Appendix B: Inclusive Language

The following includes general guidance and useful resources to incorporate language into your writing that is more inclusive and in keeping with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) standards.

General Guidance

1. Refer to people in the language they prefer. If you are not sure what terminology a group uses, there are many resources online developed by members of those communities. See the resources included below for links.

2. Preferred language changes over time, so when in doubt, check for updated terminology. Reach out to the editors and/or the DEIA committee for guidance when needed.

3. Only include information on gender, race, ethnicity, and other categories when it is relevant to the discussion at hand.

4. Avoid common idioms and word usage that subtly reinforce bias or language derived from oppression (e.g., master/slave, male/female [for connectors, parts, etc.], blackmail, white lie, whitelist, black mark).

5. Do not use the term "minority" to refer to a person (e.g., ▨▨ seeks to hire more minorities); only use it when referring to groups (e.g., ▨▨ seeks to hire more employees from minority groups in STEM positions). If possible, be more specific about the groups you are discussing. If you need general umbrella terms, other options include "underserved" or "underrepresented" depending on the context (e.g., the federal government should ensure underserved groups can access its services).

General Resources

- [18F Content Guidelines on Inclusive Language](#)
- [Google's Inclusive Marketing guidelines](#)
- [Diversity Style Guide](#)

Age and Disability

Only mention age or disability when it is relevant to the topic at hand. Avoid any depictions of older people or people with disabilities as weak, victimized, or needing protection.

Older/Younger Adults

- Use "older people" or "older adults" instead of "seniors," "senior citizens," or "the elderly." Be more specific whenever possible (e.g., 30 percent of workers were over 65).

- Avoid constructions that generalize based on age (i.e., depicting older people as weak or younger people as ignorant/inexperienced).

- Avoid stereotypes based on generations (e.g., Boomer).

People with Disabilities

- Some groups and individuals prefer identity-first language (e.g., deaf person, blind people) and others prefer person-first language (e.g., person with diabetes, people with spinal cord injuries). Whenever possible, use the language preferred by that group. National Institutes of Health guidance advises using person-first language when discussing defined diseases, conditions, or disorders. Identity-first language is most often used in communities that have developed a culture and sense of pride around their identity. For example, those in the Deaf community often prefer identity-first language, as do many who are autistic and blind.

- Capitalize "Deaf" when referring to the community or culture; lowercase when referring to a person or the condition. "Hard of hearing" is also acceptable, and generally refers to mild or moderate hearing loss, or those less closely tied to the Deaf community. Do not use "hearing impaired."

- Avoid language that implies victimization or impairment (e.g., "suffers from," "victim of," or "confined to"). Opt instead for neutral language (e.g., "he has muscular dystrophy" or "she is a wheelchair user").

- Avoid language that is condescending, such as "differently abled" or "handi-capable."

- Using the umbrella terms "disabled" or "disability" is acceptable, although some prefer the terms "people with disabilities." Be more specific whenever possible. People with disabilities make up the largest minority group in the United States, and such a large, diverse group of people should not be described as a monolith.

- Instead of "able-bodied," use more neutral terms like "non-disabled" or "person without a disability."

Disability-related Resources

- Disability Language Style Guide
- Syracuse University Disability Cultural Center Language Guide

Language for Gender and Sexual Orientation

- Avoid phrases that suggest gender and sex are binary and fixed.

- Avoid constructions that use "man" or "men" to refer to humans (e.g., replace "manmade" with "human-made" and "manned" with "crewed").

- Use non-gendered equivalents for positions/titles that were often gendered in the past (e.g., use police officer, spokesperson, chair or chairperson, instead of policeman, spokesman, chairman).

Gender

- Avoid binary constructions of gender. Instead of "opposite sex," use "different sex." Instead of "both sexes" or "both genders," use "all sexes" or "all genders." Use "everyone" or "all" instead of "men *and* women" or "ladies *and* gentlemen."

- Avoid the phrase "biological sex."

- Use a person's preferred pronouns whenever they are known. These include the pronouns they/them as singular pronouns if the person uses those, or if it makes sense in the context of the writing—for example, if you are referring to a hypothetical person of any gender, use plural pronouns instead of "he or she" (e.g., Every guest has a care package waiting in their room.)

- Do not assume pronouns based on name, appearance, etc.

- Do not use "male" or "female" as nouns. These should be used as adjectives (e.g., male participants, female scientists).

  - Use terms like "women" and "men" when referring to adults only; you can use "female" and "male" (as an adjective) when referring to groups that include adolescents and children (e.g., The program has six female interns between the ages of 16 and 22.) But only point out gender and age when it is relevant to the discussion.

- When referring to transgender people, use the pronouns and names they prefer. Consult sources from the LGBTQ+ community (see Resources section below) for specific, updated terminology when its relevant to your topic.

Sexual Orientation

- Avoid binary constructions of sexual orientation (e.g., "straight *or* gay").

- Do not conflate gender identity and sexual orientation. A transgender person can have any sexual orientation, just as a cisgender (i.e., non-transgender) person can.

- Avoid the term "homosexuals," which is considered outdated.

- There are a range of different, evolving terms for sexual orientations, from straight to asexual to pansexual. Consult the Resources section below for updated terminology when its relevant to your topic.

