

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



# Inclusive Excellence Framework 2020-2026

A Plan to Advance Excellence through  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

July 1, 2021



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Our Mission:.....	1
<b>Our Statement of Values</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Background: Looking Back, to Move Forward</b> .....	<b>4</b>
The Evolution of Virginia Higher Education and SCHEV through an Equity Lens .....	4
<b>Glossary of Terms</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>The One Virginia Goals</b> .....	<b>11</b>
A Guide to Implementing Inclusive Excellence.....	11
<b>GOAL 1</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>GOAL 2</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>GOAL 3</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>GOAL 4</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>GOAL 5</b> .....	<b>25</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia strives to do excellent work and to be an excellent place to work.**

Diversity, equity and inclusion are recognized as key values within the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia that contribute to excellence. We also recognize that these values have not been exercised and/or promoted with great intention in the past. Within a government system and statewide culture that was built upon inequities, it is now imperative that a plan be developed and implemented to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are advanced. We seek excellence in state government and higher education.

SCHEV's Plan to Advance Excellence through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a first for the agency. It follows the Inclusive Excellence framework and the One Virginia goals for state agencies. Beginning with an Introduction to the agency, we have also compiled and included background information that identifies historical events that directly impact the Commonwealth of Virginia and state government broadly and SCHEV and higher education in Virginia more specifically. This section is followed by a Glossary of Terms that defines terms and acronyms that appear in the One Virginia goals and objectives for state government and SCHEV's strategies, metrics and indicators. The noted strategies and metrics are customized to SCHEV's current structure, planned growth and priority to address issues related to access, climate, training, infrastructure and community engagement. The result is an Inclusive Excellence plan that is practical in application, yet bold in desired outcomes and impact.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia is a small state government agency with a large mission.

#### **Our Mission:**

To advocate and promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive and coordinated system of higher education in Virginia.

### **SCHEV strives to do excellent work.**

We fulfill our mission by:

- Leading state-level strategic planning and policy development that promotes greater access, quality, affordability and accountability.
- Implementing policy and programs based on objective research and analysis.

- Facilitating collaboration among institutions of higher education that enhances quality, advances educational excellence and creates operational efficiencies.
- Recommending higher education policies and funding to the Governor and General Assembly that support our mission.
- Communicating openly, honestly and effectively to the public.

SCHEV is the coordinating board and agency for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia's system of public higher education includes 15 public four-year colleges and universities, a public two-year junior college, and 23 community colleges of the Virginia Community College System. In addition, more than 350 private postsecondary institutions operate in Virginia, including non-profit, proprietary, degree-granting and career-technical schools.

Virginia's system of higher education is the 11th-largest in the nation. Postsecondary education in Virginia serves more than 600,000 traditional and non-traditional students. Public institutions enroll more than 410,000 students, and private institutions of all types serve approximately 200,000.

The Council is a board consisting of 13 members, 12 of which are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term. The President of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) serves ex-officio. The Council appoints the agency Director, and the Director leads a staff, ranging from 50-65 full and part-time members, that comprises the following offices:

- Academic Affairs and Planning
- Agency Budget and Finance
- Executive and Board Affairs
- Finance Policy and Innovation
- Policy Analytics
- Strategic Planning and Policy Studies

## OUR STATEMENT OF VALUES

Values, identified through a collaborative staff process, serve as the principles and ideals that help agency personnel make judgments about what is most important. As leaders and employees of the Commonwealth and SCHEV, we abide by the [Commonwealth's Standards of Conduct for Employees](#) and related policies and procedures as a starting place. Beyond that, **SCHEV values honesty, quality, diversity, inclusion, growth-orientation, personal well-being, equity, transparency and accountability.**

### SCHEV strives to be an excellent place to work.

To enact these values, we are guided in our actions and decision-making by the following commitments:

- We fulfill all professional duties with honesty and integrity.
- We maintain a high standard of quality in our work and we embrace opportunities to improve.
- We recruit, hire, support and advance a diverse spectrum of individuals.
- We create a welcoming and inclusive environment where we celebrate the value and contributions of each person.
- We foster a culture that encourages growth through professional development, career pathways and collaboration.
- We encourage and support staff in maintaining a healthy and balanced life.
- We act equitably and work to remedy inequitable situations.
- We live and practice these values with transparency and accountability.

Through these values, we create a welcoming work environment that represents the best of who we are as an agency and as individuals.

