

North American Edition

**TIME FOR
DMOCRACY**

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY
& INCLUSION**



Global Best Practices in Community Engagement

Section 4 of 6

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Acknowledgement and Thanks

Thank you to our Knowledge and Destination Partners for their invaluable involvement in the Time for DMOcracy, North America Edition.

Destination Partners in Time for DMOcracy (North America)

Thank you to our North America Destination Partners who supported, contributed to and collaborated in this important global research study:



Knowledge Partners on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Thank you to our Knowledge Partners who contributed their insights and expertise to the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion section of the Time for DMOcracy report:



Program, Agency and Association Partners in Time for DMOcracy (North America)



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Introduction

It is the responsibility of Destination Marketing and/or Management Organizations (DMOs) to act as the brand steward for the destination. However, the value of a strategic, inclusive approach to community engagement and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) must also be recognized when promoting tourism and supporting local economies. By fostering innovation and bringing together diverse voices and experiences, DMOs can help create a more dynamic, authentic and sustainable destination.



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At a Glance

- Community engagement is a high priority for DMOs, but most have yet to expand this as part of their destination management practices.
- Most DMOs see a range of challenges in successfully undertaking community engagement with a strong commitment to DEI – reaching all parts of their diverse communities.
- There is always a business case for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Most North American DMOs do not have any key performance indicators (KPIs) related to community engagement and/or resident sentiment around tourism. This includes KPIs on how broad and inclusive their engagement is with diverse communities.
- Community engagement and DEI practices are evolving to be more meaningful, authentic and necessary to foster unique partnerships and collaborations allowing destination organizations to be mindful and not limited in traditional perspectives and practices.

WHAT TO KNOW

WHAT TO DO

Time for DMOcracy identifies 9 practical recommendations for how DMOs can contribute to a successful DEI strategy:

1. Make the commitment to DEI and Community Engagement
2. Embrace the intersection of destination stewardship, sustainability and DEI
3. Create a culture of inclusion in the workplace and local industry community
4. Be deliberate about workforce development with a focus on DEI
5. Implement deliberate communications and transparency around your community engagement and DEI efforts
6. Engage and support diverse local businesses and community creators
7. Review and refine your community engagement strategy to incorporate DEI
8. Evolve your marketing to develop imagery and content that is welcoming & inclusive to all
9. Develop success metrics to celebrate progress and growth

RESOURCES

We highlight and share a range of critical research, case study examples and other resources to inform your action. See Page 18.

What To Know

CRITICAL LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS

The below insights have been extracted from the survey of North American DMOs as part of the Time for DMOCRacy project (i). The full report is noted in the 'Resources to Use' section or can be found [here](#).

a. DMOs See Community Engagement and DEI as High Priorities

Many North American and European DMOs consider both community engagement and diversity, equity and inclusion to be a top priority for their organization. Most predict that this importance will continue to increase in the future. 77% of DMOs rank Community Engagement overall as a high or very high priority(ii) and an even higher % - 87% agree or strongly agree with the statement that "Our organization is committed to diversity and inclusion" (iii).

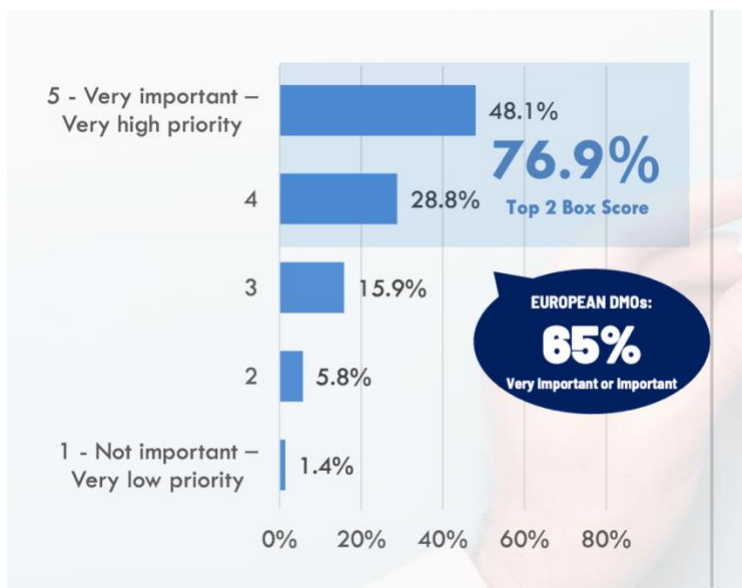


While around half of all DMOs engage in some destination management activities, only a small number actively address significant community issues such as workforce development, sustainability and short-term rental management (iv). DMOs are likewise committed to DEI but somewhat ambivalent and uncertain on the principles and practices on how to achieve it (v).



