

Celebrate Diversity Month Programming Guide

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Celebrate Diversity Month is an international observance established in 2004 “[to recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all.](#)” Now, each April, many organizations choose to observe and celebrate this month by highlighting, honoring, and learning more about diverse customs, cultures, and experiences. By doing so, we gain a greater awareness of and appreciation for the unique backgrounds and identities of others and can better leverage diverse perspectives for greater innovation, problem-solving, productivity, and collaboration.

As you start to design your Celebrate Diversity Month programming, it’s important to consider the many dimensions of diversity that each merit recognition and celebration, including gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, generation, disability, age, nationality, ancestry, regional identity, veteran status, economic status, social class origin, language, dialect, and more. Each of us is a unique mix of intersectional and overlapping identities which contribute to our full sense of self.

Remember that April should not be the only month in which you celebrate diversity. Instead, it’s helpful to think of this month as a kick-off or a high note in your yearly schedule of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programming. If you are not already prioritizing DEI at your organization, it’s important to realize that these programs may appear insincere or performative without a deeper organizational commitment. If that’s the case, Celebrate Diversity Month offers the chance to take solid, foundational steps toward greater DEI at large, which we recommend you communicate and begin before launching a full month of diversity programming.

What are the first steps in creating a celebration that is authentic to the diversity of your organization?



Start by collecting qualitative and quantitative data to measure your internal diversity and inclusion. This baseline data will help you look objectively at the current state of diversity and inclusion within your organization so that you can create an authentic celebration and begin to think about potential future goals. Consider a survey that asks employees to voluntarily contribute their demographic data in each of the categories above, plus any others that may be relevant to your organization, such as highest level of education completed, tenure, or marital status. Include questions that help to gauge feelings of belonging and inclusion, like “do you feel that your voice is heard and valued?” and “do you feel welcomed, respected, and empowered to grow?” And remember to explain why you are collecting this data: so you can better understand, celebrate, and embrace the unique diversity of your organization.



Then, have fun with it! Food, art, music, and games are a huge part of any culture. Encourage your team to share what’s most meaningful to them. Perhaps, create a multicultural movie list or playlist of songs for employees to enjoy throughout the month. Or, ask your team to contribute their favorite recipes and create your own organization-wide digital cookbook. If your employee population speaks many languages, learn the word for “diversity” in all of them.

Celebrate Diversity Month is a wonderful opportunity to seek out and promote diversity of thought and experience within our workplaces and communities. Below are some ideas and examples for how to create an authentic celebration of diversity at your organization.



Read, Watch, Listen, and LEARN

As mentioned earlier, a multicultural movie list, playlist of songs, or digital cookbook is a great way to start in celebrating the unique diversity of your organization. Below, you'll also find a short list of resources that may be helpful in broadening your perspective on the value and dimensions of diversity.

BOOKS

[We Can't Talk About That At Work](#) by Mary Frances Winters

[Demystifying Diversity](#) by Jiten Patel & Gamiel Yafai

[Lead Like An Ally](#) by Julie Kratz

[Same, Same but Different](#) by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw

[Diversify](#) by June Sarpong

DOCUMENTARIES/MOVIES

[Life In A Day](#)

[What Was Ours](#)

[Disclosure](#)

[Crip Camp](#)

PODCASTS

[Code Switch](#)

[Diversity: Beyond the Checkbox](#)

[The Deep Dive](#)

[Unlocking Us](#)



NOTES & IDEAS





Understand Where You Are

Take the time to understand your organization's existing diversity. Obtaining baseline data about your employee demographics will help you see your strengths and needs more objectively, so you can celebrate where you are successful in embracing diversity and where you may need to focus on improvement. Collect quantitative demographic data plus qualitative data about whether employees feel included and respected at work. Once you know where you are starting from, it's easier to understand where you want to go.



Support Diverse Professionals

Consider engaging or partnering with diversity-focused [trade and professional associations](#) that provide support for traditionally underrepresented groups. For instance, if you are in healthcare, you may consider a relationship with the [American Muslim Health Professionals](#) or the [Association of Black Cardiologists](#). If you are in engineering, consider the [Association for Women in Science](#) or the [American Society of Engineers of Indian Origin](#). To make a deeper local impact, you might also think of creating a paid internship or annual scholarship for one or more students from your local Historically Black College or University (HBCU).



Start to Increase Your Supplier Diversity

Investigate how you can make a positive impact and deepen your relationship with diverse people in your local community or within your industry. Kickstart an effort toward greater supplier diversity by re-examining which companies and people you partner with for your foundational business services, like legal services, insurance, pest control, office supplies, catered lunches, or accounting and payroll. Seek to make an intentional impact both socially and economically.

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Collaborate



Ask and Listen

You may have heard it said already that inclusion unlocks the power of diversity. To reap the benefits of a diverse population – and promote more diverse thinking – organizations should seek to cultivate a culture of belonging in which each person feels respected, included, and encouraged to participate. One of the best ways to foster inclusion is by seeking out and listening to the perspectives and opinions of the people you are trying to include. As you build your Celebrate Diversity Month programs, ask your employees if and how they would like their cultures and identities included.



Create a Mentorship Program

Mentorship is one of the most effective diversity initiatives, helping new employees get up to speed faster and feel an immediate sense of welcome and belonging that improves retention and workplace satisfaction, especially for people from marginalized groups. Remember, mentors do not necessarily have to come from within your organization. Consider partnering with other organizations and people you admire to support your employees from underrepresented backgrounds, those with disabilities, and those with diverse, intersectional identities.



Energize Your Efforts

Look for simple opportunities that increase exposure to diverse cultures and identities. For instance, you may think of offering a virtual, multicultural baking class, or a virtual guided tour of a cultural institution, like the [National Museum of Anthropology](#) in Mexico City or the [Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage](#) in Washington, DC. Experiential apps like [TDM Connect](#) also offer a fun and easy way to engage teams in playful competition for more diverse experiences.

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Conclusion

Celebrate Diversity Month draws attention to the great diversity of human identities, perspectives, and experiences that surround us every day. At an organizational level, highlighting diversity encourages us to celebrate the strength in our differences and to look outside our own perspective to see the world differently. By investing time and energy in celebrating diversity, your organization shows current employees, potential hires, customers, clients, partners, and all stakeholders that you value a broad range of identities, cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives.

