

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING AT BLUEGRANITE

➔ Background

BlueGranite's diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging story began amidst the demonstrations over the death of George Floyd in May 2020. After a staff meeting, a team member shared their experiences of discrimination that echoed the stories of other black and brown people throughout the country. As a result, we formed the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI&B) group, consisting of company leaders and employee volunteers, to explicitly support our DEI&B efforts at BlueGranite.

Our group quickly realized that the topic is large, complex, and would require some hard conversations. We also realized that although racism is critically important, and was in the foreground because of the demonstrations, the overarching problem of bias encompasses all the other discriminatory dimensions that surround each person – gender, sexual orientation, creed, ability and so on. As we look around our industry, it's plain to see that equal representation faces real challenges.

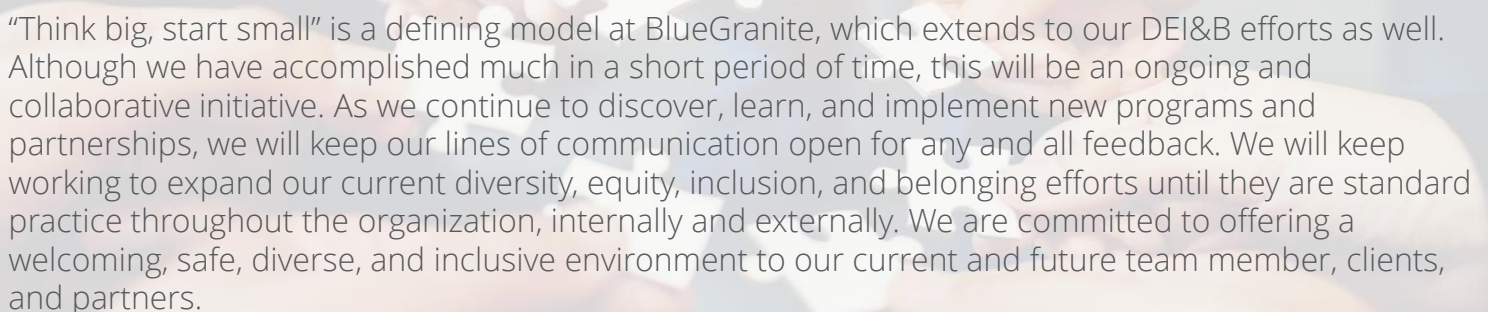


➔ First Steps

We decided on two actions initially to make sure our response would be as effective as possible. First, we thought it was important not to reinvent the wheel, since so much work has already been done in this area, so we needed to make connections with other change-minded organizations.

Second, we needed to take time to be deliberate about how we responded to the growing injustice and to formulating a unifying company commitment to diversity that we would institute and embrace to guide our efforts and facilitate open and honest communication within the organization, which is what this effort is really about – listening and understanding others' stories.

OUR COMMITMENT



“Think big, start small” is a defining model at BlueGranite, which extends to our DEI&B efforts as well. Although we have accomplished much in a short period of time, this will be an ongoing and collaborative initiative. As we continue to discover, learn, and implement new programs and partnerships, we will keep our lines of communication open for any and all feedback. We will keep working to expand our current diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts until they are standard practice throughout the organization, internally and externally. We are committed to offering a welcoming, safe, diverse, and inclusive environment to our current and future team member, clients, and partners.

➔ Our Commitment

To begin formulating our commitment, we wanted to define why diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are relevant and significant to our mission and core values. These actions applied to our internal team, as well as the clients we serve.



Taking a few of our [current core values](#) as examples, "Teamwork" and "Clients First," we broke down our rationalizations as follows:

Teamwork: We wouldn't be who we are as a company without teamwork. It's what makes us unique.

- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are relevant and significant to Teamwork to:
 - Best support and value the expertise and experiences of all colleagues
 - Emphasize that anyone with the skills to work at BlueGranite is enthusiastically welcomed to work at BlueGranite

Clients First: We're all about creating a great experience for our clients and delivering value at a rapid pace. We use our knowledge and expertise to determine where we can make the most impact on our clients' and partners' organizations.

- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are relevant and significant to Clients First to:
 - Best serve an increasingly diverse current client base
 - Broaden and enrich our potential future client base

OUR DEI&B STORY SO FAR

During our Staff Retreat in November 2020, we introduced the following Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging to the whole company, to communicate the aspiration BlueGranite has to be a champion in our industry, actively working towards and supporting change:

We embrace diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging because:

- It creates positive and authentic relationships within our team, clients, and partners.
- It supports our High Performing Culture by fostering innovation and improving leadership.
- It incorporates the skills, talent, and experience of all our colleagues, with rich and varied backgrounds.

We support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging by:

- Bridging the gap between any diversity boundary by celebrating and promoting equity and inclusivity for all.
- Listening to one another and striving for mutual understanding and empathy.
- Learning from and collaborating with other organizations already working on improving diversity in tech.

We will increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging through:

- Reflective discussion to understand and change implicit habits or biases we may have.
- Building a diverse team and inclusive culture, examining how we find, recruit, and retain team members.
- Collaboration with partners to promote DEI&B strategic initiatives across the technology industry.