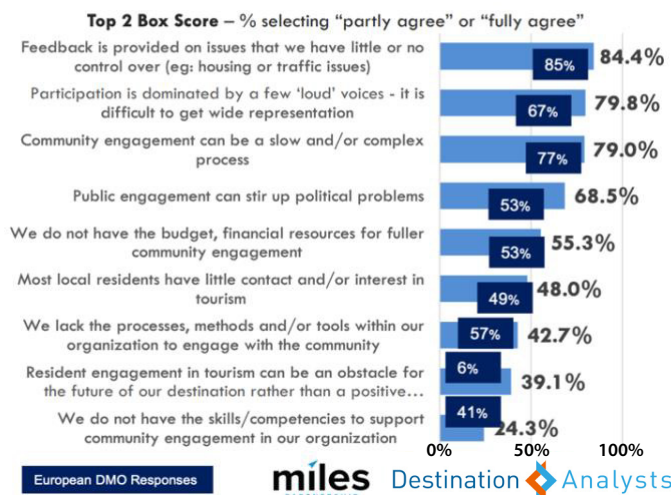
Respondents to the [2022 EDI Study](#) on Destination Organizations believe that their destination organizations are committed to DEI, but still show ambivalence to the organization actively embodying principles of DEI.

Figure 1: A significant majority (77%) of responding North American DMOs rated community engagement as a very high or high priority “in their organization today.” This was higher than European DMOs, where 65% rated it at the same level of importance. This reinforced feedback received through the survey and the Time for DMOCRACY global study—that DMOs are looking to expand their commitment to, and investment in, destination management functions focused on community engagement.



b. DMO challenges with Community Engagement

ORGANIZATION'S CHALLENGES WITH RESIDENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



DMOs identified a range of challenges with community engagement. A minority of DMOs remain skeptical, while most have concerns. This includes concerns in how to facilitate feedback from diverse and representative community voices. The research emphasized the importance of tackling community engagement with the right resources, skills, and partnerships to engage effectively and foster real and productive collaboration.

Figure 2: Most North American and European DMOs agreed with at least some of the potential challenges; most notably the lack of DMO control over many of the concerns raised by residents, the slowness and complexity of community consultation and the difficulty of ensuring that a few do not dominate the discussion. Additionally, North American DMOs were more skeptical than their European peers of the value of community engagement with almost 4 of 10 (39%) at least partly agreeing that it “can be an obstacle to the future of our destination”—vs. just 6% of European DMOs.



c. Gap in Community Empowerment

Research data highlighted a troubling gap in the importance of the community and how much influence residents feel they have in tourism in their community.

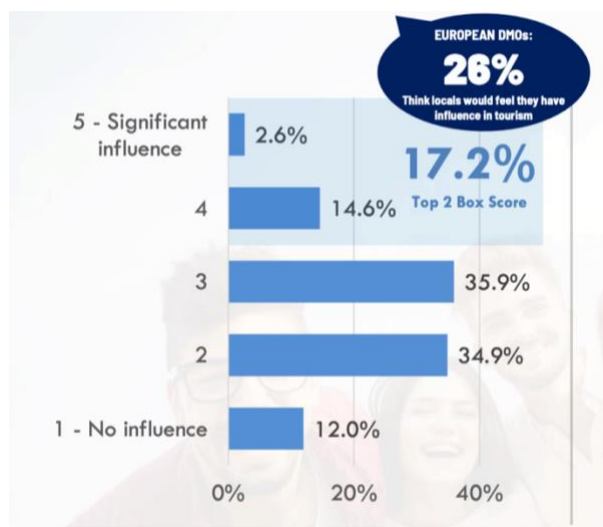


Figure 3: Only a small minority of North American DMOs (17%) reported that their residents would feel “they have any influence when it comes to the development and management of tourism” in their community. This was below the 26% of European DMOs who reported this degree of community empowerment. Diverse communities, who have traditionally been less involved in community planning & development, are likely to feel even less influence.

