



MANAGER RESOURCE:

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

Managers play a pivotal role in creating inclusive workplaces. By demonstrating inclusive behaviour, encouraging others to do so, and advocating for change at the organizational level, managers can cultivate environments where employees thrive.

As the number of newcomers in the workforce continues to grow, managers can create more supportive and engaging environments for these workers by adding a “newcomer lens” to their inclusion efforts. Utilizing this perspective will help managers focus on actions that address specific workplace integration challenges that newcomers face.

The results of these efforts could include improvements in team cohesion, employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

This resource summarizes key components of workplace inclusion and offers practical recommendations which apply a “newcomer lens” to these efforts.

For additional employer resources, visit ottawa-worldskills.org.

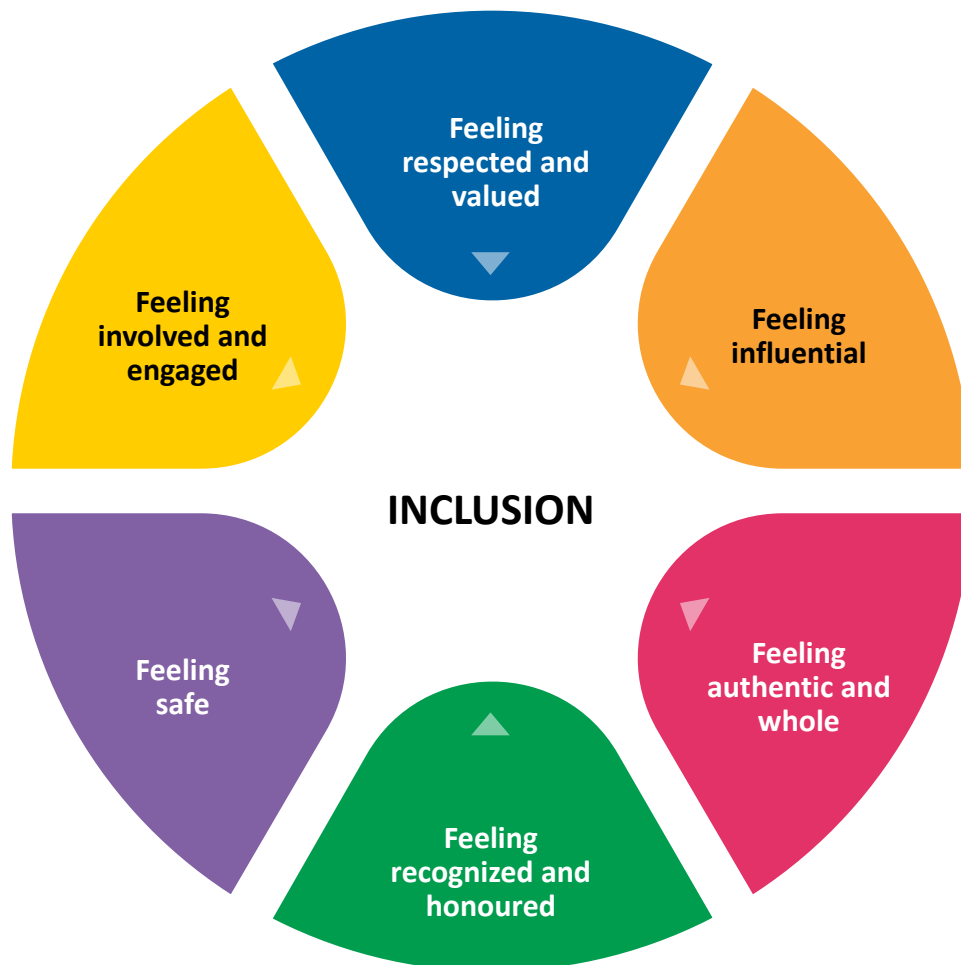
WORKPLACE INCLUSION FUNDAMENTALS

In *Diversity at Work: The Practice of Inclusion*, Bernardo Ferdman identifies six key elements that contribute to employees' experiences of inclusion (see graphic below). These feelings are related to individuals' interactions with others and the overarching policies and practices in the organization.



SIX KEYS TO INCLUSION

(Ferdman, 2013)



Before you continue reading, take a moment to think about a time when your manager made you feel respected and valued. What did that person do to make you feel that way? Next, try to imagine what types of actions might elicit those same feelings in someone who has grown up in a different culture and recently moved to Canada. This thought exercise highlights the importance of adapting your approach to inclusion to fit the needs of individual members on your team.

Now that we have described inclusion from an employee's perspective, we will share some actions that contribute to fostering inclusive environments. Ferdman (2013) outlines steps for individuals, leaders and organizations (see table below). These behaviours can be modeled by managers, woven into job descriptions and reinforced in one-on-ones and team meetings. Creating inclusive policies and practices can be achieved through participating in efforts to influence decision makers and contributing to the implementation processes.