## BACKGROUND: LOOKING BACK, TO MOVE FORWARD

The evolution of historical events has led the Commonwealth and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to where we are today. Ultimately, these events influenced the need for and development of SCHEV's Inclusive Excellence plan, as a state government agency and leader in higher education. As we look to address future needs, we must acknowledge the impact of historical events on the staffing, culture, growth, infrastructure and community engagement of state government and higher education.

### **The Evolution of Virginia Higher Education and SCHEV through an Equity Lens**

The Advancing Excellence Plan 2020-2026, came about during the national Covid19 pandemic and movement for racial reckoning. This time highlighted the inequities that have persisted throughout the nation and its history.

SCHEV was established in 1956 to bring coordination to a postsecondary-education landscape in the Commonwealth at a crossroads. Student numbers were growing rapidly (due to the post-WWII economic boom and the GI Bill) and competition between institutions of higher education was increasing both regionally and statewide. A 1955 finding noted that Virginia's college-going rate was less than half the national rate. This gave great cause for the creation of SCHEV as a coordinating body for higher education within the state. That same legislature that established SCHEV went into a special session months later and passed laws that are now referred to as Massive Resistance or the Stanley Plan. This was in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* to desegregate secondary education. Within one year, Virginia took steps to advance higher education, while limiting access to it. However, it is important to note, that SCHEV's statutory duties (then and now) prohibit its involvement in student admissions and faculty selection. These matters continue to be responsibilities of the governing boards of the public colleges and universities. The distinction in duties does not absolve SCHEV from using its position of influence and leadership to impact these matters in alignment with its mission.

The following timeline includes major U.S. and Virginia events related to or impacting higher education. These events speak for themselves and provide relevant context to SCHEV's Advancing Excellence through DE&I Plan.

**1607:** Jamestown is established as the first permanent English settlement in Virginia and North America.

**1619:** The first enslaved Africans in the American colonies arrive at Point Comfort, Virginia.

**1636:** The first college in the U.S. (Harvard) is established.

**1693:** The first college in Virginia (William & Mary) is established.

**1742:** The first college for women in the U.S. is established.

**1775:** Revolutionary War begins.

**1776:** Virginia becomes a commonwealth, where sovereignty is vested in the people.

**1788:** Virginia, one of the 13 original colonies, becomes a state.

**1823:** A person who is African American graduates from a U.S. college for the first time.

**1828:** The Yale Report, defending the classical curriculum, is issued.

**1837:** The first college in the U.S. for African Americans (Cheyney University of Pennsylvania) is established.

**1861:** United States Civil War begins.

**1862:** President Lincoln signs the Homestead Act into law, granting land for a small filing fee. This would result in displacing indigenous populations from their ancestral lands onto reservations.

**1862:** Congress passes the Morrill Land Grant Act which enables each state to sell a portion of its federal land.

**1865:** The 13th Amendment abolishing slavery is ratified.

**1870:** The 15th amendment, guaranteeing that the right to vote cannot be denied due to race, color or previous condition of servitude, is ratified.

**1882:** The nation's first public HBCU, Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute (known today as Virginia State University or VSU) is established.

**1896:** Plessy v. Ferguson. U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholds the constitutionality of the "separate but equal" doctrine.

**1914:** World War I begins.

**1915:** The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is founded.

**1918:** Co-education is instituted for the first time at a Virginia public college (The College of William and Mary, for which the state had taken responsibility as a public college in 1906.)

**1920:** The 19th amendment, promising women that their right to vote will not be denied, is ratified.

**1941:** World War II begins.

**1944:** The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill) is passed.

**1945:** Based on assistance from universities and faculty members during WWII, a federal commitment to advanced research and higher-education access follows.

**1947:** The Commission on Higher Education (Truman Commission) creates the blueprint for federal financial aid and the expansion of higher education.

**1954:** The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Brown v. Board of Education* that state-sanctioned segregation of public secondary schools is a violation of the 14th Amendment and is unconstitutional.

**1956:** State Council of Higher Education for Virginia is established by the Governor and Virginia General Assembly as the Commonwealth's coordinating body for postsecondary education.

**1956:** During a special summer session of the Virginia General Assembly, a series of laws are passed referred to as the Stanley Plan (Massive Resistance). These laws support segregation, including preventing any integrated schools from receiving state funding and supporting segregation academies.

**1959:** Desegregation of public schools (K-20) begins and is carried on through the 1970s.

**1964:** The Civil Rights Act is enacted into law. It includes Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (including federal student financial aid).

**1964-1968:** Federal TRIO educational opportunity outreach grant programs are established.

**1964-1965:** The Virginia Higher Education Study Commission (aka, the Bird Commission) identifies the lack of comprehensive community colleges as the most significant gap in Virginia's higher education system. It also recommends that SCHEV receive additional budgetary-review authority.