d. A Need to Develop a Culture of Inclusion

Only around one quarter of North American DMOs reported special efforts in ensuring DEI throughout their community engagement efforts. This included specific steps to ensure broad representation in their research respondents, investing in special, diverse advisory groups or that they have a diverse staff, representative of their community. European DMOs tend to be at an earlier stage in their DEI efforts.



Respondents to the [2022 EDI Study](#) on Destination Organizations are either unaware of or do not have any organization policies in place relating to diverse vendor procurement, decision-making and organizational culture.

ENSURING A FULLY REPRESENTATIVE VIEW OF ALL RESIDENTS

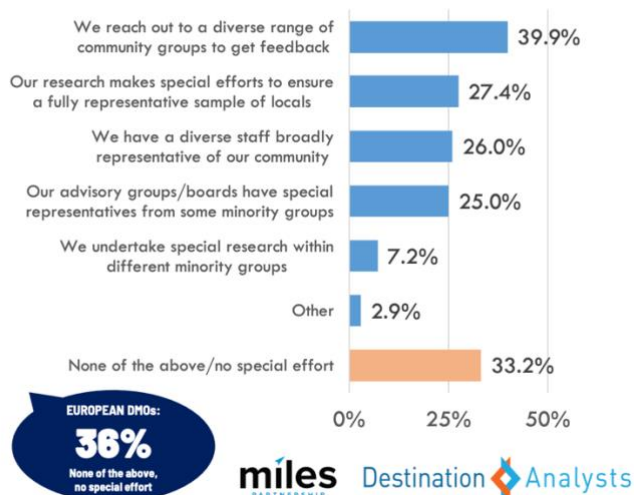


Figure 4: The survey highlighted that most DMOs need to do more to ensure all community groups feel included in their community engagement efforts.

e. The Business Case for Diversity

McKinsey & Company researched the financial impact of diversity of companies across industries. Their May 2020 report, **“Diversity Wins”**, reviewed 1,000+ companies in 15 countries globally. They found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 36% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians and 25% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians for gender diversity. Their report also revealed that companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnic and cultural diversity are 29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability than other companies in their data set.



Figure 5: McKinsey & Company, May 2020 report, *Diversity Wins*

When it comes to diverse hiring practices, DMOs have considerable progress to make. Only 26% of DMOs in the Time for DMOCRacy survey indicated they “have a diverse staff broadly representative of their community”. Progress in addressing this may be uneven as a significant minority of respondents to the [2022 EDI Study](#) on Destination Organizations were uncertain or ambivalent in their perception of how their organization is doing in the hiring of a diverse workforce and being inclusive.



Diverse teams are also better equipped to target and serve diverse customer markets, such as women, ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ communities who currently represent an increasing share of consumer purchase power that is often overlooked or not leveraged by many organizations. A report by McKinsey & Company found that a diverse workforce, including diversity in gender, racial ethnicity, and experiences, can bring a competitive advantage to organizations that are able to attract and retain diverse talent.

a. The Importance of Transparency & Reporting

The Time for DMOcracy survey of DMOs also highlighted that not all North American DMOs are sharing key results of their resident sentiment research widely – including with local government and/or community groups. The research also demonstrated that only 17% of North American DMOs have any key performance indicators (KPIs) that specifically relate to community engagement and/or resident sentiment around tourism. Transparency in reporting around community engagement and DEI is important to build trust with all the diverse members of your community – as are having KPIs related not only to community engagement more broadly but specifically to DEI objectives.

