



BRIDGE Housing
**Diversity,
Equity and
Inclusion Plan**
2021-2024



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BRIDGE Housing is grateful to all who contributed to the development of this plan, including the DEI Subcommittee, Working Group and focus group members, the Senior Leadership Team and the BRIDGE Board of Directors.

Executive Summary

In its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, BRIDGE Housing pledged to promote a culture that celebrates diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). According to the plan, this work is “essential to BRIDGE’s effectiveness and commitment to its employees and the communities it serves.”

In Fall and Winter of 2020-21, BRIDGE Housing partnered with Promise54, a consulting firm that helps mission-driven organizations advance DEI priorities. Promise54 worked with BRIDGE to deepen its understanding of current organizational challenges and strengths related to DEI through artifact analysis, a companywide survey, focus groups, and conversations with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Board. Upon deeper understanding of current challenges, BRIDGE’s DEI Subcommittee, SLT and Board collaborated to create a DEI Plan for the company to execute over the next three years and beyond. BRIDGE envisions the plan as an initial step in embedding DEI principles into all aspects of BRIDGE’s work.

ARTIFACT REVIEW

Provided understanding of current structures, practices and language around DEI

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Robust data about current challenges from a companywide survey informed development and testing of hypotheses in focus groups

FOCUS GROUPS

33 unique participants engaged in focus groups to complement and contextualize trends in the survey

PLAN CREATION

DEI Subcommittee of 11 staff members collaborated with Promise54 across a series of planning sessions to develop the DEI Plan, informed by the survey and focus groups and reflecting input from the SLT and Board

BRIDGE Fundamentals

MISSION

BRIDGE Housing strengthens communities and improves the lives of its residents, beginning – but not ending – with affordable housing.

VISION

- BRIDGE continues to be a sought-after leader in the mission-driven business of affordable and mixed-income housing, bringing quality, scale and innovation to production in diverse west coast markets
- BRIDGE creates opportunities for its residents and their neighborhoods through community investments tailored to leverage opportunities for people and places
- BRIDGE earns the highest degree of customer satisfaction from all stakeholders, including residents, neighbors, investors, taxpayers, private- and public-sector partners, and employees
- BRIDGE is the go-to developer and owner for public officials, investors and communities seeking an array of housing solutions, and it delivers results
- BRIDGE, its staff, Board and partners are builders not only of healthy places to live but of effective leadership for now and the future of the industry

CORE VALUES

- Strive for excellence
- Act with integrity and honesty: constantly aim to uphold the highest professional standards
- Be results-oriented: define and achieve ambitious, measurable goals
- Show commitment to mission: persevere in the face of challenges, seek resources to ensure the best outcomes and work toward successful outcomes
- Hold accountability for actions: take responsibility for company, team and individual performance
- Respect the rights and dignity of others: accept people for who they are and for their knowledge, skills and experience
- Promote inclusion, equity and diversity: BRIDGE celebrates the diversity of the communities it serves, and believes in providing opportunity for all while respecting individual differences
- Demonstrate compassion for others and work to improve their lives

Current State of DEI at BRIDGE

STAFF EXPERIENCE SURVEY

- Conducted in Fall 2020 to gauge staff perspectives on the effectiveness of DEI efforts
- Response rates of approximately 60% among BRIDGE Housing Corporation staff and 30% among BRIDGE Property Management Company staff
- Survey responses were benchmarked against 2,215 national respondents in other organizations

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

- Assembled in Fall 2020 to capture and share data on demographic diversity as well as existence of DEI policies, systems and practices
- BRIDGE's profile was benchmarked against 165 other organizations (100+ employees)

FOCUS GROUPS

- Promise54 conducted five 75-minute focus groups with a total of 33 staff in November 2020
- Held to contextualize Staff Experience Survey data with specific attention to:
 - Affinity-based experiences (e.g. people of color, LGBTQ+)
 - Experiences across organizational components: BRIDGE Property Management Company (BPMC) vs. BRIDGE Housing Corporation (BHC)
- Reactions to results reflected in DEI survey data

HIGHLIGHTS OF STAFF EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS:

1. Intent to stay at BRIDGE is high, especially compared with national benchmarks
2. High levels of diversity at the organization over all; relative to other organizations benchmarked, BRIDGE has a more demographically balanced staff
3. The leadership team communicates well with the organization
4. BRIDGE respects individuals and values differences

SURVEY RESULTS SHOW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BRIDGE TO:

1. Increase explicit commitment and accountability to DEI, and to invest in capacity- and trust-building on the topic
2. Acknowledge and address the presence of interpersonal biases and the disproportionate impact they have on staff with historically marginalized identities
3. Deepen investment in staff diversity through recruitment and retention practices at BHC and across leadership levels
4. Increase opportunities for advancement across the organization
5. Increase inclusion and transparency in decision-making