INCLUSIVE BEHAVIOURS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

(Ferdman, 2013)

Inclusive Behaviour for Everyone

Acknowledge, connect, and engage with others.

Listen deeply and carefully.

Engage a broad range of perspectives.

Openly share information and seek transparency.

Be curious.

Lean into discomfort.

Increase self-awareness.

Be willing to learn and be influenced by others.

Be respectful and demonstrate fairness.

Foster interdependence and teamwork.

Inclusive Behaviour for Leaders

Hold oneself and others accountable for creating an inclusive culture.

Invite engagement and dialogue.

Model bringing one's whole self to work, and give permission for and encourage others to do so.

Foster transparent decision making.

Understand and engage with resistance.

Understand and talk about how inclusion connects to the mission and vision.

Inclusive Organizational Policies and Practices

Create an environment of respect, fairness, justice, and equity.

Create a framework for assessing and implementing organizational policies and practices.

Build systems, processes, and procedures that support and sustain inclusion.

Enhance individual and collective competence to collaborate across cultures and groups.

Define organizational social responsibility (internally and externally).

Foster transparency throughout the organization.

Promote teamwork.

Create a diverse organization.

Foster continual learning and growth.

APPLYING A NEWCOMER LENS

Building on this foundation of inclusive behaviours, policies and practices, we will turn our focus to specific strategies that managers can use to promote inclusive environments for newcomers. These actions are rooted in the choice to be open to understanding and accommodating cultural differences. They also recognize that inclusion is not an automatic result of having a diverse team; instead, managers need to take an active role in cultivating this type of environment.




HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Learn how to pronounce colleagues' names correctly.** This simple practice can help newcomers feel seen and respected. For more details about how to do this well, you can refer to Ruchika T. Malhotra's article, [If You Don't Know How to Say Someone's Name, Just Ask](#).
- **Invite newcomers to share their thoughts and ideas in relevant forums,** including one-on-ones and team meetings. Some newcomers may be accustomed to working in organizations where open discussions are not the norm, and this may make them hesitant to share their ideas. Encouraging newcomers to add their voice to conversations can help them build confidence and feel more engaged.
- **Develop your inclusive leadership skills.** Use Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council's [Inclusive Workplace Competencies](#) to reflect on your ability to demonstrate inclusive behaviour within yourself, in your team and at the organizational level. Then, create a plan to gain additional knowledge and develop your competencies. These actions will help you foster a more inclusive environment, which will benefit newcomers and members of other equity-deserving groups.
- **Take steps to learn about newcomers' countries of origin.** This will provide context as you get to know newcomer staff and it can help you appreciate different aspects of their cultures. One resource for this is [Commisceo Global's Country Guides](#). As you are doing your research, please be aware that there is often a lot of diversity within countries, so the information you encounter should not be used to generalize.
- **Share information with newcomer staff about Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), if available.** These groups can provide safe spaces for employees to seek support and build community. They can also help to prevent newcomers from experiencing social isolation in the workplace. If you are interested in starting an ERG at your organization, check out this [toolkit on Employee Resource Groups](#) by the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.
- **Provide guidance about navigating subcultures within the organization.** Some departments have distinct ways of working, and it can be helpful to explain these nuances to newcomers. This information will help newcomers collaborate more effectively with other teams.

- **Advocate for flexible leave arrangements to enable team members to take time off on occasions of social and cultural significance.** Statutory holidays may not have the same level of meaning for all employees, and as a manager, you can start a conversation about how your organization can develop more inclusive leave policies. For ideas about floating holiday policies, check out the [Statutory Holidays: Best Practices for Inclusivity](#) guide from HRx. Another option is to add extra personal leave days, which can be used for any reason, so newcomers do not have to use vacation days to celebrate days of cultural significance.
- **Build cultural awareness within your team.** Include opportunities in team gatherings for colleagues to share aspects of their respective cultures. Multi-cuisine potlucks and celebrating days of cultural significance are some ways to help staff build appreciation for each other unique traditions. These events also demonstrate that diversity is valued.
- **Take steps to reduce intercultural communication challenges.** Sometimes cultural differences in communication styles can lead to issues that impact the work environment. As a manager, you should be aware of your team members' communication styles and be prepared to provide support if challenges arise. For more details, check out Manitoba Start's [Communication Styles](#) resource.

Also, if there is a need, consider adding cross-cultural communication training to your team's professional development plan. These sessions can provide information and strategies to help your team work together more effectively.

These recommendations provide a starting point for managers who are interested in applying a newcomer lens to their efforts to create inclusive workplaces. Another key to this process is being proactive in asking for newcomers' feedback. Newcomers are a very diverse group, so it's important to ask newcomer employees what their needs are and how they would like to be included in workplace inclusion efforts.



For additional ideas on cultural inclusivity, you can refer to Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO)'s article on [Cultural Accommodation in the Workplace: Tips and Practices](#). HIO also offers a suite of [Cross-Cultural Competency Training](#) to equip managers with skills and strategies to support culturally diverse teams, which are available at no cost.