USING THE RESULTS OF RESIDENT SENTIMENT RESEARCH

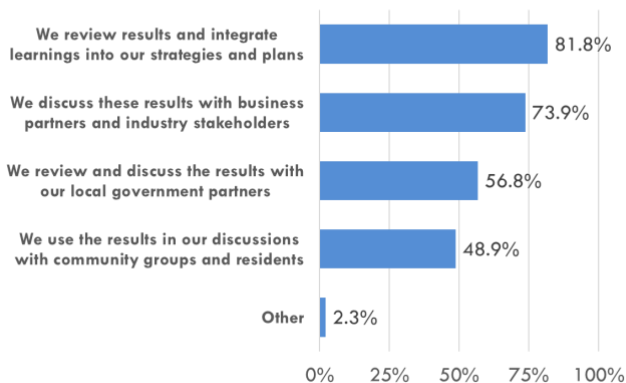
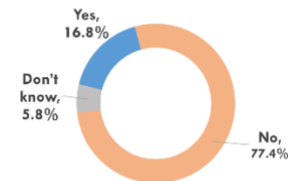


Figure 7: While most North American DMOs share the results of resident sentiment research with business partners only around half share with local government and/or community partners.

Figure 8: Over three quarters (77%) of U.S and Canadian DMOs noted that they do not have KPIs related to community engagement. Small to medium sized CVBs (9 staff or fewer) were most likely to not have any community related KPIs (88%) with larger CVBs the most likely to have KPIs (still however, just 31%).

USE OF KPI'S FOR RESIDENT SENTIMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

Figure 9: DEI should be integrated through ever other part of community engagement – including investments in community participation. A separate section of the Time for DMOcracy North American report covers Community Participation Models including efforts by DMOs such as Community Advisory Boards. For example, the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board has set up a Community Advisory Board which includes specific representation from 6 traditionally underrepresented communities including Muslim, African American, Hispanic American, Native American, LGBT+ and disability communities. See 'Community Participation Models' section of the [Time for DMOcracy reports](#).

What To Do

9 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

1. Make the commitment to DEI and Community Engagement
2. Embrace the intersection of destination stewardship, sustainability and DEI
3. Create a culture of inclusion in the workplace and local industry community
4. Be deliberate about workforce development with a focus on DEI
5. Implement deliberate communications and transparency around your community engagement and DEI efforts
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9. Develop success metrics to celebrate progress and growth

1. Make the Commitment to DEI and Community Engagement

As a first step, DMOs must ask themselves, when it comes to DEI and community engagement, what are they committed to make happen and within what timeline. DMOs must move from being reactive and checking boxers to being proactive. The organization plan should include a strong vision for the role that community engagement and DEI will play in your destination organization as a whole. This includes its implications for various departments and teams – plus clients and external stakeholders. The organization should also be able to articulate why DEI is a priority, from both a business and work culture perspective, and how it will manifest in policies and measurable outcomes. At the end of the day, DMOs will need to ensure that DEI is aligned and prioritized with overall business objectives, therefore making community engagement an actionable commitment.



Figure 10: Travel Alberta's partnership with Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA) demonstrates a long-term commitment to reconciliation and genuine partnership with Indigenous tourism businesses.

2. Embrace the Intersection of Destination Stewardship, Sustainability and DEI

When considering community engagement for destinations, it is critical to understand the intersection of destination stewardship, sustainability and DEI. Together, these three pillars embody what it means to be inclusive. Destinations need to build a community engagement process that is diverse and inclusive in terms of stakeholder engagement and equitable in terms of building sustainable tourism models that are accessible. To effectively practice destination stewardship, we must prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of our approach and process. This means actively seeking out and engaging a diverse range of stakeholders in order to create a sustainable tourism model that benefits both the social and economic well-being of the community. Through this approach, DMOs can create a space where voices can contribute to the larger idea that is ultimately strategic, leading to advocacy, governance and policy to implement meaningful change.

