



## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

NATS strives to be a welcoming and supportive community of members and students who celebrate the unique identities, varied backgrounds, and experiences of all individuals. We are dedicated to ensuring that all voices are valued and heard in an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.

NATS takes the equitable treatment for all within our organization very seriously. This **NATS Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit** has been created to identify best practices for promoting diversity and inclusion within NATS. This toolkit provides guidelines for creating and maintaining a welcoming and supportive community and culture of diversity and inclusion, strategies for communicating across cultures, enhancing respect, educating ourselves, and identifying ways to build an inclusive NATS leadership team. It is our desire that this toolkit will help you and all NATS members gain a greater understanding of diversity in order to encourage enhanced awareness of inclusive practices for all identities.

## DEFINITIONS

### **DIVERSITY**

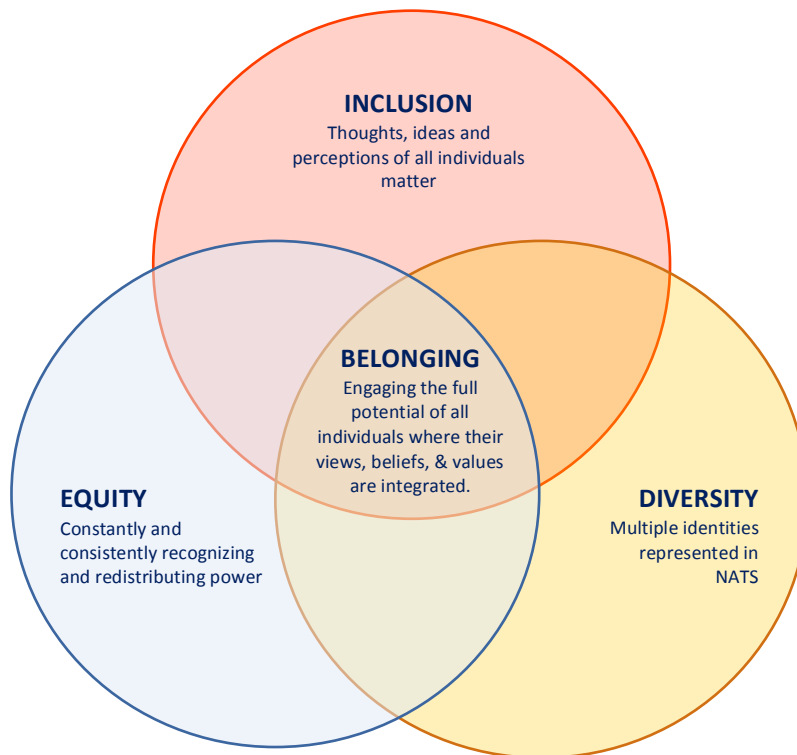
The term *diversity* can be understood as: the presence of difference. It's that simple. Diversity can refer to people of various races, genders, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religions, ethnicity, national origins, and mental or physical abilities. When applied to NATS, defining diversity should also include diversity of ideas and cultural diversity.

### **INCLUSION**

At the core of *inclusion* is diversity. Inclusion means that all members feel as if they genuinely *belong*—that they are valued and relied upon, empowered, and ultimately matter. Like diversity, inclusion is an outcome and often the actual experience of NATS membership, an experience that holds real potential or implications of equity.

### **EQUITY**

*Equity* is the norms, fundamentals, and policies in place that ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities.



*Belonging* is the desired outcome of successfully “ensuring that all voices are valued and heard in an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.”

### **Guideline #1: Create a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion**

A community that values diversity and inclusion is a place where leaders, members, and students of members demonstrate their respect for each individual's unique attributes. It is an environment that values diversity and inclusion requiring us to understand and respect the beliefs, values, and ethics of others while demonstrating our ability to effectively work with, communicate with, and interact with a diverse community of individuals. It is also essential that we relate to others with mutual respect while observing the highest standards of conduct. The NATS environment must be free from harassment, discrimination, and intolerance.

#### **Do:**

- Recognize that creating an organization culture of diversity and inclusion is an ongoing developmental process for individuals and organizations.
- Commit to building awareness, knowledge, and communication across cultures
- Encourage others to be open, flexible, and receptive of differences.
- Mentor others to recognize this need and commit to it.
- Assume that all people are individuals, who appreciate being treated with respect regardless of their ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, gender identity and expression, generational group, socioeconomic background, and other aspects of cultural identity.
- Use gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language in both written and verbal communication. Use nouns that are not gender-specific when referring to roles or professions. Avoid gender-specific pronouns, and instead use the neutral “they.”

**Don't:**

- Assume that only persons from traditionally oppressed groups benefit from a community that promotes a culture that values diversity and inclusion.  
ALL leaders, members, students, and guests benefit from understanding and respecting the diverse identities of the NATS community.
- Forget about elements of diversity that cannot be overlooked.  
Sexual orientation, age, gender identity and expression, religion, regional differences, country of origin, generation, and all other aspects of identity are also elements that impact communication and working styles for some of the different groups you come into contact with in your position.

**Guideline #2: Strategies for Communicating Across Cultures**

There are several practices you can implement to increase the strategies for cross-cultural communication within NATS, such as:

- Demonstrating that you value diversity.
- Communicating respect and showing empathy.
- Being non-judgmental.
- Recognizing your own assumptions.
- Exploring your own unconscious biases.
- Demonstrating flexibility and tolerating ambiguity.
- Being conscious that humor may be inappropriate and misunderstood.

