



## **Tips for Local LWV to Begin Your Journey Toward DEI and Build Your Bridges Toward Excellence!**

**LEARN!** Take the time... lots of reading, watching recommended videos and movies, podcasts, articles, webinars ... sources abound. Check with your fellow League members as to what they are reading and seeing or go to other trusted sources for material which can explain DEI and enlighten you. DEI is not a one-off training exercise but a deep shift in how we process and in how we behave.

There are lots of good introductory materials around, but LWVUS has learning modules on DEI that are available to start your understanding of the meaning and purpose of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) to the League. And a must-do for including in orientation of members, Boards, Committees, staff, etc.: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/dei-module-1-whys-and-what-dei>

**LISTEN!** Take the time... to practice active listening. It is a skill that we all need to enhance. One of the early educational offerings made to LWVNYS Membership was a 21 Day Better Listening Challenge. Go here at your convenience to enhance your own listening skills: <https://www.debbyirving.com/better-listening/>

This will assist you as you meet up with people from different backgrounds and cultures, placing your ego and imagined expertise on the back burner to take in what is being said. And if you disagree with a perspective, start with the request, as advised by our 2021 workshop speaker, Deb Irving, to “tell me more” ... and then listen some more. Why? Because we are all human beings and as such, we are very complex, as is our circumstances and our interwoven histories, regardless of points of origin. Which point to the next item...

**CURIOSITY!** May have “killed the cat” as the old saying goes... but it will save our society. A little bit of information may feel like enough while early in this journey... but be assured... you have barely scratched the surface.

Sustained and genuine curiosity allows us to take the steps that lead to being able to walk inside the shoes of others... to be able to see your fellow humans through the lens of empathy. And empathy helps us to “do the right thing” and care about the conditions that fall short of being “just”.

**ENGAGEMENT!** Look for ways to engage your fellow Leaguers in the journey since DEI is primarily meant to expand the breath and scope of talents that diversifying a membership allows, thus, keeping the LWV strong for another 100 years. Of course, in the process, individual growth is desirable. Your focus can range from conducting virtual book clubs to having the Board figure out ways to make their interactions with a community group less transactional and more relational. Whatever is opted for, this is a reminder that performative compliance to DEI policies is not where you stop, but rather, is where you begin. Being intentional requires many conversations and adoption of practices that are perhaps different than what the League-way had entailed for a long time.

## **After Being on the Journey a Bit, Level-Up!**

**REVIEW!** What is working and what is not. A continuous improvement cycle always includes a review of the results (nor does one even expect perfection early on). Goals have been established, and action plans developed and implemented.... learn from the inevitable mistakes

made as well as the successes (and we do want to hear about them as well! See the criteria for the DEI Recognition Award called **“Building Bridges to Excellence”**, inaugurated at the 2023 LWWNYS Convention.)

**LOOK AT THE 4 P’s!** It is so easy to consider that all areas under DEI are covered when you have attended a few webinars and posted a few policies.... You may actually feel as though you have done enough. However, challenge yourself further to apply the [“DEI Lens”](#) to your organization and its subgroups, with a focus on: **Policies, Processes, People, and Practices.**

**LOOK OUT AND REACH OUT!** DEI is partially an art and partially a science... part human resource/volunteer management and part leadership of a cultural shift... part political science and part humanities... part social studies and part psychology... part beauty and part heartbreak... but always, it is about discovery! Thus, new information comes frequently and sometimes from unexpected sources or disciplines. Take your cues from such material, as the LWW DEI Self-Assessment Survey, to help identify steps to take along your journey, from the easy “low hanging fruit” to the more complex. Then, keep your eyes out on material that seemingly does not apply to you, as an organization or an individual, but has hidden gems within.

**KEEP MOMENTUM!** And that is always a challenge regardless of how good the idea is so leaders in DEI need to keep that fact in mind. But there are actions that can work in your favor as recommended by an article in the Harvard Business Review, November 2022: “To Sustain DEI Momentum, Companies Must Invest in 3 Areas”. In short, those areas are:

- **“The Right Accountability Parties”** – as important as having the right goals (and by the way, must-haves include representation goals), is having your executive leadership accountable for making the changes needed and for realizing the strategic goals of DEI.
- **“Collect and Analyze the Right Data”** – if not doing that, will miss getting clued into valuable insights. For the League, it may be easiest to begin with viewing data related to member attrition or attendees of League programs/events.
- **“Empower the DEI Leader (for Real)”** – because of life experiences, some of us can easily identify when we are empowered (or not) to perform a task or achieve a goal ... if we have the “for real” empowerment! How does that show up? Examples given... dedicated role; position is at the executive/ Board level; a dedicated Team to work with; the authority to hold people accountable; *and investment made of Time, Money, and Access.*

**LWVNYS CAN ASSIST YOU:** Keep in mind that we are available to assist you in your efforts to make our organization live up to the LWVUS Racial Equity Urgent Resolution of 2020 while becoming a more equitable organization whose membership reflects all the constituents within our communities. Our dedicated team, the LWVNYS DEI Task Force, will be reaching out to you during the year. In the meantime, feel free to reach out to Regina Tillman, LWVNYS 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President at [rmt370@gmail.com](mailto:rmt370@gmail.com) for any questions or further guidance.

Thank you!

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Provided as a handout to attendees of the 2023 LWVNYS Convention, DEI Workshop “Successes, Missteps, and Next Steps in Our DEI Journey”