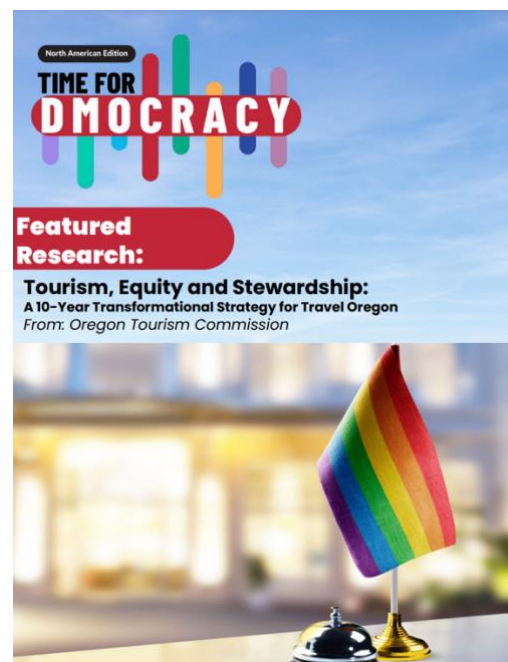


Figure 11: The draft 10-year transformational strategy for Travel Oregon focuses on addressing the needs of all residents and address destination stewardship, sustainability and DEI.

3. Create a Culture of Inclusion in the Workplace and Local Industry Community

There is a vast amount of value generated by increasing diversity and centering equity and inclusion in your organization's community engagement efforts. This includes cultivating a workplace and local industry community where everyone feels welcome and where all people feel confident and equipped to share their ideas and experiences. To align your workplace culture with your vision, purpose and core values, it is important to regularly assess the beliefs, attitudes, expectations and experiences of your employees. Use the insights gained from this evaluation to inform future decisions and identify any necessary changes that will enhance the overall strength of your organization, while also considering the impact on your DMO's relationship with the local community.

4. Be Deliberate about DEI in Workforce Development

Taking into account the impact Covid-19 has had on the workplace, it is essential to develop long-term solutions that contribute to a stronger, more resilient workforce in the future. Today, we must intentionally integrate DEI practices within our talent acquisition and retention efforts.

To ensure that talent is developed equitably, DMOs must prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of our talent development efforts. This includes understanding the role that DEI values play in employee performance and accountability. Additionally, DMOs must take proactive steps to create talent pipelines and showcase our industry as a desirable career path through various community engagement initiatives.

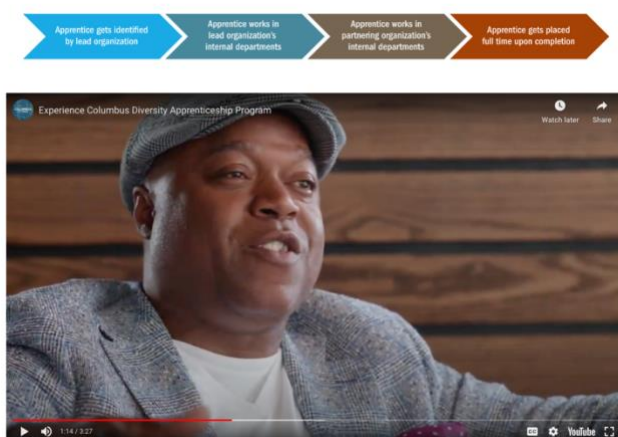


Figure 12: Through Tourism Diversity Matters' Apprenticeship Program, candidates will gain exposure to local stakeholders and community partners such as airports, government agencies, meeting and event organizations, restaurants and attractions. Upon successful completion of the program, a full-time position will be secured. (Link to play video [here](#))

For more information visit the Workforce section of the Time for DMOcracy report toolkit.

5. Implement deliberate Communications and Transparency

To successfully engage the community and demonstrate progress on diversity, equity and inclusion, we must be intentional with information-sharing. It is important to build and implement an internal/external communications strategy to articulate “the why.”

For example, what are the facts and/or data that support why community stakeholders need to support a DMO’s goals and objectives? And what are your outward-facing communications related to why DEI and community engagement are both priorities at your destination organization?

Communication can make or break any community engagement effort. Take time to think strategically about your internal and external communications. Understand what you want to communicate and then develop a clear message. Decide who should carry that message instead of the CEO—consider a community leader, elected official, business leader, or someone completely unexpected. And finally, work internally to develop feedback loops, breaking down silos, and creating safe places for ideas to grow and thrive.

