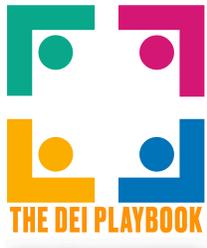


BUILDING A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

BY DONALD EASTON-BROOKS PH.D.



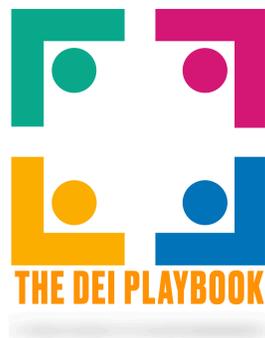
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The DEI Playbook
www.thedeiplaybook.com



INTRODUCTION

As a leader in the field of education and policy for over 25 years, I have been able to interact with educational systems, government agencies, businesses, and the future workforce related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). I have also been able to create and lead state initiatives on DEI. As a leader, researcher, educator, and consultant, I have worked with some of the world's top scholars in the field of DEI. I have assisted in enhancing the DEI practices of some of the leading organizations in the country. My work in DEI has been used to influence policies in places like Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Germany.

These experiences have afforded me the opportunity to learn a great deal when creating impactful DEI systems through team building, mission building, and using data to develop systems for increasing engagement with diverse communities. This work includes marketing plans, creating a more diverse workforce/work environment, and enhancing how organizations interact with clients and potential customers.

I created this DEI Playbook as a way to utilize my award-winning work and my years of experience to guide organizations through proven strategies in creating a DEI workforce and at the same time responding to a more diverse clientele. These practices require an environment that is welcoming, inviting, and displays a humanistic message of respect and value for all. In our current landscape, DEI practices are critical for the growth and sustainability of an organization. The DEI Playbook is designed to assist organizations as they navigate these practices.

Today, it is vital for a company to build a DEI work environment from leadership to front-line employees. This approach starts with:

1. Examining the companies mission and values.
2. Assessing the company's internal success, barriers, and challenges in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
3. Creating actions that will guide the company's practices in DEI.
4. Developing continuous improvements that ensure the DEI practices are data-driven and reflective of feedback meant to improve DEI practices.

There is no greater time in our history in which we need to come together and embrace one and other. We are becoming a more diverse community, and trends data show ethnically-diverse communities are growing at a greater rate than White communities. Are you prepared to answer the call?

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (AKA DEI) are not interchangeable terms. Together, these terms display the value of how we interact and approach one another. It is essential to understand the uniqueness of each of these terms. Below each term is defined as it relates to the content of this playbook.

Diversity - refers to the unique differences of an individual related to race, sex, gender, religion, education, age, ability, national origin, and culture. While we all have some form of diversity, what makes the term relevant is that there is a belief that most people or a group of people hold most of the economic and cultural capital in our society. This group tends to be White/European-American, male, married, Christian, and heterosexual. Anyone not in this aggregated group may be seen as having diversity. On the other hand, this mainstream group may have differences even among themselves, for lack of a better term.

Again, the challenge is that this group tends to hold a level of power and control of wealth that makes it consciously or sub-consciously challenging for others to gain the same opportunities. This suggestion is not meant to be a negative presentation of mainstream culture. Here, historically, we have become a product of a system that has led to categorizing groupings. In this, one major grouping, described above, have been more advantaged by this system. As a byproduct, the nature of grouping poses a challenge. The challenge here is that we all can be creatures of habit, meaning we all want to do the same things in the same way or that we tend to place value in those things we are most able to understand. Simply, we are drawn to things that are similar or most comforting. This phenomenon can happen on either, again, a conscious or subconscious level.

Opening up our minds to things that are different requires an intentional and inserted mental framework. For instance, when we approach others on a level of saying I do not see differences, we are really functioning on a subconscious level of saying I am open to all people. Yet, the truth is that it is impossible not to see differences in others unless we are literally medically color-blind. It is also okay to recognize or see the diversity or differences in others. The complexing part of this the difference in intent vs. impact. For instance, if we see someone of a different race with hair different from our hair. It is okay to say, "I like your hairstyle." This intent here is to acknowledge the beauty in something different. The impact is that the person sees the compliment as positive. Yet, we can make this negative by saying, "I love your hairstyle, can I touch it?" The intent again is to pay a compliment. Yet, the impact is different. In this case, the person may feel that "no, please do not touch me" or that the person may think that they are treated as an object rather than a human.

In The DEI Playbook, we will explore this topic more to help you understand how individuals' experiences may influence how we interact with others by a better understanding of intent vs. impact.

