



Diversity + Inclusion Strategic Plan **2019-2021**



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Dear Colleagues:

We are pleased to present ASAE's 2019–2021 Diversity + Inclusion (D+I) Strategic Plan. This plan is the result of a collaborative effort between volunteer leaders, industry partners, consultants, D+I practitioners, CEOs, and influential others in the association community. It builds on past ASAE plans and anticipates opportunities and challenges regarding the future of work over the next three years.

The process of developing a plan began with reflection on ASAE's 30-year commitment to diversity and inclusion. Recent D+I advancements include: advocacy efforts to oppose discriminatory legislation; new policies and practices to make meetings more accessible; new policies and practices to help boards become more diverse and practice inclusive governance; new relationships and events with organizations similarly committed to D+I and social justice issues; new data on inclusive practices in associations; and a more skilled network of CEO champions working to advance D+I in their organizations.

On the eve of ASAE's 100th anniversary, we find the association in a strong position to take its commitment to the next level. Our community has long understood that connecting great ideas and great people is not possible without diversity in the broadest sense of the word, so opportunities articulated in this plan shift from valuing D+I to envisioning an exciting and more equitable environment for all.

It is our imperfect history, coupled with our strong tradition of striving for change that has led us to this next concerted effort. ASAE is your organization, so thank you for engaging in this important work with us, and thank you for your dedication to making ASAE a better place for all.



John H. Graham, CAE
President and CEO
ASAE



Maan Hashem, PMP, CAE
Chair
ASAED+I Committee



Wendy-Jo Toyama, CAE
Vice Chair
ASAED+I Committee



Susan Robertson, CAE
Executive Vice President
ASAE



Robb Lee
Chief Marketing &
Communications Officer
ASAE



Alexis Terry, MBA, CDP, CAE
Senior Director, D+I
ASAE

Terminology

Per research on effective D+I practices, ASAE intentionally distinguishes between “diversity” and “inclusion” rather than using the terms interchangeably. Our terminology is here:

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.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the **act of establishing philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures** so that organizations and individuals contributing to the organizations’ success have a more level playing field to compete, and equal access to opportunities, information, and resources.

Equitable Environment

An equitable environment **challenges intentional and unintentional forms of bias, harassment, and discrimination** and promotes alternative actions. Because an environment can be welcoming and inequitable, attention is paid to recognizing and **eliminating barriers to full participation at individual and systemic levels.**

ASAE’s Diversity + Inclusion Statement

To help associations and association professionals transform society through the power of collaboration, ASAE pledges to:

1. practice inclusion,
2. pull in diverse backgrounds and perspectives to enrich group capabilities; and
3. point out opportunities to support equitable work environments and behaviors.

Building on our thirty-year D+I commitment, we are especially concerned with creating space for the difficult conversations, hearing the voices least heard, and providing leadership where it is needed in governance and operations. In doing so, we advance ASAE’s mission while also providing culturally relevant service and value to members and society.

ASAE's D+I Theory of Change

Assumptions:

- Diversity has long been recognized as the “right thing to do” but is not always evident in association leadership teams or boards
- There are perceived barriers to access and involvement in ASAE that suppresses full engagement and diversity
- In our complex, interconnected world, it's not enough for leaders to have good values. We must understand the chains of causes and effects
- Commitment by the highest levels of leadership in an association is essential for meaningful action to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion

Target Audiences:

- ASAE volunteer leaders
- Association chief executives
- Association senior management teams

Key Themes:

- 1 Top-Level Commitment and Accountability
- 2 Empowered Women
- 3 Algorithmic Responsibility
- 4 Formal Benchmarking and Informal Data Driven Dialog

Anticipated Outcomes:

ASAE Pillars:

- **Knowledge:** Equity-related professional standards and effective practices
- **Learning:** Collaborative experiences and guides that help remove barriers for women and other underserved and underrepresented audiences seeking to thrive professionally
- **Community:** Engaged D+I change makers and champions within the community
- **Advocacy:** D+I related public policy priorities and policies related to current affairs

Strategic Plan **2019-2021**

1 Top-Level Commitment and Accountability

Association senior leadership teams and boards are uniquely positioned to shift D+I from a core value or buzz word into a reality. These top-level leaders are more likely to be heard and not to have their recommendations dismissed. They are also more likely to determine who is next in line for leadership opportunities. Given this advantage, they have a responsibility to commit attention, resources, and accountability toward advancing diversity, inclusion, and an equitable work environment. We aim to support top-level leaders in fulfilling their responsibility.