INTERNAL RELATIONS

➔ Inclusiveness

We've launched Focus Teams based on knowledge and interest within our Microsoft Teams work environment, to give colleagues new ways to connect with each other about relatable topics and help create an inclusive company culture. Our Wellness Team supports DEI&B efforts by hosting after-hours events such as trivia, company-wide activities such as fitness challenges, hosting remote lunch hours on Fridays, and connecting individually with new team members 2 and 4 weeks into their tenure. Because we are a remote workforce, and our team works with a variety of clients, it's important to create innovative ways our team members can connect with one another and form interpersonal relationships.



Internal contributions to DEI&B

To ensure we understand and accommodate our diverse backgrounds, we've launched three targeted DEI&B subcommittees. Each helps us reach members of different walks of life and discuss ways in which we can continue to be an ally.

Disability Inclusion - We're committed to building a culture that enables everyone to thrive. We continue to make our workplaces, policies, and processes more accessible by creating an environment where every employee is accepted and empowered to bring their authentic self to work.

Gender Equity - By acknowledging the importance of gender equity and equality, as well as maintaining a company culture that both values and recognizes the knowledge, experiences, insights, and ideas contributed by women, we're not just building a more equal business, but a more successful one.

Multicultural Diversity – We're committed to advancing individuals from underrepresented ethnic groups by ensuring access to development and growth opportunities at every stage of their careers, promoting real and sustained conversations about race to foster inclusion, and by focusing on the business case for ethnic diversity, as well as the moral one.



INTERNAL RELATIONS, Cont.

➔ Open Communication

Each year, we send out an anonymous internal DEI&B survey to gauge a baseline for inclusion at the company and to provide an anonymous communication channel to discuss DEI&B concerns and insights to leadership.

We use the results from these surveys to create a concrete action plan around DEI&B training. Along with planned formal training, we now also share DEI&B “Did You Know?” roundtable presentations at our internal staff meetings to provide microlearning opportunities for our employees on sensitive topics, such as Unconscious Bias, Allyship, Invisible Disabilities, and more.



- Introduction to DEI&B
- DEI&B “Did You Know?”
 - Pronouns Matter
 - Allyship
 - Microaggression
 - Black Wall Street Unsung
 - Invisible Disabilities
 - Hispanic Heritage Month
 - EAP Offerings
- Diversity Roundtables
 - Confronting bias - implicit
 - Intent vs impact
 - Fragility
 - Fast mind vs slow mind
 - Culture, strong beliefs

Team Newsletter

To ensure our team stays connected and informed of everything happening within BlueGranite, we’ve launched a quarterly Team Newsletter. Additionally, our Team Newsletter helps drive engagement in our affinity groups by providing our team with event and contact information for all existing and new team members.

DEI&B Calendar

Our DEI&B Calendar helps us continue to grow, learn, and celebrate our diverse backgrounds. This global calendar is meant to bring awareness of the different holidays celebrated around the world and give us all a glimpse and understanding of different traditions and cultures.

➔ Safety Efforts

To protect our employees, we have included detailed and standardized verbiage in all our client contracts to ward against any inappropriate conduct. This helps to foster an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, disrespect, and other conduct or discourse inappropriate to a business setting. Under this clause, our team has the right to take immediate action to mitigate, repair, or terminate any contract in which our employees feel a grievance has taken place.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

➔ Diverse Clients

BlueGranite is working on a **client project** to support pairing people with accessible careers using Microsoft AI-enabled services. For people with disabilities, finding jobs with understanding, accommodating employers can be a challenge. To help facilitate these opportunities, **Our Ability** provides a website that connects employers with people with disabilities. The process is simple: candidates can search for positions and employers can search for candidates, but the system itself does not attempt to make these connections on its own.

To achieve this type of service, a human (for example, somebody working in vocational rehab) would have to review the candidates and positions on the site to match them up manually. In an effort to expand and automate these services, **Our Ability partnered with the Microsoft AI for Accessibility Program and BlueGranite** to develop an AI-driven solution with an emphasis on accessibility.

This engagement also led to BlueGranite being honored by Microsoft as the winner of their 2021 Partner Award for Social Impact – Inclusion Changemaker.

➔ Partnerships

We connected with **AvePoint**, the largest independent software vendor of SaaS solutions to migrate, manage and protect data in Microsoft 365, through Microsoft Inspire in September 2020, allowing us to learn from their journey of instituting a DEI&B culture within their organization. This knowledge helped us accelerate our own DEI&B implementation.

We also began a new diversity partnership with **BDPA**, a non-profit organization of professionals working in or having an interest in the Computer Science and Information Technology fields that provides resources to support the professional growth and technical development of minority individuals in the information technology industry. We have introduced DEI&B initiatives for each quarter - one of those is providing workshops on data and analytics topics and setting up a mentorship program through BDPA. BlueGranite kicked off the partnership towards the end of February 2021 with three workshops. The goal of these workshops is to introduce the data analytics career to the attendees holistically. The workshops were followed by more in-depth training that focused on specific skillsets needed in data analytics. The partnership also included mentoring.

At a level to promote direct organizational impact for BlueGranite, we have begun utilizing additional networking platforms to facilitate the DEI&B initiative of broadening our own team with a diverse culture. The **BDPA Career Center** is a new and improved tool for their members to engage with potential employers at the pace they want to engage. We aim to leverage this tool as an employer to bring awareness to our available positions, which may present better opportunities for quality candidates.

