

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106684](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

As the nation’s largest employer, the federal government strives to be a model for DEIA, and to cultivate a workforce that draws from all segments of society. To this end, federal agencies are expected to establish and maintain a productive workforce that provides opportunities for all employees to excel. Such organizations typically foster a work environment in which people are enabled and motivated to aid mission accomplishment.

GAO was asked to identify leading practices and tools to advance DEIA. This report updates our 2005 leading diversity management practices and highlights key considerations that can help agencies advance DEIA in their workforces. Since 2005, GAO has continued to report on federal efforts to increase diversity in the workforce, ensure equity, enhance inclusive environments, and improve reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

GAO reviewed scholarly and peer-reviewed literature related to diversity management. GAO randomly selected 21 subject matter specialists that included, amongst others, individuals from federal, state, and local governments, for semi-structured interviews.

View [GAO-24-106684](#). For more information, contact Dawn G. Locke at (202) 512-6806, or locked@gao.gov.

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FEDERAL WORKFORCE

Leading Practices Related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

This report presents GAO’s leading practices for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) management and includes key considerations for implementing them (see table below). These practices can provide valuable insight and guidance for agencies to enhance their DEIA programs but are not meant to be all encompassing and are distinct from equal opportunity requirements under the law. GAO’s leading DEIA practices are interrelated, reinforce each other, and are not sequenced in any order.

Subject matter specialists and the literature generally agree that a combination of the nine identified practices should be considered when developing and implementing DEIA programs. GAO was told by all the subject matter specialists that top leadership commitment to DEIA sends a clear message about the seriousness and business relevance of DEIA. GAO has often emphasized that top leadership commitment is perhaps the single most important element in successful management improvement initiatives. Accountability provides a means for ensuring that managers at all levels are made responsible for DEIA in their organizations and are evaluated on their efforts to support DEIA initiatives. DEIA training includes organizational efforts to inform and educate management and staff about DEIA.

Leading Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Practices and Selected Key Considerations

DEIA Leading Practice	Selected Key Considerations
 Top leadership commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign leadership and accountability for DEIA throughout the organization to managers and supervisors Dedicate resources for DEIA (i.e., staff, training, budget, and technology) Identify opportunities to support accessibility for employees
 DEIA as part of an organization's strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a DEIA strategic plan with related objectives, time frames, and responsibilities and align with the agency strategic plan Monitor and report progress of DEIA initiatives and make course corrections
 Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect, analyze, and report agency workforce demographic data Collect, analyze, and report employee views of DEIA Assess the equity of workplace policies and procedures
 Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and evaluate DEIA performance objectives for leaders, managers, and supervisors Recognize employees for progress on DEIA initiatives
 Succession planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create career roadmaps for employees Build a pipeline of qualified candidates identified for promotion Provide networking and mentoring programs
 Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand sources of recruitment Develop a recruitment strategy to support DEIA initiatives
 Employee involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support employee resource groups Form workplace teams with employees of diverse backgrounds
 DEIA training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training programs that focus on the benefits of DEIA Provide DEIA training (i.e., teambuilding, communication, and conflict resolution)
 Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement communication strategies that support DEIA (i.e., newsletters, policy statements, speeches, and meetings) Use language that shows support for a diverse and inclusive workforce

Source: GAO analysis of relevant literature and interviews with subject matter specialists. GAO illustrations. | GAO-24-106684