MILESTONES

GOAL	2019	2020	2021
Grow and support an association community with top-level accountability and demonstrated commitment to D+I.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the state of top-level commitment to D+I through appropriate research methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote visibility and usage of D+I performance guidelines, tools, and practices by organizational leaders and leadership teams. 	

2 Empowered Women

The numbers of women, particularly women of color, in leadership roles are still staggeringly low across industries. Well documented are the high rates of turnover for women, especially women of color. Also, recent movements (e.g., #metoo, inclusion riders, etc.) highlight the need for associations to cultivate equitable, not just welcoming, work environments where women can thrive. We aim to help leaders and teams be responsive to this unmet need in their associations.

MILESTONES

GOAL	2019	2020	2021
Help associations promote and ensure a safe environment where women thrive professionally and c-suite roles and boards of directors are accessible.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer D+I guidelines, resources, and mechanisms that explain what leadership gaps look like, how they arise, what associations can do about them, and how fixing them can improve organizational outcomes for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and test c-suite and board leadership equity models for use by professional and trade associations with composition imbalances.

3 Algorithmic Responsibility

At the press of a button, algorithms utilized by an organization can look up someone’s Facebook profile, or DNA, trawl through school and professional records, and the meaning constructed about a person or group of people based on findings is not free of potential negative consequences. Allegations of racism and sexism have permeated the conversation as stories surface about search engines delivering job postings for well-paying jobs to men and not women. Intelligent though they may be, these algorithms find patterns within datasets that reflect implicit biases and, in so doing, maintain some of the same biases that permeate society. We aim to help associations spot and stop unwarranted biases in the way their algorithms and artificially intelligent applications are constructed and findings are interpreted.

MILESTONES

GOAL

Develop guidelines and resources that prioritize D+I as part of the design, development, and implementation of algorithms, and Artificial Intelligence/automation technologies in associations.

2019

- Collaborate with volunteers (e.g., Technology Council) to evaluate association-specific algorithms currently in use for possible D+I concerns.
- Convene a working group (e.g., association and technology company decision-makers, consultants, D+I practitioners, industry partners, etc.) to develop D+I principles of algorithmic responsibility for the association community.

2020

- Develop resources to use in assessing the responsible and ethical application of all algorithms, and evaluating datasets for potential human bias and prejudice.

2021

4 Formal Benchmarking and Informal Data Driven Dialog

What is the state of D+I in the association community? What about the “lost Einstein’s”—association professionals who would have made highly impactful contributions to ASAE and the association community had there been exposure, access, and opportunities to do so? Finding fresh ways to talk about the state of D+I and encourage strategic engagement of champions and change makers can spur action and lead to greater advancements and accountability

MILESTONES

GOAL

Report annually on the state of D+I in the association environment and informally throughout the year to allow for real time discussions and decisions by association professionals.

2019

- Leverage the Association Inclusion Index and continue to pursue research to build a body of knowledge on D+I practices in associations and produce material highlighting successful practices.

2020

- Establish an approach that reports annually on the state of D+I in the association environment.

2021

- Partner with other communities and DELP to launch online campaigns (e.g. #rise up), and empower association professionals to make change and drive D+I movements forward.

Acknowledgements

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Cie Armstead

Diversity & Inclusion Director
American College of Healthcare Executives

Jeff De Cagna, FRSA, FASAE

Executive Advisor
Foresight First LLC

Vicki Deal-Williams, MA, CCC-SLP, CAE, FASAE

Chief Staff Officer for Multicultural Affairs
American Speech-Hearing-Language Association

Lisa Fanning, MA

Senior Manager, Diversity and Inclusion
The American Society of Hematology

Salvador Mendoza

Vice President, Diversity & Inclusion
Office of Diversity & Inclusion
NBCUniversal

Brian Ross, CTA

President and CEO
Experience Columbus

Melvin Tennant, CAE

President and CEO
Meet Minneapolis

Richard Yep, CAE, FASAE

Chief Executive Officer
American Counseling Association



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