

Diversity and Inclusion Advocates

What is an advocate?

Diversity and inclusion (D&I) advocates actively support and promote a culture that values and practices diversity and inclusion within an organisation. Being a D&I advocate involves a commitment to understanding, respecting, and valuing the differences among people, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

While similar to a diversity and inclusion champion, advocates support policies and raise awareness at a grassroots level while champions typically have a more leadership-oriented role that drives change through policy direction and leads initiatives.

What does it mean to be an advocate?

- **Educating Yourself and Others:** D&I advocates may continuously educate themselves on issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. They try to stay informed about the challenges and barriers that underrepresented groups face and share this knowledge with others to raise awareness and foster understanding.
- **Promoting Inclusive Practices:** Advocates may push for the implementation of policies and practices that promote inclusion and equity. This can involve recommending changes to hiring practices, advocating for more inclusive workplace policies, or supporting initiatives that provide equal opportunities for all members of a community.
- **Supporting Underrepresented Groups:** Being a D&I advocate may also mean standing in solidarity with individuals and groups who are marginalised or underrepresented. Advocates try to use their voice, platform, and resources to support these communities, whether through mentorship, sponsorship, or amplifying their voices and concerns.
- **Challenging Discriminatory Behaviours:** Advocates avoid remaining silent in the face of prejudice, discrimination, or injustice. They aim to speak out

against such behaviours and work towards creating environments where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued. This might involve confronting biases (both implicit and explicit), educating others on the impact of their words or actions, and advocating for accountability.

- **Fostering Dialogue and Understanding:** D&I advocates often encourage open and respectful dialogue around issues of diversity and inclusion. They aim to facilitate conversations that allow for the sharing of diverse perspectives and experiences, helping to build bridges of understanding and empathy among individuals with differing backgrounds and views.
- **Modelling Inclusive Behaviour:** Advocates often lead by example, demonstrating how to interact with others in a way that respects and appreciates diversity. This can include using inclusive language, being mindful of cultural sensitivities, and showing respect for different perspectives and experiences.
- **Committing to Continuous Improvement:** Understanding that the journey towards full inclusion is ongoing, advocates make a commitment to continuous learning and improvement, both personally and within the groups they are part of. They are open to feedback and willing to adjust their approaches as they learn more about how best to support diversity and inclusion.
- **Empowering Others to Advocate:** Finally, D&I advocates empower and encourage others to become advocates for diversity and inclusion. They seek to share knowledge, provide resources, and inspire others to join in the effort to create more inclusive and equitable environments.

How can you identify D&I advocates?

- **Look for Active Participation:** Individuals who frequently are seen to be engaging in diversity and inclusion initiatives, attending related training sessions, and participating in relevant discussions often have a genuine interest in advocating for D&I.
- **Observe Interactions:** Observe interactions between those individuals who actively promote an inclusive environment in their interactions, such as those who challenge discriminatory behaviour, use inclusive language, and show empathy towards colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

- **Identify Passion and Knowledge:** Those who invest time in educating themselves and others about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and who are passionate about these topics, are likely candidates for being effective D&I advocates.
- **Acknowledge Volunteerism:** Individuals who volunteer for committees or projects focused on D&I or community outreach initiatives demonstrate a commitment that aligns with advocacy.
- **Recognise Influencers:** Some employees may not hold formal leadership positions but have a strong influence on their peers. These individuals can be powerful advocates for change.

How can you support D&I advocates?

- **Provide Resources and Training:** Offer access to resources, training, and development opportunities that enhance their understanding and skills in advocating for diversity and inclusion. This could include workshops, webinars, conferences, and reading materials.
- **Empower with Responsibility:** Assign leadership roles or responsibilities related to diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as leading a D&I task force, facilitating D&I training sessions, or representing the organisation in D&I community events. This empowerment shows trust and recognition of their advocacy.
- **Create Networks:** Help advocates connect with each other to form a network of support. This can facilitate the exchange of ideas, strategies, and encouragement, strengthening their efforts and impact.
- **Acknowledge and Reward Efforts:** Recognise and celebrate the contributions of D&I advocates through awards, public acknowledgment, or other forms of appreciation. This not only validates their work but also highlights the importance of D&I to the broader organisation or community.
- **Provide a Platform:** Give advocates opportunities to share their insights, experiences, and suggestions with senior management or at public forums. This can help elevate important issues and solutions that might not otherwise gain attention.