**1965:** Higher Education Act creates Pell Grants, need-based student aid.

**1966:** The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) is established and financed by the state's first sales tax, putting a public, open-access postsecondary institution within a 30-minute drive of every resident of the Commonwealth.

**1969:** The United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), issues a letter to the Commonwealth stating that OCR regards Virginia as operating a public system of higher education segregated by race and that such a system is violative of federal law.



In response, the Commonwealth begins to develop a plan for its public institutions of higher education intended to dismantle any such dual system of education and eliminate any vestiges of de jure segregation.

**1971:** Virginia's Constitution is rewritten. The rewrite omits the poll tax and other barriers to voting in Virginia as well as the requirement of racial segregation in public schools. It also prohibits governmental discrimination based on "religious conviction, race, color, sex, or national origin" and in effect grants to every school-age person in the commonwealth a right to a high-quality education in a public school.

**1972:** Title IX (gender equity) is adopted in the Educational Amendments of 1972.

**1973:** Rehabilitation Act, Section 504. First disability civil rights law is passed in the U.S. prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal financial assistance, including higher education.

**1974:** In response to the 1969 OCR letter, Virginia initiates development of a plan for equal opportunity in higher education.

**1978:** Virginia completes, and the OCR approves, the Virginia Plan for Equal Opportunity in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education.

**1988:** SCHEV's first (and so far, only) African-American agency director is hired by the SCHEV Council. The incumbent had chaired the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights and also had been a critic of race-sensitive policies and programs in college admissions.

**1989:** SCHEV's first (and so far, only) female agency director is hired by the SCHEV Council. The incumbent had worked in the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget.

**1990:** Virginia elects its first African-American governor, who is the nation's first Black governor since Reconstruction.

**1990:** Americans with Disabilities Act. Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life including school, jobs and public and private places open to the general public.

**1992:** The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *United States v Fordice* that eight universities in Mississippi had not integrated sufficiently and that the state must take affirmative action under the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution to address the issue. Following the decision, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) announces its intention to look at the status of minority students in six southern states, one of which is Virginia.

**1994:** The U.S. Fourth Circuit rules in *Podberesky v Kirwan* (a case involving the University of Maryland) that within its jurisdiction, which includes Virginia, financial aid programs cannot be exclusionary by race.

**1996:** The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down the all-male admissions policy at Virginia Military Institute in *United States v Virginia*.

**1996:** The General Assembly establishes the Commission on the Impact of Certain Federal Court Decisions on the Commonwealth's Institutions of Higher Education.

**1998:** Pursuant to the 1992 *Fordice* case, the OCR notifies several states, including Virginia, that it will conduct civil-rights audits to ascertain whether these states have eliminated all vestiges of their formerly de jure segregated systems of public higher education.

**1998:** The General Assembly continues the 1996 Commission as the Commission on Access and Diversity in Higher Education in Virginia, which it directs to: monitor relevant federal and state legislation and court decisions; continue its collaborations with the OCR to provide legislative representation and oversight during the civil rights audit; conduct a state examination to identify any vestiges of the dual system of higher education; and to review all preferences other than race used in college admissions processes.

**2001:** Following the civil rights audit begun in 1998, the Commonwealth and the OCR enter into an Accord to address specific issues related to public support for Virginia State University and Norfolk State University.

**2001:** Legislation is passed in Virginia outlining a process for state recognition of Native American tribes.

**2008:** The OCR issues the final report on its Accord with Virginia, concluding that the Commonwealth is in compliance with the *Fordice* case, with Title VI and with all other law and regulation regarding the issues addressed in the 2001 Accord.

**2011:** Shifting higher education demographics. For the first time, more than half of the undergraduate enrollment at four-year institutions in Virginia consists of under-represented populations.

**2019:** Virginia's and the nation's first cabinet-level Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are created by the governor.

**2019:** The Commission to Examine Racial Inequity in Virginia Law is created by the Governor.

**2019:** Virginia receives Talent, Inclusion and Equity (TIE) state designation from the Lumina Foundation.

**2020:** The Virginia Values Act is signed into law, establishing protections for LGBTQ residents from discrimination.

**2021:** State financial aid for undocumented students.

**2021:** State requirement for state agencies to establish and maintain a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A shared vocabulary is critically important in the work of DE&I. Listed below are common terms and abbreviations used throughout this document, along with their meanings. The online toolkit provides a more comprehensive “Glossary of Terms” intended to advance education and awareness of institutional and structural racism and to assist in articulating appropriate language for formal and informal writings and conversations about race, racism, proposed executive action or pending legislation.