6. Engage and Support Diverse Local Businesses and Community Creators

Supplier Diversity is not a new topic, but many destination organizations do not have a plan in place. This may seem like a heavy lift for many DMOs, but an organization can start by asking the following questions:

- How can we build an external network of vendors that is diverse and inclusive?
- How can we operationalize our process to move away from unconscious bias and broaden our sourcing for talent?
- Beyond staffing, in what other areas of contracted services can DEI considerations have impact?

These few considerations can help create an environment where a DMO can source services and talent in a much more competitive and efficient environment that can ultimately lead to effective community engagement and more innovative business solutions.

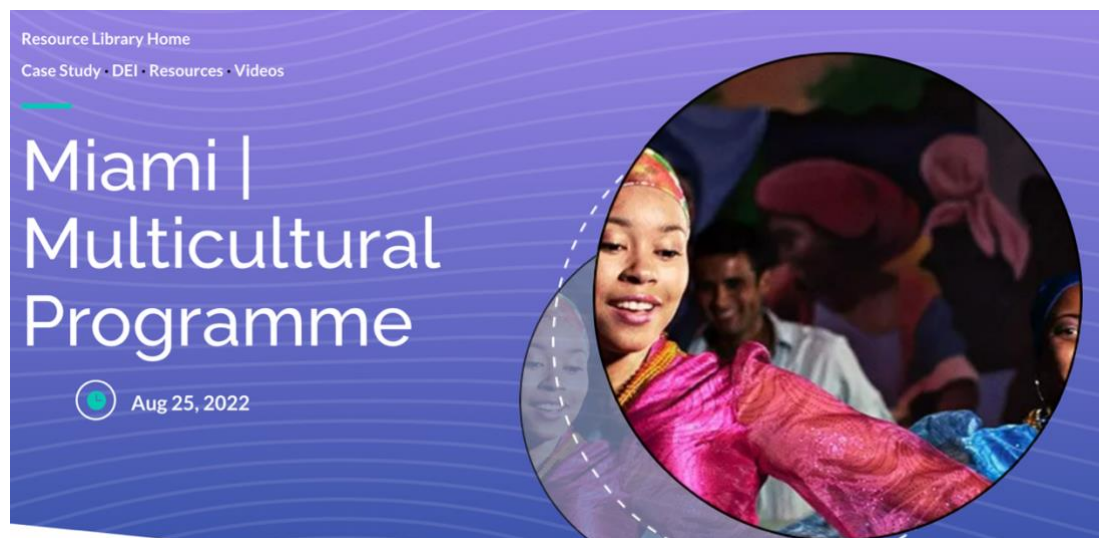


Figure 13: Greater Miami CVB's multicultural and tourism development mission is to ensure that the diversity of Miami's multicultural communities, attractions and events are promoted by working locally to build consistency and economic sustainability, broadening the scope of initiatives and maximizing marketing opportunities.

7. Review and Refine your Community Engagement Strategy to Incorporate DEI

It is the responsibility of the local tourism and hospitality community to foster deep connections with the diverse communities that make up their destination. By actively supporting broader cultural and institutional change and demonstrating how the hospitality industry can enhance the lives of residents, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives can effectively be advanced. Focus on building relationships across your community by listening and committing the time and effort to follow up and conduct genuine, ongoing outreach. Partner with other agencies and organizations (government entities, NGOs, community and business groups) that are also prioritizing DEI. Think about unique partnerships and collaborations that will allow your DMO to be open-minded and not complacent. To ensure that all perspectives are considered, strive to provide open access to diverse viewpoints and engage with community stakeholders to bring in a range of expertise and insight. To get started in this space, ask the below questions:

- Who are your current stakeholders and who is missing?
- What do current community engagement efforts look like and how can they be stronger?



Figure 14: ICMA has published a resource on "How to Facilitate Inclusive Community Outreach and Engagement."

8. Evolve Your Marketing to Develop Imagery and Content that is Welcoming & Inclusive to All

As an industry, we need to collectively strive to implement inclusive and equitable marketing practices that are essential to tourism marketing and destination brand stewardship. Diverse and inclusive marketing aims to speak to a larger audience of potential consumers by looking past preconceived notions of gender, age, race, income, sexuality, language and religion (among other things). An inclusive campaign should feature people from the targeted audience groups and incorporate diverse stories and perspectives. By focusing on shared experiences such as enjoying time with family or traveling, and featuring individuals from a variety of backgrounds, messaging that resonates with all audiences can be created. It is important to continually strive to evolve promotional practices to be welcoming and inclusive.

