



Assessing Organizations' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices During the Job Search

The Wasserman Center for Career Development is committed to supporting the career development journey of diverse student and alumni populations at NYU (inclusive of, but not limited to, nationality, gender, gender expression, race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, veteran status, legal status, and sexual orientation). We recognize that candidates from marginalized identities have vastly different experiences in the workplace than their counterparts from dominant identities. These differences are palpable in the job search cycle, from the application process, through the interview, and culminating in the onboarding process as a new hire. It is important for you, whatever your identity is, to learn how to assess organizations' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices. As you plan your next steps and continue developing [Violet Ready skills](#), we want to help you find work spaces that are inclusive, and where you belong as your whole, authentic self. Whether you are a current student, a new graduate ready to join the workforce, or a seasoned professional going through a career change, below are some tips and resources to help you navigate the job search process if you are a member of a historically marginalized community.

Job Descriptions and Employer Research

It all starts with the job description. As you look through hundreds of postings, the way that organizations describe their jobs is revealing of their real DEI practices. Pay close attention to the following:

- Truly inclusive organizations post job descriptions with gender-neutral, non-binary language (e.g., "they" vs. "he/she" and "chairperson" vs. "chairman").
- Lookout for gender-coded words, like: "dominant," or "dynamic." These words often carry biased preferences for men and young people. We recommend using [gender decoder websites](#) to help you identify these patterns.
- Is the text for the job description accessible, meaning that it can be captured by screen readers for individuals with visual impairments?
- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Tagline. Organizations who are committed to diversity and inclusion feature this disclaimer at the end of each job description. They can be as simple as a few lines, or more developed paragraphs detailing the organization's definition of diversity, their commitment to the diversification of their workforce, and their stance against discrimination of all types.

Beyond looking closely at job descriptions, research the company's website and online presence to further understand their core values, and whether or not DEI is a part of them. As you conduct online research on different organizations, here is what to look for:

- Is DEI part of the organization's mission statement? *Is there even a diversity statement?* Many organizations state they care about diversity and inclusion, but they don't make it a core pillar of their operations. The "About Us" or "Mission Statement" sections are great places to assess their actual commitment.
- What are the organization's core values? Check to make sure that words such as "inclusion" or "diversity" are mentioned as part of their values.
- What is the composition of the leadership team? What kind of representation exists at all levels of the organization? If their leadership team is homogeneous, then it can be inferred that they are not cultivating staff from marginalized identities for upward mobility.
- Is there evidence of leadership's commitment to diversity (e.g., Chief Diversity Officer or well-defined diversity programs)? If an organization is committed to DEI, they will, without excuse, invest in leadership members who are in charge of implementing equity practices, and who keep the organization accountable. They will also strive to develop diversity programs to recruit and retain diverse talent.
- What kind of reviews are on websites, such as [teambind.com](#) or [glassdoor.com](#)? Sometimes, former employees provide anonymous feedback on their personal experiences within the organization. This could provide unfiltered insight into their internal practices and procedures related to DEI.



- Follow them on social media to look at their activity. The voices and opinions they amplify, who they follow, and what comments they “like” may reveal their genuine DEI perspective.
- **A note on digital accessibility:** Organizations should think about inclusivity from all perspectives. For candidates who are visually or hearing impaired, consider the following when assessing the organization’s DEI practices in digital form (these are just a few examples):
 - Videos on websites are closed-captioned for individuals with hearing impairments.
 - Images include “alt text” for individuals with visual impairments.
 - Websites must be navigable by keyboard for users who may not be able to operate a mouse (i.e., navigating using the “Tab” on a keyboard).

Check Employee Benefits

What kind of benefits does the company provide its employees? For instance, if a company does not provide family leave, this is a potential red flag, for it can signal a lack of inclusivity for new parents. Remember that your preference or need for certain fringe benefits depends on your personal life circumstances or may vary according to your level of professional experience. Benefits also vary by state. Below is a short list of inclusive benefits and perks:

- Paid parental leave (including same sex couples)
- Domestic partner coverage
- Coverage of sex reassignment surgery or hormone treatments
- Disability insurance
- Flexible schedules
- Tuition reimbursement
- Childcare facilities
- Employee meal plans
- Paid time off

Interviewing is a Two-way Street

When you make it to the interview phase, it is your time to further confirm the organization’s DEI commitment. As you arrive for the interview, take a look at how staff at all levels interact with each other. What is the composition of the staff? Most importantly, pay attention to the composition of the panel interviewing you. Is it truly diverse? Remember, you need to interview the employer as much as they’re interviewing you, so don’t be afraid to demonstrate your desire to learn about their inclusive practices (or lack thereof). This information will be paramount in helping you make an informed decision about a possible offer. Below are some suggested questions to ask:

- How do you ensure that the composition of your workforce is representative of the market or population you serve?
- When was the last time you mentored a person whose background does not resemble your own?
- What specific initiatives has the company launched to improve diversity and inclusion?
- How do you promote inclusivity on your team so that all employees can succeed?
- What are the ways the company creates a collaborative atmosphere in the workspace?
- How do you define diversity, and what value does it bring to the organization?
- How do you foster a sense of belonging within teams and across staff?
- How would you define your office culture?
- What steps are you taking to diversify leadership and promote staff from underrepresented backgrounds?
- How do you train supervisors to be inclusive leaders with employees of all backgrounds?
- What are the career trajectories of staff of color within the organization?
- What social causes does your organization support?

