



# COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

## Legislation Text

---

File #: 22-929, Version: 1

---

**To:** Board of Supervisors

**From:** Human Resources

**Agenda Section:** Departmental

**SUBJECT:**

Humboldt County Foundational Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Definitions, Addition of Exploring Racial Equity: Common Terms to the County's Mandatory Training List, Diversity Framework (Seal), and the Establishment of a Diversity Web Presence

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the foundational definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion, microaggression and intersectionality;
2. Add Exploring Racial Equity: Common Terms course to the county's Mandatory Training List;
3. Require 3 hours of diversity training required annually for all county staff;
4. Adopt the Humboldt County Diversity Framework (Seal); and
5. Direct the Office of Human Resources to establish the necessary web site presence dedicated to county diversity initiatives and data.

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

All county funds

**DISCUSSION:**

On July 14, 2020, your Board directed staff to "Identify Strategies to Promote and Increase Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (DEI) with the express intention to "explore, prepare and develop strategies and practices to support a diverse workplace and harness the benefits of diversity and inclusion to achieve organizational excellence." Since this direction was given, the Office of Human Resources has worked diligently with county departments and staff to develop a diversity roadmap that served to guide the county's diversity activities. A principal component of this roadmap was the deployment of the county's inaugural DEI organizational assessment. Though the findings of this assessment were myriad, analysis revealed that despite the county's best efforts to harness diversity, much work remains.

Language is important as through language meaning is conveyed, information is exchanged, relationships are established, and trust is built. The effects of language are even more pronounced in

diversity work. Data collected during the county's Great Workplace Culture Change initiative, suggested, in part, staff believe that an organizational commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion needs to be institutionalized in the county's workplace culture and reflected in all that the county does, beginning with how staff speaks about diversity and inclusion. In the county's DEI organizational assessment, respondents were asked to define diversity, equity, and inclusion and share what these constructs mean to them. Consistent with the diversity roadmap developed by staff, foundational definitions for diversity, equity, inclusion, microaggression, and implicit bias were derived. Formalized definitions will ensure that the county is consistent in its language and understanding as these terms are applied throughout the organization. Today, the Office of Human Resources presents the following definitions to your Board for consideration and adoption:

**Diversity:**

Psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any individuals, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability and learning styles.

**Equity:**

The guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in providing adequate opportunities to all groups.

**Inclusion:**

The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued to fully participate and bring their whole, authentic selves to work. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in the words, actions, thoughts of all people.

**Microaggression:**

The everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or harmful messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

**Implicit Bias:**

Attitudes or stereotypes towards people without our conscious knowledge. These biases operate beyond our control and awareness, inform our perception of a person or social group and influence our decision-making and behavior toward a person or social group.

Mandatory training, or training required to be taken by all county employees, is usually comprised of topics of great importance from a compliance standpoint or deemed essential for a distinguished career in public service. Examples of current mandatory training include Ethics, Sexual Harassment and Abusive Conduct, Defensive Driving, CyberAwareness, and Americans with Disabilities Act training.

Developing an understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion generally, and cultivating familiarity with certain key terms specifically, is essential to the provision of public service in a changing landscape. The inclusion of the County of Humboldt's Department of Health and Human Services created Exploring Racial Equity: Common Terms course to the county's Mandatory Training List will ensure the county's workforce continues to build the requisite skills to provide community appropriate levels of service while continuing to work toward building an inclusive organizational culture. Finally, to further encourage continued staff development around diversity, equity, and inclusion, staff request that your Board take the additional step of making 3 hours of diversity education mandatory on an annual basis for all staff with the Office of Human Resources maintaining responsibility for providing DEI education opportunities to county staff.

To appropriately harness the benefits of increased diversity, the county must first recognize the strategic contributions that increased diversity can provide and establish a framework that links the county's strategic goals to DEI. The attached diversity framework, recognizes that success requires a comprehensive approach to diversity which includes creating strategic partnerships, encouraging professional development and providing staff opportunities for individual growth, embracing the county's leadership role and building relationships with the community in a manner consistent with the county's core values. Staff request that your Board adopt the diversity framework enclosed with this staff report.

Finally, as the county continues to implement initiatives related to diversity and inclusion, establishing methods of communication and information distribution will be critical to success. The creation of a comprehensive repository for all diversity related items will allow county staff to stay abreast of diversity activities, allow the Office of Human Resources to gain valuable insight into the organizational experiences of staff, allow the public to obtain and monitor workforce demographic information, highlight learning opportunities and engage diverse community members. Consequently, staff ask that your Board direct the Office of Human Resources to create a webpage dedicated to county diversity initiatives and data on both the public-facing website and staff-facing intranet, known as HumNet.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Approval of this agenda item results in no direct impact to the county General Fund beyond staff time spent preparing this report and related materials. Requiring 3 hours of training for all county staff will impact each department, though will not increase expenditures as staffing costs are already included in the county's budget. Additional professional services may be needed to assist staff in developing and/or providing training, and if a supplemental budget is needed staff will bring that information before your Board.

Advancement of initiatives and policy which positively impact diversity, equity and inclusion across the organization are documented to improve recruitment and retention efforts, staff engagement and increase productivity which ultimately result in a reduction to expenditures related to hiring and recruitment, staff turnover, training and loss of productivity.

#### STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board’s Strategic Framework by investing in county employees and by providing community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

All county departments

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board may choose not to approve this agenda item, however that is not recommended as this decision would negatively impact staff’s ability to appropriately respond to your Board’s directive to “harness the benefits of diversity and inclusion to achieve organizational excellence.”

ATTACHMENTS:

DEI Assessment Report  
Diversity Framework (Seal)  
Mandatory Training List

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: G-1  
Meeting of: 7/14/2020  
File No.: 20-890