Additionally, messaging should consider and align destination experiences with culturally relevant experiences, products and programs/events, and should make target audiences feel welcome, visible AND understood. Consider marketing activations and delivery channels that resonate with target audiences. For example, delivery channels through community engagement efforts or trusted community partnerships will resonate stronger than traditional media channels.

Finally, storytelling is a powerful tool that should be leveraged beyond traditional practices. Push for inclusive marketing practices that prioritize community partnerships, contributions and authentic experiences. Do not look to implement one-off opportunities that, in the end, only serve one side of a partnership. Think long term, think scale and think sustainability.

Figure 15: San Francisco Travel Association created an advisory council to address the need to become a more inclusive and diverse organization to better represent and promote the communities of San Francisco.



9. Develop success metrics to celebrate progress and growth

Thinking back to how the challenge is simply getting started, it is important to celebrate the small, early wins. It is also important to have clear and measurable outcomes. Invest in quantitative and qualitative resident and business research that reaches the full diversity of your community. Ensure you can segment sentiment by neighborhood, age, ethnicity and other important groupings.

Resources to Use

IMPORTANT RESEARCH, ANALYSIS & OTHER RESOURCES

Highlighted Resources:

1. North American and European DMOs on Community Engagement, August 2022, Miles Partnership and Destination Analysts – [view & download here](#) Time for DMOCRACY Survey of 292 North American and European DMOs, August 2022
<https://northamerica.timefordmocracy.com/>
2. Destinations International Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Study on Destination Organizations 2022 – [view & download here](#)
3. McKinsey & Company, May 2020 report, Diversity Wins – [view and download here](#)
4. Case Study: [Travel Alberta – Indigenous Tourism Engagement](#)
5. [Learning Lab 4: DEI Engagement](#) – featuring Jen Gray-O'Connor, Roz Stuttley and Renee Areng
6. [Greater Miami CVB Multi-cultural Business Program](#) – case study, presentation and slide deck from July 2022 Learning Lab
7. [Tourism, Equity and Stewardship: A 10-Year Transformational Strategy for Travel Oregon](#)
8. 2021 [Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy Roadmap](#)
9. Tourism Diversity Matters Apprenticeship Program – Tourism Diversity Matters – [view here](#).

References & Sources:

- i. Summary Report of Survey of North American and European DMOs on Community Engagement, August 2022, Miles Partnership and Destination Analysts.
- ii. Summary Report of Survey of North American and European DMOs on Community Engagement, August 2022, Miles Partnership and Destination Analysts
- iii. Destinations International Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Study on Destination Organizations 2022
- iv. Summary Report of Survey of North American and European DMOs on Community Engagement, August 2022, Miles Partnership and Destination Analysts
- v. Destinations International Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Study on Destination Organizations 2022

Other Resources:

[Inclusion & Diversity Guidelines](#), World Travel & Tourism Council, December 2020

[How to Facilitate Inclusive Community Outreach and Engagement](#), ICMA

[Towards Inclusive Tourism?](#) Stakeholder Collaboration in the Development of Accessible Tourism, Tourism Geographies, 2018

[Factors Influencing Indigenous Engagement in Tourism Development](#): An International Perspective, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 2016

[Travel Industry Association DEI Pledge](#), Travel Unity

[DEI Standards for Travel & Tourism](#), Travel Unity

[Inclusive and Accessible Travel Guidelines](#), World Travel and Tourism Council

[Indigenous Communities Engaging in Tourism Development in Arizona](#), USA, Ambros & Buzinde, Journal of Heritage Tourism, 2022

[Organizational Change Towards LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Hospitality and Tourism: Managerial Perspectives](#), Vongvisitsin & Wong, Tourism Management, 2021

[Fundamentals of Creating Inclusive Content](#), Miles Partnership

[Inclusive Tourism Development](#), Scheyvens & Biddulph, Tourism Geographies, 2018