**Include and Optimize Diverse Talent**

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**(Slide 2) - Objectives**

* Explain the basic definition of diversity.
* Explain how differences among members benefit a group.
* Illustrate the importance of inclusiveness to achieving purposeful diversity.
* Develop simple, inclusive behaviors that can make diversity work for Scouting or another group.

**(Slide 3) - Vision Statement**

Scouting America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law.

Remember:

It does not say youth of one type or another. It is all youth.

**(Slide 4)**

None of us is as smart or as strong as all of us.

**(Slide 5) - Who do you go to?**

Think for a moment about your units and teams at home. Think about the people you work with. When something really needs to get done, do you turn to the same familiar people, your go-to people?

**Ask: Why do we go to the same people over and over?**

Questions:

* Do they have the same work ethic as you?
* Do you actually know if others do not?
* Are you alike in many ways?
* Do you know them better than others?
* Do they usually feel like safe choices?

So, what happens when you ask the same people to be on your team all the time? (Possible responses may include: burnout, resentment, perceived cliques, and no new ideas.)

Now think about those who might not be your automatic first choices. How are they different?

When might you decide to include them?

Pulling someone out of their comfort zone can be a powerful catalyst for personal and professional growth. When team members step into unfamiliar roles, they gain fresh perspectives and contribute new talents. It’s a win-win situation: individuals evolve, and the team benefits from their expanded capabilities.

**(Slide 6) - Diversity**

What is the first thing you think of when asked for a definition of diversity?

(Take short answers that pop out.)

For this discussion: In our context, diversity encompasses any dimension that distinguishes the characteristics of individuals and groups. It’s essential to recognize that diversity solely highlights differences, not judgments.

Remember, embracing diversity enriches our collective experience and fosters a more inclusive environment!

**(Slide 7) - Pack Activity** - Pack Activity (10 minutes)

1. Have three flipcharts placed in different parts of the room. Label one “Human”, one “Cultural”, and one “Organizational.” Have one staff member assigned to each flipchart to write answers.
2. Divide the pack into three mixed groups (count off 1,2,3, 1,2,3, etc.).
3. Have each group go to one flipchart. Allow 30 seconds to write down as many different characteristics in that category that they can think of.
4. Rotate and allow 30 seconds for additions.
5. Rotate a third time for the next group to add any additions, again in 30 seconds.
6. Have the groups return to their seats and have supporting staff bring the charts to the presenter. Make sure the characteristics in the sections below are mentioned and are in the appropriate category; if not, ask the staff members to add them to the flipcharts.

**(Slide 8) - Human Diversity**

Addresses how we differ in the simplest forms, including:

* Gender/gender identity
* Sexual orientation
* Race or ethnicity
* Age and generation (This is common to all Scouting units.)
* Physical appearance
* Health/physical ability/disability
* Intellectual abilities and challenges
* Personality type
* Family situations (marital status, incarceration, economic status, etc.)

**(Slide 9) - Cultural Diversity**

Arises from differences in:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Language (native and second-learned, sign) * Lifestyle * Heritage * Belief systems and social norms | * Religious beliefs * Traditions * Generations * Income level * Access to technology |

Cultural diversity can represent the accumulation of a person’s life experiences, including education, marital, and parental status that align us with a group.

**(Slide 10) - Organizational Diversity**

Are those differences that are inherent in the values, vision, and mission of the organizations we support:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Teamwork * Roles * Relationships * Leadership * Empowerment * Hierarchy | * Education * Dress codes * Affiliations * Which Scouting program one works with * Generational differences |

**(Slide 11) - What can you know?**

What do—and what can—you know about someone, right away?

Have you ever assumed something about a person and been completely wrong? Many of us have!

Diversity is multidimensional. There are certain aspects of everyone that we can’t see or hear, and what constitutes diversity is different for every group. It might depend on the local population in the community itself. A small rural town might have different differences than an urban community.

Notice, however, that age and generation are common differences in each of these categories. We usually find at least two generations in every Scouting unit.

Among our youth, diversity may be manifested quite differently. While their peers are often already ethnically and culturally diverse, they share the same age and frequently attend school together. Differences emerge in several dimensions, however, such as disabilities or abilities, social skills, maturity, communication skills, and family situations.

Remember, embracing these diverse facets enhances our youth programs and promotes growth for all!