**BIPOC** - Black, Indigenous and People of Color

**COVA** - Commonwealth of Virginia

**DEI / DE&I** - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**DHRM** - Department of Human Resource and Management

**HBCU** - Historically Black College and University

**HSI** - Hispanic-serving Institution

**SCHEV** - State Council of Higher Education for Virginia / Council

**Diversity** - The wide variety of differences and characteristics among all students and employees in higher education that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, ability and age as well as ideas, personalities, learning styles, perspectives and value.

**Equity** - Maximizing the potential of all students and employees in higher education by targeting resources based on identified needs and circumstances and eliminating barriers that limit opportunities and success.

**Inclusion** - The active and authentic engagement of all students and employees in higher education that fosters empowerment, belonging and respect.

**Marginalized** - relegated to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

**Underrepresented students** - those who are low-income, minority race/ethnicity, over age 25 and from regions of the state with low attainment rates.

## THE ONE VIRGINIA GOALS

### A Guide to Implementing Inclusive Excellence

The goals below, and the objectives, strategies, and indicators detailed in the next several pages, guide the actions of appropriate organizational units, including senior management, in the delivery of goods, services, policies and practices that advance diversity, equity and inclusion. In implementing the *ONE Virginia Plan*, SCHEV will use the indicators for each of the dimensions of Inclusive Excellence to create an annual report to the Director and Council. The report will include accomplishments, barriers and plans for continued improvement.

#### **Goal 1**

Access and Success: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

#### **Goal 2**

Climate and Intergroup Relations: Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

---

*The intent behind the ONE Virginia Plan is to use the Inclusive Excellence framework to disrupt longstanding injustice and inequity, and create sustainable change, innovation, and productivity across state government and other sectors of the Commonwealth.*

*- Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity Officer of the Commonwealth Office of the Governor*

---

#### **Goal 3**

Training and Education: Engage in learning the concepts of DE&I and the importance of these concepts in completing the agency mission.

#### **Goal 4**

Infrastructure and Accountability: Create and sustain an agency or departmental infrastructure that effectively supports progress and accountability in achieving diversity goals.

#### **Goal 5**

Community Engagement: Focus community engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable and sustained benefit to all of Virginia's diverse communities.

## GOAL 1

### **Access and Success: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce.**

Access refers to the activities an agency or department uses to recruit and hire individuals from a broad range of human experience and ability. Success refers to the investments made in the development of employees and leadership/supervisors. These efforts increase or maintain diversity among the agency’s or section’s employees and leadership to bring needed perspectives to its operations and increase creativity and productivity.

This dimension also refers to the access and success of the service populations of the agency. Access for service populations includes how an agency or department communicates available services and programs, intake processes, service delivery models, and practices. Success refers to the outcomes for service populations related to the mission of the agency or department.

---

*By improving the representation in government of the different social groups, diversity plays a part in maintaining core public values, increasing managerial efficiency, improving policy effectiveness, raising the quality of public services, and enhancing social mobility.*  
 - [Fostering Diversity in the Public Service.](http://www.oecd.org)  
[oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)

---

### **Objective 1**

Recruit and hire a diverse workforce at every level of leadership.

#### **Strategies**

- 1.1.1** Hire full-time staff dedicated to serve as the Human Resource Liaison to work with DHRM through the agency’s shared services contract to develop agency recruitment, selection and hiring policies and procedures designed to advance diversity, equity and inclusion.
- 1.1.2** Train all hiring managers on new procedures designed to increase diversity within the applicant pool, Equal Employment Opportunity requirements, cultural competency, unconscious bias and other related topics, as identified.
- 1.1.3** Modify the Human Resources Shared Services Contract with DHRM to acknowledge SCHEV’s priority to increase diversity in the applicant pools from historically underrepresented populations. Develop outreach and recruitment strategies accordingly.

