SDSN Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee Charter

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN's) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee promotes and fosters an inclusive, accepting, and accommodating workplace that welcomes all staff members while encouraging and cultivating DEIB best practices within the wider community, including but not limited to consultants, future hires, network members, and leadership. Given the global reach of SDSN, it is important to ensure that the scope of the DEIB Committee is both locally and globally informed.

Advancing DEIB is critical to creating a safe and welcoming environment in which all feel respected, valued, and included regardless of their backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, genders, identities, and beliefs. In such an environment, staff members sense that they belong, that their voices are valued, and that they are safe to innovate, evolve, and thrive in their work.

At SDSN, we recognize, appreciate, and embrace the importance of DEIB as more than just a concept or a box to tick. We strive to create a work environment in which all staff members feel empowered to do their best work.

Based on intersectionality theory, we understand that each employee’s unique experiences, perspectives, and social, economic, and cultural identities shape, influence, and add value to SDSN. We understand that each employee's unique experiences, perspectives, and social, economic, and cultural identities shape, influence, and add value to SDSN's programs, resources, and services. We also believe that supporting DEIB at SDSN helps our team members become better employees, colleagues, and leaders. This is particularly true when we tap into the collective wisdom of staff members, hear all voices, and cultivate an environment in which employees feel a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging can lead to engaged, productive, and thriving staff members.

2. Definitions

Diversity refers to the range of visible and invisible human differences, including the unique attributes, traits, and characteristics that make up individuals. These differences include values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, preferences, behaviors, race, gender, ability, culture, language, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, and age.
Equity is about advancement being just, impartial, and subject to fair and transparent decision-making so that everyone has an equitable chance to be successful.

Inclusion involves the range of actions taken to embrace all staff members, ensure that they are seen, heard, and acknowledged, and enable them to make meaningful contributions.

Belonging is the feeling that results from staff members’ differences, worth, and dignity being recognized. The feeling of belonging allows employees to be their authentic selves without fear of punishment. This can lead employees to feel safe speaking up, innovating, evolving, and thriving.

Community results from staff members feeling that they belong and matter to one another.

3. Background

SDSN’s DEIB Committee was formed in 2020 and is led by staff. The committee works to address topics and issues pertaining to DEIB at SDSN, such as developing suggested DEIB policies related to programs, events, and processes, including recruiting.

The committee’s focus over the past year has been working with DEIB consultants to conduct an internal assessment of DEIB at SDSN. This work took place from May to October 2022 and included a review of our policies, procedures, and communications, as well as focus groups, interviews, and an anonymous organization-wide survey.

As a result of this work, the committee made a set of recommendations to SDSN senior leadership regarding areas that we need to address and strengthen.

The key themes of these recommendations include the following:

1. Leadership engagement in DEIB at SDSN
2. Addressing internal biases among staff members, regardless of rank or title
3. Increasing thought and effort toward community building and psychological safety across teams and the organization as a whole
4. Revising current HR practices to promote team diversity
5. Increasing the attention given to staff career development
6. Updating policies to be more inclusive of non-binary individuals and people with accessibility needs
4. Mission

The mission of the DEIB Committee is to advocate for, engage, and empower staff by aligning SDSN’s programmatic activities and operations with the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion and to sustain an organizational framework that fully embodies the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The DEIB Committee aims to promote these values through active learning and by improving accountability measures while creating an environment in which all voices are heard and celebrated.

5. Objectives

The Committee’s objectives are to work in partnership with designated DEIB staff or short-term technical experts and the SDSN senior leadership team to do the following:

- Promote dialogue and foster respect and belonging among all SDSN employees
- Undertake activities that build a sense of community
- Raise awareness of DEIB across the organization
- Conduct and disseminate research on DEIB that is relevant to SDSN’s context.
- Facilitate DEIB training and development opportunities for all employees
- Develop recommendations, strategies, and policies to improve workplace DEIB
- Recommend best practices for recruiting, retaining, and promoting SDSN staff
- Periodically review workplace policies to ensure full integration of DEIB principles
- Partner with SDSN leadership to ensure that DEIB principles are incorporated in SDSN’s activities and programs
- Provide a rotating member from both the DEIB Committee and senior leadership team to participate in each other’s meetings on a quarterly basis
- Ensure accountability for the progress of the six themes recommended to SDSN senior leadership
- Recruit volunteer DEIB Committee members with the aim of broad representation across our teams and offices
- Serve as a resource for employees with concerns or questions about DEIB in the workplace

6. Membership and Participation

This is a volunteer group, and active participation is encouraged but flexible. Generally, expectations for participation include the following:

- Joining the DEIB Committee listserv (dei-committee@unsdsn.org)
- Participating in one-hour biweekly DEIB Committee meetings (two per month) every other Tuesday at 10 p.m. MYT/4 p.m. CET /10 a.m. ET (subject to change)
• Contributing an estimated two hours per month to DEIB tasks (research and drafting of documents)
• Participating in occasional meetings between the DEIB Committee and SDSN senior leadership
• Providing updates on monthly SDSN-wide calls on a rotating schedule and, in some cases, during each office’s check-in meeting
• Leading biweekly meetings on a rotating schedule, distributing meeting reminders, drafting the agenda, sending out follow-ups, and leading the meeting
• Committing to at least six months of participation in the DEIB Committee
• Contributing to an annual written update on the DEIB Committee’s activities that can be shared with Leadership Council members, the board, and external stakeholders via the SDSN website
• Having access to shared resources and additional training

Intended representation:

• At least one team member per office
• At least one participant from each VP’s workstream (does not have to be a direct report, but this ensures that there is representation across programs and a link to every senior leadership member)
• At least one consistent member of the senior leadership team and rotating participation from other leaders.

7. Guidelines

The DEIB Committee exists as an open and collaborative space for staff who are eager to advance SDSN’s efforts related to DEIB. The following points aim to guide committee members in their engagement during discussions and online communication:

• Be present and respect the space.
• Avoid getting bogged down in semantics.
• Share your experiences and use “I” statements.
• Assess your emotional safety and use your discernment.
• The stories of others are theirs to share; maintain confidentiality and trust among the group.
• If you experience yourself making judgments, ask yourself where those feelings come from.
• Consider and address the impact of your actions rather than focusing on your intentions.
• Consider your privilege.
• Acknowledge pain or offense in the moment by using “ouch,” and know that you have the option to discuss it at that time.
• Be willing to be uncomfortable and participate in challenging conversations.