association Executives.

[3] Brock, P. and Sanchez, J. (1996) Outcomes of perceived discrimination among Hispanic employees: Is diversity management a luxury or a necessity? Academic Management Journal, 393: 704-719

[4] Bond, M.A. (2007) Workplace Chemistry: Promoting Diversity through Organizational Change. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England. Page, S.E. (2007) The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[5] Tschirhart, M. (2008) Diversity and Inclusion in Associations. American Society of Association Executives.

[6] Wanous, J. P. and Youtz, M. A. (1986) Solution diversity and the quality of group decisions. Academy of Management Journal, 29: 149-159. Goby, V. P. (2007) Business communication needs: A multicultural perspective. Journal of Business and Technical Communication, 21: 4: 425-427. Kochan, T., Bezrukova, K., Ely, R. , Jackson, S. Joshi, A., Jehn, K., Leonard, J., Levine, D. , and Thomas, D. (2003) The effects of diversity on business performance: Report of the diversity research network, Human Resource Management, 42: 1: 3-21.

[7] Cox, T. (2001) Creating the Multicultural Organization. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Robinson, G. and Dechant, K. (1997) Building a business case for diversity. Academy of Management Executive,11: 3: 21-31.

[8] Cox, T. H. and Blake, S. (1991) Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. Academy of Management Executive, 5: 45-56.

[9] Cox, T. H. and Blake, S. (1991) Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. Academy of Management Executive, 5: 45-56. Tschirhart, M. (2008) Diversity and Inclusion in Associations. American Society of Association Executives.

[10] Tschirhart, M. (2008) Diversity and Inclusion in Associations. American Society of Association Executives.

9. **Takes the "pulse" of the operating environment**. Diverse communities help in making an organization more responsive to environmental changes and at less cost. [11]

10. **Eliminates rankism**. An inclusive team or organization helps individuals learn, develop, and connect with one another and is less likely to create a culture of "somebodies" and "nobodies" in the organization.[12]

[11] Cox, T. H. and Blake, S. (1991) Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. Academy of Management Executive, 5: 45-56.
[12] Fuller, Robert W. (2006). *All Rise: Somebodies, Nobodies, and the Politics of Dignity*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.