- 1.1.4 Collect data to identify gaps in representation and inform succession planning and pipeline development.
- 1.1.5 Actively reach out to diverse populations in the recruitment process through professional networks, college career centers, online and social media, diversity websites and job/career boards.
- 1.1.6 Collaborate with local community organizations that reflect the greater COVA population.
- 1.1.7 Develop an internship program based upon research-based practices that promote inclusion, diversity and equity.
- 1.1.8 Promote a culture of transparency and regularly solicit feedback and recommendations from staff.
- 1.1.9 Develop and provide biannual staffing report to leadership, include organizational chart, titles, salaries, demographics, Employment Opportunity report, etc.
- 1.1.10 Create opportunity/resource for hiring managers to share best practices and lessons learned from experiences with the recruitment, selection and hiring process, i.e. recruitment and outreach outlets/platforms/events, position description template, interview question bank, sample skills tests.
- 1.1.11 Promote equal opportunity in our selection process through diverse interview/hiring committees, blind screening, cohort hires, and culturally sensitive language in job postings, interview questions, and evaluation criteria.
- 1.1.12 Leverage the Governor's Affinity Advisory Boards to seek engagement and expertise including interview panels and outreach.
- 1.1.13 Work with HR to forecast workforce needs, set strategic diversity hiring goals and measure progress against them.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.

- Position/Role developed and staff hired to support and advance agency human resource responsibilities.
- Documentation of updated DHRM shared services contract/MOA with a priority on growing diversity and promoting equity and inclusion.

- Documentation of developed and/or redesigned recruitment, selection and hiring policies and procedures to solicit a more diverse applicant pool, increase inclusivity and standardize hiring practices across candidates.
- Analysis of the demographic composition of pools across all stages of the recruitment, selection and hiring processes to create an automatic tracking and feedback cycle.
- Documentation of developed staffing reports and dissemination to leadership.
- Documentation of hiring manager trainings and expectation of participation included in EWP.

## **Objective 2**

Retain and promote a more compositionally diverse workforce.

### **Strategies**

- 1.2.1** Collect data to identify gaps and disparities in staffing, compensation, promotion and management. Design plan and implement to remedy accordingly.
- 1.2.2** Review, redesign and standardize new employee onboarding to incorporate inclusive principles and ideas.
- 1.2.3** Compensate employees competitively through salary, benefits, and other amenities that are culturally sensitive and appeal to a diverse workforce.
- 1.2.4** Create reward and recognition programs to honor the service of all employees and recognize the contributions of staff that support the mission, contribute to the community, and promote values, including commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 1.2.5** Measure employee satisfaction and organization climate through surveys, focus groups and more informal SCHEV “coffee chats” and “breaks” that promote candor and fairness. Evaluate results and take action for continuous improvement.
- 1.2.6** Continue to host “coffee chats” driven by external environment factors that impact internal climate, well-being and staff morale. Foster a culture of open communication, transparency, compassion and empathy.
- 1.2.7** Work with HR to forecast workforce needs, set strategic diversity hiring goals and measure progress against them.



- 1.2.8** Assess policies and processes for potential bias in selection and remove barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion. Develop new policies as needed.
- 1.2.9** Create and seize opportunities raise SCHEV employer profile within diverse communities, i.e. participation in targeted career fairs/conferences, HBCU and HSI career center partnerships.
- 1.2.10** Actively reach out to diverse populations in our recruitment process through professional networks, college career centers, online and social media, diversity websites and job Boards to expand our outbound reach.
- 1.2.11** Promote equal opportunity in our selection process through diverse interview/hiring panels, blind screening, and culturally sensitive language in job postings and interview questions.
- 1.2.12** Review, redesign and standardize professional and leadership development processes and related policies to ensure that there is equitable access to all opportunities.
- 1.2.13** Review, redesign and standardize current processes and policies related to performance evaluation, recognition and compensation to ensure equitable practices.
- 1.2.14** Analyze salary and roles data by demographic and act to amend disparities.
- 1.2.15** Review, redesign and standardize employee engagement and exit surveys forms and policies to improve retention.
- 1.2.16** Create a system to track diversity metrics to inform leadership of SCHEV's workforce diversity status relative to the ONE Virginia Goals, EEO complaint numbers, and Employment Dispute Resolution (EDR) bias incidents cases.
- 1.2.17** Ensure that subject matter experts/presenters, Council members, technical trainers and vendors include people from diverse backgrounds.
- 1.2.18** Develop and implement talent management and networking programs, such as mentorships, succession planning, and coaching programs with professional organizations and institutions of higher education to maximize performance and career potential within the agency.
- 1.2.19** Create opportunities for cross-collaboration and rotational assignments among employees to enrich the employee climate, foster diversity of thought, and inspire innovative solutions.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.

- Responses to survey/focus group items, by current staff, about their experience with recruitment, onboarding, in relation to equity.
- Survey for candidates who decline offer, asking why they declined.
- Composition of the agency or department workforce both cross-functionally and vertically.
- Voluntary departure rates for employees and leaders.
- Documentation of exit interviews and responses related to equity and inclusion.
- Promotion, recognition and compensation for employees and leaders.
- Salary disparities identified and adjustments made to reduce structural inequities.
- Number, type and impact of partnerships implemented.
- Number, type and impact of initiatives implemented.
- Policy development/revision.