DEI Belief Statement and Definitions

BRIDGE developed a DEI Belief Statement and definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion through an iterative process guided by Promise54 and which included:

- Working Group of 40+ staff who expressed interest in contributing to BRIDGE's DEI efforts
- Subcommittee of 11 staff from across the organization who volunteered to lead development of BRIDGE's multi-year DEI strategies
- Senior Leadership Team
- BRIDGE Board of Directors

DEI BELIEF STATEMENT

Longstanding systemic discrimination created many of the housing problems our cities face today, and as one of the largest nonprofit affordable housing developers on the West Coast, BRIDGE has the responsibility and an opportunity to actively change that landscape.

Only by actively assembling a diverse, inclusive team and nurturing an open, collaborative and trusting environment, will BRIDGE be able to work towards disrupting and dismantling the current systems of injustice at their root. We will focus on this work within our organization and Board and the communities we serve. Respecting the rights and dignity of others, and accepting people for who they are and for their knowledge, skills and experience, is integral to BRIDGE's values and beliefs.

The power of our collective and individual commitments to these beliefs is reason enough to be confident of our ability to achieve our mission as we work to create a more just and equitable world.

DEFINITION OF DIVERSITY

BRIDGE believes that diversity enhances our ability to serve communities. BRIDGE recognizes, respects and affirms diversity, including all identities, lived experiences, backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives that make individuals unique.

DEFINITION OF EQUITY

We recognize that inequities exist and are barriers to access to opportunity. By understanding root causes of outcome disparities, leading with an equity mindset and having honest, transparent conversations, BRIDGE commits to the advancement of people, especially people who have historically been marginalized, within all levels of our organization and within the communities we serve.

DEFINITION OF INCLUSION

BRIDGE is committed to intentionally creating inclusive environments where people feel welcomed, respected, valued and heard. BRIDGE strives to break down biases—conscious and unconscious—to foster greater inclusion across its communities, workforce and Board. BRIDGE will further develop a culture of belonging by inviting all people to participate and providing access to opportunities for growth.

Three-Year DEI Plan

The Subcommittee, working with Promise54, developed BRIDGE's three-year plan between December 2020 and March 2021, with periodic input and feedback from the Senior Leadership Team and Board. After establishing working drafts of the Belief Statement and DEI definitions, the group:

- Explored potential root causes of BRIDGE's DEI challenges using survey and focus group data
- Brainstormed strategies to address root causes
- Collaborated to assess strategy details, priority levels and highest leverage strategies
- Developed implementation recommendations and considerations

Note: strategies in bold are considered “big rocks / heavy lifts”

1: RECRUIT, HIRE, ADVANCE

- 1a. Map and communicate career pathways for all BRIDGE staff by role and title, including pathways for staff who are non-managers**
- 1b. Actively recruit at smaller, local junior colleges and HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) and enhance diverse pipelines through internships for candidates with marginalized identities**
- 1c. Leverage current networks and internal talent by creating incentives for referrals from current employees (e.g. bonus, additional PTO, etc.)
- 1d. Enhance internal advancement by frequently communicating job opportunities internally (e.g. weekly email, job bulletin, during performance evaluations with managers)
- 1e. Develop and enact an explicit commitment to achieve broader diversity of Board membership that is reflective of the diversity of BRIDGE residents and employees

2: CAPACITY BUILDING

- 2a. Leaders: Develop and communicate a management/leadership DEI philosophy for leaders, managers and the Board to embody and implement**
- 2b. Managers: Institute management training for all managers to develop managerial capacity and skills, including support, coaching and resources for ongoing discussions of DEI with expectation that SLT/Leadership are cheerleaders for DEI and model DEI vulnerability**
- 2c. All Staff: Analyze BRIDGE's internal forms and training materials to remove biased language (e.g. gender binary options) going forward
- 2d. All Staff: Provide a series of mandatory, interactive DEI trainings for all staff (e.g. anti-bias) to positively impact engagement with all audiences, including colleagues, partners, residents, etc.
- 2e. All Staff: Educate all staff about personal pronouns as they relate to gender identity, including the practice of adding pronouns to email signatures, to foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging
- 2f. Managers: During annual reviews, give direct reports the opportunity to provide feedback about their managers to the managers' supervisors; feedback from direct reports offers different perspectives on managers' strengths and areas for growth

3: TRANSPARENCY/ACCOUNTABILITY

- 3a. Build shared strategic vision for DEI with specific goals and progress to date that is public and documented**
- 3b. Create opportunities for more Board and staff interaction, beyond Senior Leadership Team members**