Equity - Within the DEI framework, equity is one of those terms that is misunderstood. Here, often equity is confused with equality. On the one hand, equity is about providing fair and impartial opportunities. Whereas equality refers to everything being equal. However, equality is not always possible. For instance, yes, we can pay someone an equal salary for the same job and qualifications. Yet, not all situations are this simple. As an example, we are not born with equal means socially and economically. We have heard the phrase, and I paraphrase, some people are born on third base well others are born without the opportunity to be on the team. This implies that some people start with a more significant economic advantage than others. For instance, in the U.S., whites' wealth is in many cases in the form of generational wealth. For many minoritized communities, wealth is not generational, and most of their wealth/assets are in the form of debt.

Case in point, in 1865, Blacks owned less than .05% of the wealth in the U.S. By 1996, Blacks owned 1% of the wealth in the U.S. Additionally, up until 2000, more than 25% (a quarter) of Blacks lived in poverty. The 2017 U.S. Census data shows that Blacks, on average, make less than \$30,000 annually than their White counterparts, and the Latinx community makes \$20,000 less than Whites.

This is an example of both equity and equality. How so? On the one hand, we can not ask Whites to stop capitalizing on their potential to maximize their earnings. Nor can we ask them to reduce their salaries to make everything equal. On the other hand, we can ask for equity, a fair opportunity to make the same or similar salaries, given the matrix laid out for others. Or a fair opportunity to be at the table.

Equity has historically plagued U.S. society. I am reminded of a story about my family's history. My grandfather owned and worked his land in Louisiana in the 1940s and 50s. Many times Whites offered to buy his land, but he would not sell. As a result, and common practice during that time, taxes were continuously raised to the point that he could not afford the taxes, and his land was foreclosed on. This move pushed my family into poverty and made it challenging for both my grandfather and his children. In this instance, my grandfather just wanted a fair opportunity to generate a quality of life for his family. Yet, this inequity had a long-lasting economic impact on my family.

Today, many minoritized and diverse communities are not asking for equality. They are merely asking for an equitable and fair opportunity to live the U.S. dream.

Inclusion - refers to an environment in which all are included and feel welcome. In this process, barriers are removed to allow others access. Also, as needed, adaptations and accommodations are made to ensure that inclusiveness occurs. This concept is often

In 2019

**72,675 ECCO claims, totaling
\$346.6M in claim**

used in Special Education and Human Resources. In Special Education, inclusion is about providing accommodations and adaptations to assist in the academic success of students. Similarly, we see this approach in the workplace, often through Human Resources. Here, based on ADA Federal Laws, workers are given accommodations so that they can successfully perform their job by reducing limitations.

While inclusion, as described above, is a part of DEI, this concept, in the DEI context, also centers on the concept of **belonging**. Here, belonging refers to others feeling a part of creating policies, practices, and procedures. Again, as we look to develop policies, practices, procedures, etc., do we have diverse voices at the table, or do we have only the voices we are familiar with or who we consciously or subconsciously value?

A better descriptor of the concept of belonging is the use of the word **Ubuntu**. This concept is a South African term that means humanity, "I am because we are," or "humanity towards others." Other interpretations are "society gives human beings their humanity" or "to become as one by looking out for one another." The belief here is that Ubuntu, in its verb tense, suggests that humanity exists because people feel that they are a part of the tribe/community/society. This concept means society and its people exist because they look out for one another. Nelson Mandela often used this concept as he worked to bring together South African communities. Former Basketball star and current NBA coach Doc Rivers used this concept with his team in 2008 to win the NBA championship.

This moves us to the concept, **intentionality**. In my years of research on this topic, I have found that some well-intended individuals are open to creating a DEI environment for both workers and customers. Yet, the challenge is how to do this work. Before we continue, let's pause and understand the difference between intent and intentionality. While intent or intended actions refer to an act of attempting to respond or interact with others with a particular purpose in mind. Intentionality refers to a deeper level of intent by being intentional or deliberate in everything one does, from creating internal policies, practices, and procedures to creating external approaches such as marketing, advertising, messaging, and connecting with others.

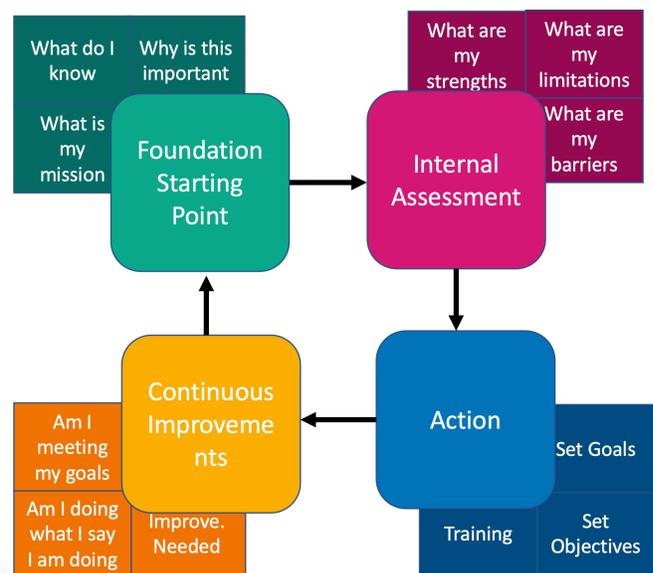
As mentioned previously, intent and impact are essential and can often make or break an organization or individual. An example here is the Girl Scouts celebrating the

