

# Everyone On Board: Advancing Equity Within Different Organizational Cultures

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# Why this topic?

- Positive desire to address and make amends for systemic racism
- Equity initiatives and expectations can alienate some staff
- Organizations that promote equity often assume (sometimes incorrectly) they are inclusive to people of color and other underrepresented groups

# What can this look like?



A place can have all the “right” values – but still not be inclusive

# How do we find our we?

How do we advance equity without leaving parts of our organizations behind?

**Learning to build bridges  
across our differences is  
the challenge of our  
times**

# We can start by understanding our differences

- Three different value systems based on the Spiral Dynamics Integral system
- Both organizations and individuals are a mix of these value systems, but one tends to be more dominant
- Anyone can get lost in their own value system—the goal is to be able to see and act from all these systems

**BLUE**

Order &  
Purpose

**ORANGE**

Independence &  
Achievement

**GREEN**

Community &  
Equality

# Order & Purpose

BLUE

- Rules should be consistent, fair and uniformly applied
- Value individual responsibility and taking care of your own
- Comfortable with hierarchy and earning your place
- Individuals are expected to conform to the expectations and norms of the group to maintain harmony and order (nobody is special)
- Influence behavior through punishment

**Typical barrier:** Not understanding that a system that they have personally experienced as fair, has not been fair for everyone.

# How can we connect?

BLUE

- Use easy-to-understand terminology – don't make people afraid to use the wrong word
- Use the language of equality (e.g., this program is here so that everyone has a fair chance)
- Race-only programs are very challenging, while programs based on socioeconomic or multiple factors are better received
- Engage them in the conversation, don't make assumptions

*If you want to engage your field staff, examine and acknowledge classism within your organization first*



# Independence & Achievement

ORANGE

- Rules should be minimal and not get in the way of outcomes
  - Value individual agency and achievement
  - Believe in meritocracy, efficiency, and never-ending growth
  - High performers are given leeway to deviate from rules and norms
  - Influence behavior through performance incentives (pay and status)
- Typical barrier:** Not being able to see the role of bias and systemic advantages in their own achievements.

# How can we connect?

ORANGE

- Research and data, data and research!
- Focus on organizational benefits of greater diversity and the desire for every person to be able to reach their full potential
- Do your homework – identify specific barriers, develop a system for addressing those barriers, and measure and report on the outcomes
- Orange loves STEM programs for kids

# Community & Equality

GREEN

- Rules are relative and subjective
- Embrace equity and reparations
- Anti-hierarchical and pluralistic – everyone has a voice and the freedom to identify and express themselves as they choose
- Oriented to communication and process, rather than action and outcome
- Influence behavior through threat of out-grouping (cancellation)

**Typical barrier:** Confusing advocacy with alignment (I advocate for them, hence they want the same things as me)

# How can we make programs more effective?

GREEN

- Most equity systems are driven from the green system and are consistent with green values and language
- Recognize that many of the people you want to help do not belong to the green value system
- Keep the mission of your organization (clean water!) at the center and build equity into delivering that mission
- Embrace systems and outcomes

**Building bridges isn't  
about flip flopping from  
one way of being to  
another –  
it's about **integration.****

# Thank you!

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