3c. Define and socialize shared DEI definitions and beliefs

3d. Evaluate/review business units (and leaders) for DEI outcomes

3e. Develop and implement a method to assess how the Board is regularly incorporating inclusion and equity into the work of the Board

4b. Support partners (e.g. the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee) to embrace DEI by making changes to their documentation and processes

4c. Set targets for and create evaluation/reporting processes for commercial and community-serving spaces to promote businesses and services owned by people who are Black, indigenous, people of color and/or women

4: EXTERNAL COMMITMENTS

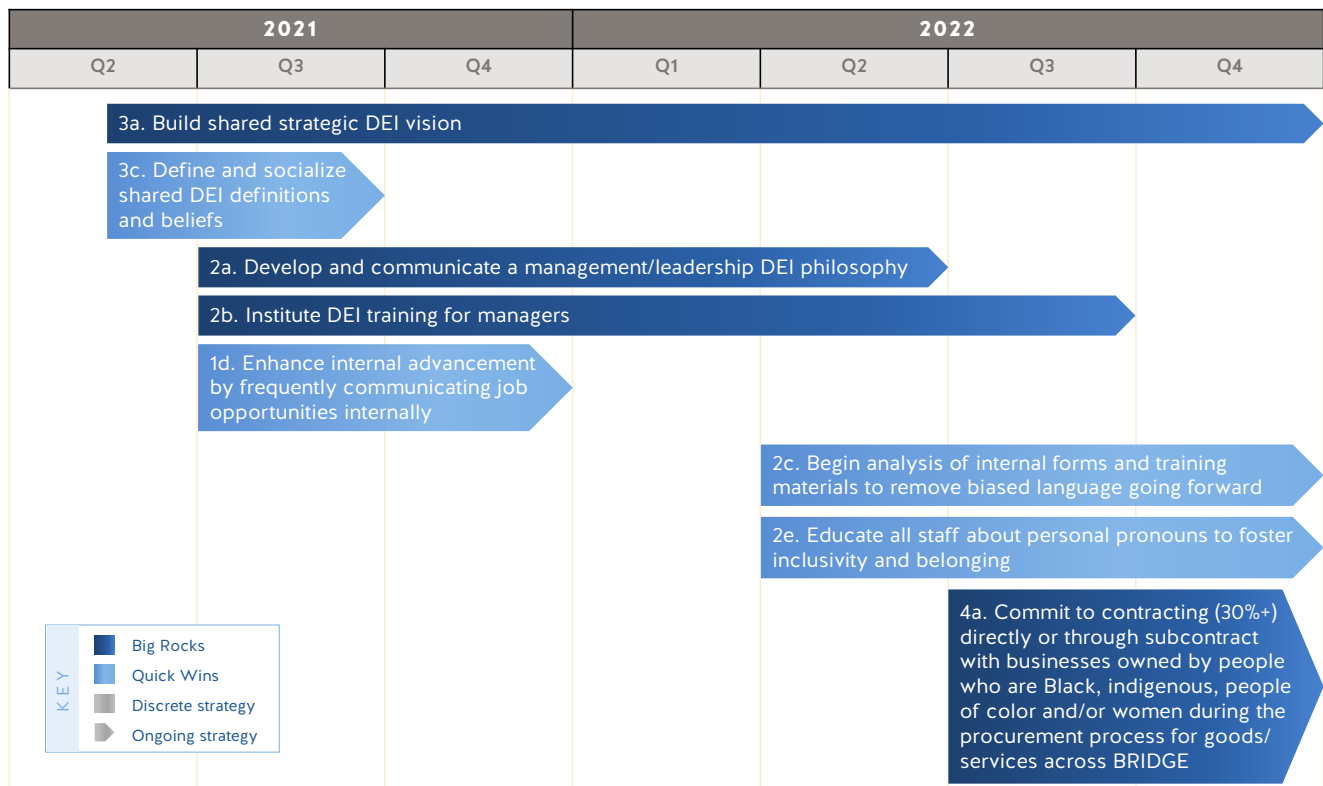
4a. Commit to contracting (30%+) directly or through subcontract with businesses owned by people who are Black, indigenous, people of color and/or women during the procurement process for goods/services across the organization, with an emphasis on increasing equity for people who have been historically marginalized

5: CULTURE

5a. Demonstrate DEI commitment by creating an environment where participation in culture building will become part of every employee's work schedule.

5b. Provide a rotational program between different teams at BHC and between BPMC/ BHC (e.g. shadow for 2-3 days)

DEI STRATEGY SEQUENCING (PRELIMINARY)



The remaining strategies will be mapped out for implementation in 2023-2024 and beyond.

Appendices

DEI SUBCOMMITTEE

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* Reflects members who joined the group when it was formed in Summer 2020



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