appointment of Justice Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. The intent here was to acknowledge the success of a woman. Yet, the impact was that many saw the message as one that devalued women from a non-mainstream lifestyle, given the presumption of Justice Barrett's values. Often, intent is meant to either solve a problem or to recognize something. The challenge is that intent without an intentionally driven mission, or core value can lead to actions that appear non-inclusive, whether that is the intent or not. Yet, to be intentional implies a deeper understanding of the message one is trying to present to others. This is one reason it is critical to have a diverse team of diverse voices at the table. In my work, I have found that those leaders, schools, businesses, etc., who are intentional in their work tend to be much more successful in creating an effective DEI environment and responding to diverse communities internally and externally.

Organizations with a 30%-40% workforce are more success in connecting with a diverse clientele

HOW TO USE THE DEI PLAYBOOK

This Playbook is meant to guide you through the process of thinking about how (see figure) to 1) develop a Framework (**Stage 1**) for how you see DEI, why DEI is important to you and your organization. This stage will provide you a starting point for building your mission or vision around DEI and your rationale for creating a DEI environment. From this framework, the Playbook guides you through an 2) internal assessment (**Stage 2**) so that you can examine the strengths of your organization around your DEI mission created in stage 1. Also, in this stage (2), you will want to look at the



barriers that will need to be removed to create or strengthen your DEI environment or mindset. This stage may include re-adjusting current policies, processes, or practices, which can also mean creating new ones.

Next, the Playbook takes you through putting actions ([Stage 3](#)) into place to help align your policies, processes, practices, activities, outreach, hiring, marketing, and messaging with your DEI mission. In this stage, you will focus on the training and professional development needed to get you and/or your team to carry out your DEI mission. This approach may include additional DEI training. At this stage, you will also want to develop processes and messaging on how you want others to see your organization in relation to your DEI mission. Lastly, in this stage, you will want to set achievable and realistic objectives and goals that you want to accomplish in regard to your DEI mission. Again, this may require training and consultation to help develop objectives and goals that are realistic and obtainable.

In the fourth stage, you want to use data to assess ways to improve your efforts in DEI continually and to assess for validity (are you doing what you say you are doing). You will also want to reflect on your data and outcomes with your team and/or possibly with an outside consultant to assess if your efforts effectively and assist your organization in reaching its DEI mission, objectives, and goals.

ABOUT DR. DONALD EASTON-BROOKS



Donald Easton-Brooks Ph.D. is internationally recognized as a critical quantitative culturally responsive scholar. His scholarship covers more than 100 manuscripts, blogs, podcast, Op-Eds, presentations, and keynotes. He is best known for introducing the concept “ethnic matching” to the field of education.

Dr. Easton-Brooks has received a number of awards and recognitions for his research and work, including the 2019 Phillip C. Chinn Book Award from the National Association of Multicultural Education for his book, *Ethnic Matching: Academic Success of Students of Color*. He is a section editor of the Handbook of Research on Teachers of Color and is on the editorial board of the Urban Education journal.

The impact of his work has led to national and international interviews on television, radio talk shows, newspapers and parenting magazines. His work has also been key in creating high-school pathway programs designed to promote equity in education by moving to diversify the educator workforce and creating a diverse workforces and in developing culturally responsive educators, which has seen over 500 diverse student intern programs nationally.

Dr. Easton-Brooks is instrumental in co-creating and chairing the Oregon Educator Equity Advisory Group, which brought together community stakeholders to create a culturally-responsive educator workforce. He served on a panel with the U.S. Secretary of Education on strategies to bridge the workforce and Twin-Cities communities. He has sat on boards including members from Target, 3M, and Spotify. He began working Major League Baseball to introduce people of color to the MLB as a career choice. He has been elected to serve on three national boards, which are representative of the top universities in the country. His leadership has been recognized by the International Urban Education Conference, and has being elected to the American Educational Research Association Series: Senior Scholars on Advancing Research and Professional Development Related to Black Education.

Dr. Easton-Brooks has led the increase in national rankings of three universities. He has raised over \$6M in donor funds and secured over \$2M in grants. He have created marketing plans, which has increase college enrollments by 30%, has supervise over 398 employees, and has increased revenue over \$250k/yr. He has consulted with business, government agencies, non-profits, the health/medicine, etc.