

# National Eye Institute (NEI), Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan Preview

## Document Introduction Letter

Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) matters. Why? Because it is “people work” and critical for building a culture where every person feels seen, heard, and valued. DEIA generates intentional strategies to bring forth and amplify voices so we can be more inclusive, more respectful, and increase everyone’s sense of dignity and belonging. DEIA means creating environments for all our staff members where everyone has ample opportunity for growth and development.

DEIA work is also mission-centric. It strengthens what unites us in pursuit of eliminating vision loss and improving quality of life through vision research. A key objective in meeting our mission is to build and maintain a workforce that is talented, diverse and inclusive. Our success depends on our ability to check our biases at the door and then invite others to help us see into our blind spots. When we work better together and attract exceptional talent, DEIA helps us to produce the best science possible.

Our NEI DEIA Strategic Plan is organized around five strategic goals supported by a set of objectives and actionable tactics. The tactics will be shared in a forthcoming follow-up report later this year. We know that DEIA means different things to different people. That’s why the NEI DEIA Council created the DEIA definitions (included in the following pages) that begin to develop shared language within the context of our work together. Our plan calls on leaders at all levels of the organization to unambiguously support and model DEIA priorities and every staff member at NEI to learn, grow and change together.

During my career, there have been a number of instances where I’ve struggled to become comfortable with being uncomfortable. From that perspective, I’ve recognized how important that can be, and hope we’ll all ask ourselves, “Am I willing to step outside my comfort zone in order to make room for growth?” If we can do that, I hope we can more effectively build lasting trust.

We invite you to review this preview report and take the accompanying survey to offer your feedback, ideas, and reflections. We also hope you will share your stories of when you felt a strong sense of belonging – or when you haven’t. We will be selecting a few of your responses to include in the final report. Thank you in advance for your time to share your experiences and perspectives.

By harnessing the transformative power of DEIA, we catalyze the advancement of vision research and accelerate closing gaps in access to treatment. These are critical and urgent vision care needs for some of our most vulnerable neighbors and fellow citizens which we can best address by working together. Thank you for your continued commitment to our mission at NEI.

We look forward to working with all of you, in our changing and challenging environment, on this important effort.