## GOAL 2

### **Climate and Intergroup Relations: Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity, and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.**

To nurture the diversity of perspectives and experiences that lead to inclusive excellence, SCHEV must create an environment that is culturally affirming and which integrates differing viewpoints and lived experiences. SCHEV will utilize different channels to communicate the Commonwealth’s message on DE&I to all agencies’ levels. Thus, the goal and subsequent objectives focus on building and sustaining an inclusive workplace environment and facilitating outstanding customer service and stakeholder relations by promoting accessibility, cultural competency, accountability, education, and communication while respecting alternative viewpoints.

---

*...create an engaged workforce that leverages diversity as a strength, cultivates and supports an inclusive work climate and culture, and works in pursuit of policies and practices that hold each agency accountable for expanded access, success, and overall inclusive excellence.*

*- Emily Elliott, Director, DHRM*

---

### **Objective 1**

Create and sustain a climate that is supportive, respectful, and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

#### **Strategies**

- 2.1.1 Assess climate and design plan and implement to remedy concerns accordingly.
- 2.2.2 Demonstrate top-down commitment and involvement through the articulation of the DEI strategy, including how DEI enables the achievement of the agency’s vision, mission and goals.
- 2.2.3 Emphasize senior management’s commitment to DEI by conveying the economic and moral obligation for DEI in messaging, promotion, and behaviors reflective of the ONE Virginia brand and mission.
- 2.2.4 Remove barriers for employees with disabilities by conducting regular accessibility audits; provide employees the necessary accommodations to be successful in the agency.
- 2.2.5 Provide access and resources for ASL and language differences for websites, documents and in-person services.

- 2.2.6** Institute opportunities, such as SCHEV's coffee chats, designed to facilitate dialogue between and among groups that increases understanding of varied perspectives and the nature of social and economic inequalities and the impact of environmental factors on higher education and the agency.
- 2.2.7** Educate employees, interns, student pages, etc., on the importance of prevention and tactics to prevent harassment, discrimination and identity-based violence.
- 2.2.8** Educate staff, FT/PT and Fellows/ interns on DEI policies and initiatives.
- 2.2.9** Promote productive methods of conflict resolution, facilitation to encourage courageous conversations and address concerns and complaints.
- 2.2.10** Offer educational and celebratory events that recognize, value and honor diversity and promote inclusion; evaluate different programs for their impact on the climate for and across many dimensions of diversity.
- 2.2.11** Utilize organizational climate employee engagement factors/trends to assess an environment, identify barriers to maximum engagement and develop targeted actions.
- 2.2.12** Review, redesign and standardize policies supporting DEI, such as accessing professional development, teleworking and maintaining personal wellness.
- 2.2.13** Encourage and normalize the use of flexible work policies and programs such as telework, wellness programs, tuition assistance/forgiveness, community service leave, and professional development to support employees' and agencies' growth and productivity at all levels.
- 2.2.14** Explore opportunities with other small state agencies to establish Employee Affinity and Resource Networks (EARNs) for underrepresented groups, to promote DE&I within the state workforce; define the functions of EARNs, then formalize through a charter, formulate and execute an action plan to establish and enrich strategic relationships both internally and externally to enhance inclusion, partnership, service to and recruitment of underrepresented populations.
- 2.2.15** Intentionally build diverse teams and partnerships that foster DE&I practices, ie. workgroups, interview panels, vendors, technical assistance providers.
- 2.2.16** Include a reference prioritizing diversity equity and inclusion in procuring services.

- 2.2.17** Create and add elements to onboarding programs and materials, marketing materials, website, wall coverings, and agency decorations/bulletin boards, etc. that promote SCHEV's value for diversity, equity and inclusion.

### **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.

Employee survey requesting information on:

- Workplace climate perceptions
- Sense of belonging
- Career growth opportunities
- Awareness and understanding of agency and departmental resources related to harassment, discrimination, and identity-based violence.

## GOAL 3

### **Training and Education: Engage in learning the concepts of DE&I, and the importance of these concepts in completing the agency mission.**

Help SCHEV staff and leadership develop awareness about diversity and skills to facilitate intergroup relations. SCHEV will leverage workforce diversity and empower diverse perspectives throughout the organization with relevant employee training, diversity scholarship, learning and professional development.

---

*My personal goal is to continue to spread awareness of the types of disparities that exist and work with leadership to effect REAL changes in how things are done.*

*- SCHEV Employee*

---

#### **Objective 1**

Offer training and workshops that achieve DE&I learning goals.