- **Offer Financial Support:** When possible, provide funding or resources to support projects or initiatives proposed by D&I advocates. This could include sponsoring events, purchasing educational materials, or funding community outreach programs.
- **Encourage Feedback and Ideas:** Create channels for D&I advocates to offer feedback and propose new ideas for improving diversity and inclusion. This could be through regular meetings, suggestion boxes, or dedicated forums.
- **Foster a Culture of Inclusion:** Ultimately, supporting D&I advocates means fostering a culture that values and practices inclusion at every level. Leadership should seek to model inclusive behaviours, make clear commitments to D&I goals, and actively work to remove barriers to equity.

How can you be an advocate for underrepresented groups?

Educate Yourself

- **Learn about the Issues:** Start by educating yourself on the historical and current issues facing underrepresented groups. Understand the systemic barriers, discrimination, and biases these groups face.

E.g., Research the historical exclusion and current underrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, and minority groups in the resources sector. For example, familiarise yourself with the impact of resource extraction on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander country and the barriers to entry for women in resources jobs.

- **Listen and Learn from Their Experiences:** Actively listen to the experiences and perspectives of individuals from underrepresented groups. This can involve reading their literature, attending workshops or seminars, and engaging in conversations.

E.g., Attend forums or conferences where workers from underrepresented groups in the resources sector share their experiences. Companies could host speaker series featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders discussing land rights or women engineers sharing their career paths in the sector.

Raise Awareness

- **Use Your Voice:** Speak out against discrimination, bias, and injustice when you see it. Use your platform, whether at work, on social media, or within your community, to raise awareness about the challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

E.g., Write articles or blog posts for your company's website highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in the resources sector, specifically addressing the challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

- **Amplify Underrepresented Voices:** Share resources, stories, and insights from underrepresented communities. Make a conscious effort to amplify these voices rather than speaking over them.

E.g., Share reports, documentaries, and articles produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the environmental impacts of resource extraction on their country through your professional networks.

Support and Empower

- **Advocate for Inclusive Policies:** Work to advocate for policies and practices in your workplace, schools, and community that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. This can include supporting affirmative action, advocating for accessibility improvements, or pushing for the inclusion of diverse materials in curricula.

E.g., Lobby for the implementation of inclusive recruitment policies within your organisation, such as targeted outreach programs to hire and support people from underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) roles in the resources sector.

- **Support Businesses and Organisations:** Support businesses owned by individuals from underrepresented groups and donate to organisations working towards equity and inclusion. Financial support can be a powerful tool for empowerment.

E.g., Purchase supplies and services from businesses owned by underrepresented groups or donate to non-profits working towards improving diversity and inclusion within the resources sector.

Build Alliances

- **Collaborate with Others:** Join or form alliances with groups or organisations dedicated to advocating for underrepresented communities. There is strength in numbers, and collective efforts can lead to more significant impacts.

E.g., Join industry groups focused on diversity and inclusion, to collaborate on initiatives and share best practices.

- **Engage in Dialogues:** Initiate and engage in open and respectful dialogues about diversity, equity, and inclusion with people from all backgrounds. Use these opportunities to challenge stereotypes, address biases, and foster understanding.

E.g., Organise roundtable discussions within your company or at industry conferences to discuss diversity and inclusion, inviting speakers from underrepresented groups to share their insights and recommendations.

Actively Participate

- **Volunteer Your Time:** Offer your skills and time to organisations and causes that support underrepresented groups. Whether it's through mentoring, tutoring, or assisting with events, your active participation can make a difference.

E.g., Offer to mentor young professionals from underrepresented groups within your organisation or volunteer for community outreach programs that expose students from diverse backgrounds to careers in the resources sector.

- **Challenge Systemic Barriers:** Recognise and challenge systemic barriers and injustices that perpetuate inequality. This could involve advocating for policy changes, or working within systems to enact change.

E.g., Participate in industry-wide initiatives aimed at dismantling barriers to inclusion, such as supporting gender equity certifications for resource companies.

Practice Self-Reflection

- **Reflect on Your Biases:** Continuously reflect on your own biases and preconceptions. Recognise that everyone has biases and that acknowledging and working on them is a crucial step in being an effective advocate.

E.g., Engage in training programs offered by your organisation or industry associations focused on unconscious bias, specifically related to the unique context of the resources sector.

- **Commit to Ongoing Learning:** Understand that advocacy is a journey of ongoing learning and growth. Stay informed about new developments, listen to emerging voices, and adapt your advocacy approaches as needed.

E.g., Stay informed about best practices for inclusion in the resources sector by subscribing to industry newsletters, attending diversity and inclusion webinars, and participating in related professional development opportunities.