



**INSPIRED LEADERS
SHAPING CITIES**

ASSESSING INCLUSION IN DOWNTOWN DISTRICT TOOLKIT

A 2018 INCLUSIVE PLACES TOP ISSUES COUNCIL CASE STUDY



Photo credit: Gonzalez de la Pena, Marta / CHCTDC. (2018). Congress Heights community planning meeting. Washington, DC.

Making your district a more inclusive place begins with opening the conversation up to the community and building a team of advocates who care about this work. These assessment tools provide a place for you to start and a way to measure progress regularly as you embark on this work.

A thorough assessment of weaknesses and opportunities to enhance inclusion should consider three levels of inclusion:

1. **Personal:** Assess your own experiences, acknowledge your own biases
2. **Organizational:** Assess your organization's representation, the perspectives that are guiding your work, and those that are absent
3. **Municipal:** Assess representation and outcomes at a community level

This toolkit focuses on the second level: a rapid assessment you can do with and for your organization.

To begin, assemble a team of at least two people who are familiar with your staff and organization and supportive of the idea of assessing dimensions of identity and experience for your organization and your community as a whole.

Community Demographic Benchmarks

The first part of this tool uses dimensions of identity that are readily available for most American communities, taken from the U.S. Decennial Census. U.S. cities and towns can access this information using this 2010 Census Interactive Population Search tool available at <https://www.census.gov/2010census/>. By clicking on Interactive Population Search, you can then navigate to specific data about your community by drilling down from state to place.

If your organization is in a different country or if you have access to a different set of detailed benchmark data for your community, adjust the assessment template (pg. 21) accordingly.

For organizational assessment, you may want to look at dimensions of identity in leadership (executives and board) and across staff as two separate categories.

You may need to enlist the support of your human resources staff to complete the organizational profile of race, income, and age demographics. The purpose of this exercise is meant to help you start to understand where you may have limited or no representation of a group that makes up a large part of your community; it should not be an exacting categorization of individuals within your organization. If there are areas where you do not know how to answer the questions for your organization or the community, that may be a good place to start learning as a team.

Dimension of Identity or Access

Community-wide (Benchmark)

Organization

Race	Total Population:		Total Employment:
African American	/ Total =	%	%
American Indian + Alaska Native	/ Total =	%	%
Asian	/ Total =	%	%
Native Hawaiian + Pacific Islander	/ Total =	%	%
White	/ Total =	%	%
Other	/ Total =	%	%
Two or more dimensions of race	/ Total =	%	%
Ethnicity: Hispanic or Non-Hispanic	Total Population:		
Hispanic	/ Total =	%	%
Not Hispanic	/ Total =	%	%
Age	Total Population:		
Under 18	/ Total =	%	%
18–34	/ Total =	%	%
35–64	/ Total =	%	%
65+	/ Total =	%	%
Annual Median Income	Community:		Organization:
Housing	Total Housing Units		
Owner-occupied	/ Total =	%	%
Renter occupied	/ Total =	%	%

Benchmarks for Additional Dimensions of Identity & Access

Some dimensions of identity, experience, and access are not easily measured or benchmarked against nationally available census data. As a team, consider these additional ways that residents of your community may be privileged or burdened.

Gender identity

How do our community and organization welcome or exclude individuals based on gender?

Consider: On the spectrum of gender identity, individuals may be male (cisgender), female (cisgender), agender, nonbinary, or have another way of relating to the gendered roles in our culture.¹

Sexual orientation and domestic and marital status

How do our community and organization welcome or exclude individuals based on sexual orientation or domestic or marital status?

Consider: employment benefits, leave policies, culture, and social gatherings.

Educational attainment

How do our community and organization welcome or exclude individuals based on educational attainment?

Consider: employment policies, opportunities for continuing, and lifelong education.

Housing tenure and stability

How do our community and organization welcome or exclude individuals based on housing stability and income?

Consider: availability and cost of rental housing, availability and cost of housing for sale, geographic distribution of renter and owner-occupied housing in the community, costs of frequent moves or housing instability, access to public education, and access to safe modes of transportation.

Opportunities

What have you learned from considering the questions above?

What gaps have you identified?

Techniques and Tactics for Inclusion

For each opportunity listed above, list 1–3 concrete steps your organization can take to invite in, empower, listen to, and learn from groups within your community who lack access to your downtown and decision-making spaces.

Here are some ideas:

Listen. Seek out opportunities to visit with and learn about a population or community that is part of your city but not well-represented in your leadership.

Ask: How can I help? Sometimes this simple question and the act of welcoming another can make all the difference in building connections in your community.

Invite others to lead you on a tour of downtown or another part of town. Ask a group that does not normally have access to the halls of power in your organization: a neighborhood group, a faith-based organization, a nonprofit or advocacy group, or individuals who frequently use public spaces in downtown but do not have their own private refuges nearby.

Offer public tours with your organization, advertised and on a regular schedule, followed by a conversation where residents may ask questions or offer input on what could make the community more welcoming and inclusive.

Convene community dialogues on specific topics. UPMOs are outstanding conveners and communicators; bringing people together to talk about shared goals and issues is the bread and butter of what we do. Perhaps there is a role for your organization in convening stakeholders, concerned citizens, and leaders in your community to work on specific issues of access or exclusion—even if these issues do not directly relate to safety, economic development, or other issues that are typically on a UPMO program of work.

Look for opportunities to influence policy. Systemic exclusion is often embedded deeply in our policies, both large and small. Examine the rules that we take for granted and seek out ways that those rules can be changed to extend opportunities to everyone.

Extracted from the Inclusive Places Top Issues Council report, available in the [IDA Knowledge Center](#).

Endnotes

- 1 For more information on understanding gender identity, visit <https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/>