#### **Strategies**

- 3.1.1 Conduct a training needs assessment to determine gaps (e.g., competency, legislative, resource, etc.) and create an ongoing training plan.
- 3.1.2 Establish agency and departmental learning goals and training plans based on gap assessment.
- 3.1.3 Integrate DE&I knowledge and awareness into performance appraisals for all employees, including the director.
- 3.1.4 Offer educational opportunities that enable employees and leaders/Council members to achieve DE&I learning goals based on competency gap assessment.
- 3.1.5 Build opportunities for employees to learn about the organization's inclusive excellence framework, including its nondiscrimination policies, equity resolution processes, and resources for support.
- 3.1.6 Assess feasibility and effectiveness of virtual learning.
- 3.1.7 Identify and remedy barriers that impede employee professional development.
- 3.1.8 Promote diversity in the use of subject matter experts, technical experts, and trainers for professional development.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.

- Movement toward agency or departmental learning goals.
- Employee perception of increased knowledge related to DE&I.
- Number and type of educational offerings.
- Participation rates in different types of educational offerings.
- Employee satisfaction with quality and quantity of educational opportunities.
- Increased sense of belonging.

## GOAL 4

### **Infrastructure and Accountability: Create and sustain an agency infrastructure that effectively supports progress and accountability in achieving diversity goals.**

As an agency that seeks Inclusive Excellence, SCHEV will enhance its infrastructure in ways that support and fully integrate its DE&I goals. These efforts will include the centering of Inclusive Excellence in planning processes and the adjustment of policies and processes as needed. To ensure sustainability and accountability, SCHEV will identify and eliminate systemic barriers to full inclusion by embedding DE&I in its policies and practices and by equipping its executive staff with the ability to manage diversity and be accountable for the results.

---

*The key question is how to build a public workforce that is of the adequate size to secure capacity, has the right competencies for the proper delivery of public services, and is representative of the population it serves.*

---

#### **Objective 1:**

Sustain and increase agency efforts designed to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in the agency DE&I plan.

#### **Strategies**

- 4.1.1 Incorporate DEI interests into strategic planning and reporting efforts.
- 4.1.2 Establish a DEI council within the agency that bears the responsibility to explore, coordinate and assess DEI initiatives that represents employees at all levels and in all sections/units.
- 4.1.3 Design processes for sharing resources, best practices and opportunities for employee engagement within the agency and with other agencies.
- 4.1.4 Conduct analyses to identify barriers to EEO and develop action plans to eliminate any identified EEO barrier(s).
- 4.1.5 Strengthen collaboration between and clarify roles of responsibilities of staff hiring managers, the Human Resource liaison and the DHRM client manager and other shared/contracted service providers.
- 4.1.6 Require training for hiring managers on how to conduct interviews and make hires in lawful and equitable ways, and on the impact of unconscious bias in the employee recruitment and selection process.



- 4.1.7 Include a reference to prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion in procuring services and developing partnerships, i.e., scope of services, requests for proposals, bids, etc.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.

- Evidence that Inclusive Excellence has been integrated into strategic planning.
- Evidence of increased cross-agency collaboration and sharing.
- Documentation of processes used to evaluate DE&I efforts.
- Documentation of policy and process redesign.
- Evidence of agency-led or agency-involved change (internal and/or external) that advances DE&I or confronts barriers to Inclusive Excellence.

## **Objective 2**

Create structures and processes of accountability for organizational leadership and effectiveness.

### **Strategies**

- 4.2.1 Institute systems of assessment, reporting, and accountability and continuous improvement to optimize the realization of the agency's DEI goals.
- 4.2.2 Establish a process for creating a DEI council within the agency that bears the responsibility to explore, coordinate and assess DEI initiatives that represents employees at all levels and in all sections/units.
- 4.2.3 Develop regular reporting processes on progress toward statewide DEI goals.
- 4.2.4 Engage key leaders and stakeholders in analyzing disaggregated data and special studies to better understand and address longstanding organizational challenges related to DEI.
- 4.2.5 Schedule regular and ongoing meetings with key leaders and relevant agency work groups to review data and reports.
- 4.2.6 Measure constructs related to DEI to describe organizational excellence.