Gender and Sexuality-related Resources

- University of North Carolina Gender Inclusive Language Guide

- National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association Style Guide

- GLAAD Media Reference Guide

- PFLAG LGBTQ+ Glossary

Language Referring to Race, Ethnicity, and National Origin

- Do not use hyphens in terms such as African American, Asian American, etc., even when the term precedes a noun (e.g., Asian American voters).

- "People of Color" can refer to any population that is non-white, including (but not limited to) people of African, Asian, and Hispanic descent; Native Americans; Pacific Islanders; and multiracial people. BIPOC is a related acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Both People of Color and BIPOC are umbrella terms often used to describe systemic discrimination that affects these groups. For that same reason, the terms can be controversial; some people feel that using such terms implies that all non-white people are a monolith with similar experiences. Be more specific whenever you can. Do not use the term BIPOC when

referring only to Black people, for example. It is a best practice not to use these terms to refer to individuals unless that is how they identify themselves.

- Capitalize Black, White, Indigenous, and other terms that refer to race and ethnicity. Other than the terms Black and White, do not use terms based on skin color.

- The terms biracial or multiracial are both acceptable; avoid "mixed-race" unless someone uses it to refer to themselves.

- Try to use parallel language for race and ethnicity (i.e., rather than using "Asian and Black Americans," where one group is described by geographical heritage and the other by skin color, use a parallel construction like "Asian and African Americans"). Balance this concern with consistency across the document (i.e., if the rest of the document uses "Black Americans," it makes more sense to use the same term throughout, even if it creates some non-parallel language).

- Be careful using terms like "citizens" or even "Americans" in general contexts, as these terms can exclude people such as permanent residents and other non-citizens that make up part of the American public. Use "citizen" only when referring to that specific legal group (e.g., This job is open to U.S. citizens.)

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

- "Asian American," "NH/PI (Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander)," and "AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander)" are umbrella terms representing a diverse group of people with heritage in over 60 countries. These terms are not completely interchangeable.

- Many Asian Americans more closely identify with the specific country where they have heritage than with the umbrella terms.

- Whenever possible, use more specific language (e.g., Chinese American).

Black/African Americans

- Both "Black" and "African American" are acceptable terms for Americans of African descent, but you should pick one and stay consistent within a single document.

- "Black" is a broader term (i.e., not limited to Americans) and may be preferred by some people/groups.

- Many individuals who can trace their ancestry to more specific locations may prefer more specific terms (e.g., Nigerian American). Use a person's or group's preferred term when possible.

Indigenous People

- The term "Indigenous" is generally accepted as a global umbrella term. "Native American" and "American Indian" are both commonly used, but not universally accepted.

- Indigenous people from Hawaii and Alaska will have more specific terms that they prefer, such as Hawaiian Native and Alaska Native. Do not use the term "Eskimo."

- Whenever possible, use more specific language identifying the tribe/nation. When writing about a specific group, ensure you use the language they use for their official name (i.e., do they use "tribe" or "nation"), the title of their leader, how they refer to their people (e.g., "members" or

"citizens"), and other specifics to their situation. The tribal government will usually have a website with information on their official name and how to refer to them and their leaders.

- Capitalize "tribe" or "nation" when it is part of the official name of a group or nation (e.g., Navajo Nation).

Hispanic and Latino People

- No one term is universally accepted to refer to this diverse group of people. Surveys show mixed views on using Hispanic vs. Latina or Latino, but most Americans in this group prefer to use the specific country of their heritage (e.g., Costa Rican American) rather than either general term.

- The terms Latino and Latina generally refers to those from/with heritage in Latin America, including Brazil. The word "Hispanic" generally refers to those from/with heritage in Spanish-speaking countries. Anecdotally, "Hispanic" is more popular in the eastern United States, and "Latino" is more popular in the western United States.

  o These two terms are not completely interchangeable. Not every group in Latin America speaks Spanish (e.g., the official language of Brazil is Portuguese, and there are many Indigenous communities with their own languages). There are Latinos and Latinas who do not consider themselves Hispanic and vice versa.

- Latinx is a term often used in academia as a gender-neutral alternative to Latinos and Latinas. But many Latinos and Latinas are [unfamiliar with the word, do not refer to themselves that way](#), and may consider it an unnecessary and offensive anglicization of their language and culture. You may encounter variations of these gender-neutral terms, such as Latine, Afro-Latinx, Afro-Latinidad. Avoid using Latinx or its variations unless you know the group/person you are discussing prefers those terms. One or more of them may become more common in the future as gender-neutral and gender-fluid language gains popularity among younger generations. Check for updated language preferences if you have not written about these subjects in a while.

White/European Americans

- Either "White" or "European American" are acceptable but pick one and be consistent throughout. Do not use "Caucasian," which was originally used in racial classification systems intended to portray White people as superior to others.

- There is ongoing debate over whether to capitalize "White" or not. The AP, for instance, does not capitalize White, but many other style guides (Chicago, APA, etc.) do capitalize it. For the sake of uniformity, we have chosen to capitalize White just as we capitalize Black, Indigenous, etc.

Resources on Race and Ethnicity

- [National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide](#)
- [Guidance from the Asian American Journalists Association](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association Reporter's Indigenous Terminology Guide](#)