



# INCLUSIVE HIRING: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT AND HOW YOU CAN START MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Below are four steps you can take for immediate, yet meaningful impact in reducing biases in recruiting:

## 1. WRITE BETTER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job descriptions are often the first tangible impression between you and your prospective candidates. Do subtle cues discourage would-be-candidates from applying?

Be sure to include:

- The outcomes a new hire would be expected to achieve at specific milestones (months 1, 3, 6, etc.)
- A clear articulation of what the new hire would be expected to know already and help others with (labeled as “Teach”) and then clearly state what skills they would have to develop on the job (labeled as “Learn”).
- Give weight to a candidate’s volunteer experience and civic engagement. Does this person care about – and are they invested in – the world around them?
- What other skills and experiences – not academic credentials or certificates – are critical to the role?

**Bonus Tip:** Check out [Textio](#). This is a fantastic tool that may help companies analyze the language of job descriptions. Research has shown that bias embedded in job descriptions can favor/discourage certain candidates. Language is a reflection of your culture, and a signal whether your workplace is welcoming or not.

## 2. SPARK A CONVERSATION ABOUT BIASES

A conversation about unconscious biases with your team is a great place to start (see recommended reading and TED Talks below), as it’s something that affects everyone.

**Bonus Tip:** We recommend the unconscious bias training from [Hone](#) and materials from [Paradigm](#), one of our favorite leading consultancies offering Unconscious Bias Trainings.

**Bonus Tip 2:** [Harvard has developed a free online tool called the Implicit Association Test \(IAT\)](#) to help the unconscious become more conscious. Check out the website and try out a few of their tests – it’s a window into self-awareness, and you may be surprised by the results.

### Readings:

- [White Fragility](#)
- [How to Be An Anti-Racist](#)
- [Stamped from the Beginning](#)
- [Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)
- [Uncovering the Myths That Keep Racism in Place](#)
- [So You Want to Talk About Race](#)

### TED Talks:

- [How to Overcome Our Biases: Walk Boldly Toward Them](#), Verna Myers
- [Color Blind or Color Brave](#), Mellody Hobson
- [Can Art Amend History](#), Titus Kaphar
- [How Studying Privileged Systems Can Strengthen Compassion](#), Peggy McIntosh



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## 3. FOCUS AND INFORM INTERVIEWERS

Here are three critical areas to set your interviewers up for success in effectively screening candidates:

### **Ensure the hiring panel is aligned on how candidates should be evaluated**

At the beginning of every search, gather the hiring panel for a short meeting. Walk through the job description and make sure everyone is on the same page about the evaluation criteria. Ask thoughtful questions to help people talk out what is **required** versus **desired**.

### **Establish basic guidelines for resume reviewing guidelines**

Walk through the basics of resume-reviewing with your hiring team. Use the resume to understand the whole story behind a person, with questions like these:

- Does this person demonstrably show growth in their environment? Or if the organization was relatively flat, does this person demonstrate increased responsibilities over time?
- Does this person's language indicate a healthy view of their contributions (not too exaggerated, overblown, egotistical), including specific details on what they were proud of?
- Does the organization of the resume indicate a conscientious ability to communicate with others? (e.g. minimal typos; careful to explain jargon and make it accessible for the reader)

When it comes to evaluating people, there is no one indicator – the best we can do is to gather as many relevant details as possible to consider the whole person.

### **Structure and plan your interviews**

You'd be surprised how much of an impact some basic structure can have. Structured interviews (planned questions, asked across multiple candidates) are more likely to get you the information you need for a sound hiring decision.

Focus on behavioral questions that are focused on the candidate's past experiences, as opposed to hypotheticals. Focus on the "why" and "how" to learn about the candidate – what their strengths/weaknesses are, as well as how they learn and problem-solve. Ask open-ended questions to gather stories:

- Please tell us about a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
- We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell us about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a co-worker.
- What are three words your current boss would use to describe you?

Remember that much stronger predictors of success are found in work samples; past patterns of success; comparison against the required competencies of the job; peer/manager ratings; and motivation fit. Focus on these areas to make sure you can identify top talent, no matter their background or privileges.

**Bonus Tip:** Check out the [Interview section in our Viking Resources library](#) for thoughtful, productive interview questions.



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## 4. TRACK AND MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

It's not possible to fully measure the impact of unconscious bias. There are too many signals that are too subtle to possibly identify, let alone track.

### Company demographics

Determine the makeup of your team and compare against local census data. Start a discussion about the trends and discrepancies you see. If diversity and inclusion efforts are just taking off in your organization, we recommend using this step as a current snapshot and to be able to compare against it in the future.

This is because: 1) Explicit goals around hiring numbers can send the wrong message to your team, who may wonder what's being sacrificed in the pursuit of diversity and 2) Diversity and inclusion work takes time, and moving too quickly on setting aggressive goals in recruiting may result in short-term results and long-term failure. Even if diversity is prioritized in recruiting, if the work environment and company culture still have problems, your unsatisfied new hires will rightly leave.

### Conversion rates vs Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) data:

A caveat, you'll need larger sets of data to be able to run this analysis.

Take your conversion rates (e.g. the percentage of resumes submitted are moved to phone screen) and intersect them with demographic data collected by EEO, an optional set of questions that can be enabled in your applicant tracking system.

- For example, you might find that underrepresented candidates are passing phone screens but falling off after on-site panels at a disproportionately high rate. This tells you there is likely some sort of bias in a particular stage.

With this information, you can identify the problem like a detective:

- Maybe it's an untrained interviewer turning people off.
- Maybe it's the type of questions asked that's unfair to a certain group.

In addition to conversion rates, you can run the same analysis with interview scores. If underrepresented groups are consistently ranking lower in certain stages and questions, maybe there's underlying bias at play. More opportunities for detective work!

**Bonus Tip:** Not every company is set up or resourced for substantial metrics and data analyses in diversity recruiting. In that case, we recommend starting with some low-hanging fruit and building up momentum from there. Here are [50+ ideas for advancing D&I](#) that you can start today.

And as always, you are welcome to contact us in the Career Services office for any additional questions or needs you may have!

Adapted from Kim, J. (2017, April 18). Inclusive hiring: Why it's hard, why it's important, and how you can start making a difference [Blog Post].



## INCLUSIVE HIRING: TIPS

Interested in furthering your diversity recruitment initiative? Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when recruiting Cleveland State University students:

- When attending Career Services events or planning an upcoming visit, send employees that represent your inclusive culture and provide diverse perspectives.
- Highlight in your presentation, and in your conversations with students, how your organization values diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Invest in recurring training for your employees, especially as it relates to reviewing resumes and hiring, so they can better serve students of different backgrounds and abilities.
- Recognize that when addressing diversity and inclusion, you may face issues and questions that are often difficult and nuanced. Approach these with an open mind and be accepting of constructive feedback.
- Understand that recruiting is just one piece of the puzzle. It's important to take a variety of steps to retain your talented and diverse workforce.