**Some tips for additional practices include:**

- Provide an open and safe environment in meetings, auditions, and all NATS events: Be aware of situations and settings that are uncomfortable. *Reduce power dynamics.*
- Focus on understanding: *Check tone, style, and delivery of voice.*
- Seek first to understand; then be understood. When interacting with others in a diverse community like NATS, it is likely that you will encounter new and/or controversial ideas. Demonstrate a clear understanding of these ideas by actively listening before formulating arguments for or against them. *Critique ideas rather than individuals.*
- Explore the possibility that what is presented may not be the main issue: Listen to others and give them time to tell their story in their own way and words; trust must develop before others share their vulnerability; trust is earned and developed over time; *Identify root or underlying issues, which may prevent you from developing a relationship.*
- Acknowledge differences and different experiences: Avoid saying "I know how you feel" as it is always untrue. Most cultural minorities are more skilled in coping in the majority culture than members of the majority culture. Most majority culture members are less skilled in coping within a minorities' culture.
- Be aware of differences in nonverbal communication patterns: eye contact and facial expressions.
- Respect all people as persons who have the right to make decisions freely: Keep an open mind; avoid dictating, making judgments and assumptions.

**Guideline #3: Enhance Respect**

Enhancing respect is an ideal way of supporting the membership within NATS and helping them feel valued. Respect can be demonstrated through our choices, delegation of duties, behaviors, and communication—both verbal and non-verbal. There are several practices you can implement to increase awareness and sense of respect in NATS.

**Do:**

- Make your expectations clear to your leadership and members regarding verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., answer emails in a timely manner, resist interrupting or talking over each other, etc.)
- In regularly scheduled meetings discuss your Region or Chapter environment or assess the climate, discuss feelings of respect, and solicit feedback from colleagues about ways to improve the environment/climate.
- Identify best practices for all to model.
- Provide consistent feedback to leaders/members who need further mentoring and support.
- Reward/Reinforce respectful behavior when you see it.
- Manage conflicts and disagreements with respect in a timely and confidential manner.

**Don't:**

- Assume that all NATS colleagues have the same definition of respect as each other or as you.
- Avoid conversations about disrespectful behavior in the hope that the behavior will stop all by itself.
- Rely on someone else to provide vision and tools for respect in your Region or Chapter. This is part of your responsibility as a NATS leader.
- Ignore inappropriate jokes or humorous discussions around any diverse group or identity
- Make generalizations about any group or identity.
- Reveal a person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their expressed permission.
- Assume heterosexuality when sending invitations for NATS events and avoid gendered terms like Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc.

**Specific behaviors that convey respect include:**

- Communication that is open and transparent.
- Decision making that is transparent, communicated, and inclusive.
- Information being shared in a timely and consistent manner.
- Disagreeing without losing one's temper or otherwise conveying disrespect.
- Greeting NATS leaders, members, students, vendors, and guests by acknowledging them verbally and non-verbally.
- Respecting people's time by arriving at meetings and ending meetings promptly.
- Being open to criticism and feedback.
- Providing critical feedback in a manner, which is caring and respectful to the specific individuals.
- Taking responsibility for the impact of one's actions.

**Guideline #4: Identify Ways to Build an Inclusive NATS Leadership Team**

Inclusive teams are characterized by open communication, transparent decision making, and creativity. The purpose of building an inclusive NATS leadership team is to create a productive environment of trust and respect. NATS is a diverse community. We have members that represent multiple and different identities. Our differences and similarities are based on age, gender identity and expression, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, ability, and other forms of identity as well as opinion, which requires us to develop an inclusive community.

**Do:**

- Communicate and regularly remind NATS membership of the importance of developing and maintaining an inclusive culture within NATS.

- Encourage the following behaviors that demonstrate inclusion:
  - communicating information consistently,
  - being open to feedback,
  - respecting colleagues regardless of different styles or beliefs, and
  - offering critique in a constructive manner.
- Mentor District and Chapter leadership in a way that creates model behaviors that you would like to see from them.
- Respond to inappropriate jokes or comments immediately. Silence sends a message of agreement.

#### **Don't:**

- Rely on the same people for advice all of the time. Whom you seek to advise you should be as varied as your Region or Chapter membership. If you surround yourself with a non-diverse group of leaders or advisors who never push back or point out challenges, then your pool is not sufficiently inclusive. Seek out the perspectives of colleagues who have different backgrounds and expectations. Region or Chapter decisions, activities, and events will generally benefit from having diverse feedback.
- Use some of your meeting times as an "information dump." Facilitate meetings that invite participation, explore ideas, and model dialogue.
- Allow exclusionary or intolerant behavior to go unaddressed. Respond efficiently and with respect to behaviors that mock, shame, insult, or have the potential to injure members.

#### **Conclusion**

When considering diversity, we are not just talking about those visibly different from us. We are talking about all of us in all the ways we are different. Differences can include our education, our experiences, where we grew up, how we grew up, our temperaments, what populations we teach, our values, attitudes, and beliefs. NATS *is* diverse—we are all different.

Recognizing and accepting dissimilarities and valuing each and every person in NATS, regardless of these dissimilarities, will help all of us feel included and valued. We are depending on you to model leadership of and interactions with members that is respectful and accepting. As is stated in the **NATS Diversity and Inclusion Statement**, NATS is “dedicated to ensuring that all voices are valued and heard in an inclusive environment with equitable treatment for all.”

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#### **Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit References**

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For addition to all NATS Leadership Manuals

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