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- How has your organization prioritized executive accountability toward DEI advancement?
- Is your dress code inclusive of Trans and non-binary identities?
- Does your organization have any affinity groups or committees to support diverse populations? If so, how do these groups contribute to the culture of the organization?

It is important to also pay attention to the infrastructure of the organization's working space. For example, does it support the needs of individuals with special needs? The ADA requires on-ramps as an alternative way of accessing a staircase for individuals who may use a wheelchair. Is the building equipped to accommodate all employees? Furthermore, all-gender restrooms and lactation rooms demonstrate inclusive accommodations for Trans and non-binary individuals, as well as mothers.

Employee Resource Groups

What are ERGs, you ask? They are voluntary, employee-led groups that foster inclusive workplaces while aligning with organizations' missions, values, and goals. Other benefits include the development of future leaders, increased employee engagement, and open channels of communication to leadership. Some identities often represented in ERGs are Women, Veterans, Parents/Caretakers, Latina/o/x, Black, Asian, LGBTQ+, and Indigenous. Make sure that you ask if these exist in the organizations where you are applying, and join one as a new hire!

Onboarding as a New Hire

If you've accepted an offer, and feel that you've joined a diverse and inclusive workplace, that's great! However, don't stop assessing. Once you are a new hire, reflect on the following during your first ninety days:

- What duties are they asking you to take on? Research on implicit bias suggests that marginalized groups are more often assigned "housework" tasks, such as taking notes at meetings. This is more pronounced for women of color.
- What kinds of committees are you part of? Are you regarded as the expert or representative of your specific identity group? Although you want to showcase your diverse voice and make a difference at your job, you don't want to be pegged as the "token" hire.
- Do you have an open channel of communication to leadership? If your supervisor is not escalating your contributions, ideas, or concerns to senior leadership, ask yourself: "*Is there another way for me to gain visibility with decision makers in the office?*" You might be able to create an ERG or join a staff mentorship program.
- Does the organization have a team or committee that oversees special accommodations for neurodiverse individuals or employees with disabilities? Do they take into account different learning styles?

Many believe that marginalized groups have to work twice as hard to get half of the recognition or upward mobility enjoyed by their dominant identity counterparts. However you identify, make it a priority to advocate for yourself and create work spaces that respect and appreciate all of the knowledge, diversity, and overall contributions that you bring as an employee. Start looking at the job search process through a DEI lens so that you can bring your authentic self to the workplace and shine—as you should!

Additional Resources

See below for additional resources to help you understand the unique differences in your job search as a marginalized identity. The more information you have at your fingertips, the more empowered you will be to advocate for yourself. Lastly, it is highly recommended that you schedule an appointment with a Wasserman career coach to assist you with researching diverse and inclusive organizations, preparing your resume or CV, responding to difficult or illegal questions during an interview, and any other career questions you may have. We are here to support you!

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Wasserman Resources

- [Graduate Student Diversity and Inclusion Career Resource Guide](#)
- [Student Veteran Career Guide](#)
- [Career Guide for Students and Alumni with Disabilities](#)
- [LGBTQ Job Search Guide](#)

External Resources

- Zippia Article: [Trans Job Seeker Guide: Overcoming Obstacles in the Job Market](#)
- Human Right Campaign's [Corporate Equality Index](#)
- The Muse Article: [Looking for an Inclusive Employer? Ask These 9 Questions During Your Interview](#)
- Glassdoor Article: [Diversity At Work: 5 Tips to Find Out If A Company Has It Or Not](#)
- The Muse Article: [The Best Way to Figure Out if a Company's Truly Committed to Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- Monster Article: [4 Reasons to Seek out Employers with Diverse Workforces](#)
- The Balance Careers Article: [How to Tell if a Company Values Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- Fast Company Article: [10 Interview Questions to Determine if a Company is as Inclusive As it Claims](#)
- Fairygodboss Article: [A Step-by-Step Guide to Starting an Affinity Group at Work](#)
- Code Academy Article: [What is Digital Accessibility?](#)
- Department of Labor Article on [Accommodations](#)
- Job Accommodations Network: www.askjan.org