- 4.2.7 Review and assess internal policies and procedures throughout the agency to identify opportunities to further organizational excellence.
- 4.2.8 Modify performance evaluation standards to assess performance in support of the ONE Virginia initiatives and goals and SCHEV values.
- 4.2.9 Hold employees accountable for inappropriate workplace behavior.
- 4.2.10 Enforce a no-tolerance policy with respect to sexual harassment, hostility, bullying and discrimination, and reinforce equitable workplace policies and practices.
- 4.2.11 Ensure accountability of agency leadership for achieving specific measurable, actionable, and timely DEI objectives.
- 4.2.12 Create a structured process for recruitment of positions.
- 4.2.13 Identify barriers to EEO protective factors (race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability status, and veteran status) in hiring, promotions, separations, and career development and by grade levels and major occupations in accordance with Governor's Executive Order, §2.2-1201 of the Code of Virginia, DHRM Policy 2.05 Equal Employment Opportunity, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

- Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.
- Documentation of mission and scope of work for Chief Diversity Officer and DE&I council.
- Documented processes for reporting progress toward DE&I goals to appropriate oversight bodies.
- Provision of reports annually by agency sections/units to senior leadership on sections'/units' progress toward the ONE Virginia goals.
- Mechanism(s) for setting and monitoring continuous improvement toward Inclusive Excellence.

## GOAL 5

**Community Engagement: Focus community-engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable and sustained benefit to all of Virginia’s diverse communities.**

SCHEV, like all government organizations, can and will deepen Inclusive Excellence internally by engaging the community as anchors of equity. Serving and supporting Virginians through the provision of quality higher educational opportunities is at the core of SCHEV’s mission. A commitment to equity serves as the underpinning of the [Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education, 2020-2026](#). The vision of the strategic plan is to become the best state for education. This means delivering a comprehensive education system that is equitable, affordable and transformative for all. The objectives and strategies below reflect the commitments made to communities across the Commonwealth through the strategic planning process. The measures are bold and aspirational in that we seek to close gaps instead of meeting incremental increases. We take an equity-minded approach to working with students and families, advocacy groups, institutions and the legislative and executive branches towards the vision of becoming the best state for education, with 70 percent of educational attainment for adults, age 25-64 by 2030.

---

*Don't judge, listen more,  
open my eyes wider.*  
- SCHEV Employee

---

### Objective 1

Improve outcomes and experiences for constituencies that SCHEV serves directly.

#### Strategies

- 5.1.1 Remove barriers to access and attainment especially for Black, Hispanic, Native American and rural students; students learning English as a second language; students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and students with disabilities.
- 5.1.2 Expand postsecondary opportunities and awareness to Virginians who may not view higher education as an option.
- 5.1.3 Advance digital access, adoption and literacy as well as high-quality, effective remote learning programs.

- 5.1.4 Align tuition and fees, financial aid and state appropriations such that students have broader access to postsecondary education opportunities regardless of their ability to pay.
- 5.1.5 Cultivate affordable postsecondary education pathways for traditional, non-traditional and returning students.
- 5.1.6 Update and reform funding models and policies to improve equity, affirm return on investment, and encourage increased and consistent levels of state funding.

## **Metrics and Indicators**

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity. \*

- Calculating percent of 25 to 64-year-olds with a postsecondary degree or credential towards closing gaps in attainment of selected groups. (Attainment baseline, 54%).
- Assessing Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates (enrollment) against Virginia's population and demographics.
- Evaluating undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year against enrollment.
- Tracked average debt of graduates towards closing gaps in borrowing by selected groups (Baseline - \$30,363).

## **Objective 2**

Improve outcomes and experiences for underrepresented groups in SCHEV's larger community.

### **Strategies**

- 5.2.1 Support experiences that improve students' employment outcomes, income and community engagement.
- 5.2.2 Improve the alignment between post-secondary academic programs and labor market demands.
- 5.2.3 Cultivate a climate of inclusion and innovation through scholarship, research, a diverse faculty and other programming.

- 5.2.4 Implement programs and develop partnerships that help close the opportunity gaps within and between constituencies/communities served by SCHEV.
- 5.2.5 Create a formal communication feedback mechanism to get input from underrepresented groups, advocates, nonprofit organizations, sister agencies, etc.

## Metrics and Indicators

Whenever possible, SCHEV will disaggregate data by demographics and share, while protecting anonymity and integrity.\*

- Graduate wages 10 years after graduation towards closing gaps in median earnings of selected groups.
- Evidence of outreach and collaboration with identified communities/groups.

\* The campus-focused Community Engagement measures will be tracked by SCHEV's equity dashboard, which is under development. The data can be categorized by race, ethnicity and income (in some cases). More work is needed to assess English language learners, students with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Specific references to these groups in the strategies serve as a reminder of their importance to this ambitious endeavor and continued commitment to expand data collection and analysis.