**(Slide 12) - Values of Diversity**

Diversity is an asset!

Why is it important?

Diversity is the uniqueness each of us brings to fulfilling our mission and achieving the vision of Scouting America. It allows us to learn new things from each other and think about things from a different perspective, allowing us to better serve our youth. We need to look for all available youth and the adults who will work best with them.

Scouting welcomes all, and we provide a safe place for all youth to grow.

**(Slide 13) - None of us is as smart or as strong as all of us.**

None of us is as smart or as strong as all of us.

Companies with diverse workforces have higher revenue growth than those that do not. We can use that same concept to grow Scouting.

Out of our differences come inspirations, fresh ideas, and new solutions. This can be especially powerful when we are teaching youth to lead each other.

Den Exercise 1: (8 minutes total)

Let’s do an activity that will help us identify potential obstacles to identifying and optimizing diverse talent and then find effective solutions to them.

* In your dens: use sticky notes to list five challenges or difficulties related to optimizing diverse talent. These challenges can arise from within a group or from external factors.
* Write down one challenge on each sticky note. Be specific and concise.

*Note: Allow 2 minutes for discussions within each den. Encourage dens to brainstorm and share one item they come up with. After the discussion, allow 6 minutes for half of the dens to share one item each. If time permits, allow the remaining dens to report as well. In smaller courses, dens can offer a second response. This ensures balanced participation and diverse insights.*

* There is comfort in sameness.
* We tend toward affinity bias, looking for those with whom we can easily align.
* We naturally resist change, even when change can be positive.
* Stereotypes are easy to fall back on, and sometimes we tend to just “go along” with the group.
* Norms without even considering if they are right or wrong.
* Inclusive leadership starts with self-awareness. (Refer to the Hidden Figures clip about the obstacles put in place by segregation.)
* We may be afraid of unfamiliar aspects of people. Sometimes it is hard to be brave and look outside of the familiar. We may be afraid to fail.

**(Slide 14) - Sometimes we fall short**

No matter how tactfully we approach the subjects of valuing others and valuing diversity, there are likely to be times when we fall short in our efforts.

In most cases, our difficulties arise from a lack of understanding of the very differences we are trying to grasp. Each of us needs to realize that we will make mistakes and that we or others might believe stereotypes or simply wrong information that needs to be corrected.

**Ask: What are some of these?**

Some example answers (with your appropriate responses in parentheses) might be:

* Youth with physical or intellectual disabilities can’t participate. (Yes, they can. We can make appropriate accommodations for them. What we see as a disability may be just a different ability to them. Focus on what they can do, not what they can’t do.)
* Women don’t have the skills to camp. (Not true)
* Girls aren’t interested in outdoor activities. (All genders like the outdoors.)
* Someone with a prosthesis may have trouble hiking. (Ask if there are adaptations needed.)
* Older people don’t use up-to-date technology. (Some do, some don’t, just like everyone else.)
* Financial need precludes participation. (There is often someone willing to support a Scout’s activities.)
* Inner city kids can’t access the outdoors, so Scouting won’t suit them. (Each step out of a building is outdoors. Scouting works in any environment.)
* Certain cultures don’t embrace Scouting’s values. (They may simply not know about the programs.)

**Takeaways**

Don’t be afraid to ask questions so that you can more fully understand others. Have you ever noticed that children often do this more easily than adults? They don’t have pre-formed ideas about people.

When we realize that there has been an incorrect assumption about someone, we need to put our own egos aside and ask the other parties for guidance on how to avoid future missteps.

Most importantly, though, we need to keep trying. Setbacks are part of the process of learning and can be every bit as important as our successes.

Inviting and responding positively to diversity in our units and organization is a great responsibility and a great privilege. It is up to us to model acceptance and inclusion.

**How do we engage those who may be different from us?**

Possible answers may include the following:

* Listen, ask for clarification, and sometimes agree that we don’t need to see all things in the same way.
* Tell them what we have to offer that might interest them.
* Let them know that we are interested in them and that they are appreciated.
* Engage them with a peer.

**Remember that a Scout is courteous; a Scout is kind.** By abiding by the Scout Law, we can value others and, at the same time, serve as examples of the values we cherish.

**Achieving Diversity**

A leader must effectively understand diversity to be able to include and optimize diverse talent. So, how can we, as Scouters, achieve diversity?

**(Slide 15) - Den Exercise 2** (8 minutes total)

Let’s do another activity where we think about the youth we aren’t yet serving, how we can reach them to include them in Scouting, and what they can bring to our program.

* What types of youth are served in your units?
* What types of youth might not be getting access to Scouting in your neighborhoods because they are not understood and may be overlooked?
* What added value could different youth bring to your program?

If participants don’t mention the items below, be sure to cover them.

1. We must actively recruit a diverse youth membership and adult leadership and

develop plans for retention as well. If we recruit them, we need to make sure they are welcomed and valued. We must let them know what we have to offer to them, as well as how they can be fulfilled by joining.

1. We can make accommodations for the youth who need it and not expect them to fit the program if they have different abilities or disabilities. Scouting has a process for adaptations.
2. A variety of people always makes things more interesting and fun for everyone.
3. We must immediately identify and stop unacceptable behavior or cultural representations that could be demeaning to others. (Ask for some subtle examples of how this occurs, which might often be overlooked, such as terms

like mimicking accents or sweeping “they” statements. Subtle unconscious behaviors may need a discussion to stop them from getting worse. Mention that teasing and bullying of any kind is never acceptable.)

1. We need to understand everyone’s values and culture and allow them to be themselves. What a great opportunity to learn from others!
2. Encourage all members of teams, regardless of their backgrounds, to contribute their talents and strengths. Sometimes a leader must bring out those talents they see in others, which they don’t always see in themselves. This is one of the basic aspects of servant leadership—helping others find positive traits and talents within themselves. This applies to youth especially, since we are there to help them grow.
3. Serve as visible role models embracing differences and valuing others. If our communities are homogenous, we should not force artificial diversity; however, likely, our communities are not as homogenous as we think.

**What happens when a group makes inclusion work?**

We have an opportunity in Scouting to create cohesive teams that address the specific needs and challenges of the units, the districts, and the councils—and most of all, the youth!

**One of the roles of a leader in any group is to engage the minds and ensure the commitment of all participants.** To do this, awareness of and sensitivity to everyone’s views of the world is critical.

**(Slide 16) - What can we do?**

Remember, diversity isn’t solely about intentional exclusion. It can also be evident when we overlook those outside our familiar circle. To incorporate diversity into your leadership style, be mindful of default tendencies and actively include everyone. Incorporating diversity into your leadership style starts with remembering not to go into that default mode.

1. Optimize the talent you find. It may be in unexpected individuals. When you lead, make sure everyone has challenging opportunities to contribute and from which to learn. Observe people. Listen. Look for those who might excel if asked to help.
2. Then ask them to join you!
3. Find ways to accommodate specific needs to enhance participation.
4. Be open to trial and error. Nobody is perfect, but most people are willing to try something new.
5. Be aware of your own behavior and how it affects others. (Refer to upcoming session on “Apply Interpersonal Savvy.”)
6. Be prepared for change and to lead the change! Exceptional things can happen when we think outside the box. Be ready to defend changes as good.
7. Consider how your leadership behavior affects the team environment. We’ll learn more about team development in an upcoming session.
8. Slick words don’t engage people. Inclusiveness is not simply coexisting or tolerating those with differences. It means taking time to show you care, really listening to the ideas of others, and encouraging them to act on their good ideas.
9. Reach out and learn something from everyone, even those with whom you may disagree on some things. There are always new things to learn.
10. Focus on shared goals and experiences—those things you already have in common—and then grow from there.
11. Recognize individual and team achievements. Voice your appreciation to both youth and adults.

**(Slide 17) - Tool**

The tool for this session is a multi-tool. It might be like the most recognized brand, a Leatherman, but they can take many forms.

A multi-tool does not just make a job get done more easily. It brings the diversity of processes together in one place to achieve more and to show how many things and methods can come together to build a project through many connections that are all different, but also

all useful. When you have those differences all together and ready to work, great things can happen.

**(Slide 18) – Summary**

Offer an Analogy

Think of the threads that make up a fabric—the MacLaren tartan, for example. One thread alone is not so strong, but when woven together, the resulting fabric is strong and beautiful, and it represents something to us. If all the threads ran in the same direction, it would not hold together. They support each other. Each color gives life to the pattern, and that pattern tells a story of unity and the strength that comes from working together.

**We are stronger together than when we are separate.**