



# ADVANCING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SERVICE

## A Guide to Leading Change



Leadership for a Changing America



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Research Center for Leadership in Action would like to extend a special thanks to Paula Gavin, David Mensah, Angela Perry and the staff at the National Urban Fellows who collaborated with us in this project. Thanks to our colleague Erica Gabrielle Foldy, PhD, for her deep insight and expertise in the literature on diversity.

It is with gratitude that National Urban Fellows acknowledges the generous support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and JP Morgan Chase that made this Public Service Leadership Diversity research possible. It is our sincere expectation that the Public Service Leadership Diversity movement will enhance and empower the lives of people of color to become the leaders and change agents of our country's present and future.

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## ABOUT THE RESEARCH CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

The Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) is located at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, a nationally top-ranked school for public service.

RCLA's research complies with the highest academic standards while at the same time resonating with both practitioners interested in learning about leadership practice and scholars interested in developing theories of leadership. Our research is done in partnership *with* leaders rather than *on* leaders to uncover and cultivate insights that describe leadership clearly and with an authentic voice.

RCLA has a long-standing commitment to research that supports diverse leadership at all levels of organizations and across all sectors for the common good. Examples of our recent work include a study exploring the relationship between race and leadership in social change organizations. In another study, RCLA scholars catalogue how "race-ethnicity" is treated in the leadership literature and present an integrative framework for understanding the relationship between race and leadership. In a report based on an RCLA-facilitated action learning inquiry, leaders of color committed to social justice offer strategies for community-based leaders of color to maintain the integrity of their work and remain accountable to communities, develop supportive relationships, deepen their understanding of race and educate others, and nurture new leaders. This research is part of RCLA's work to support leadership that taps the resources of many voices to make systems and organizations effective, transparent, inclusive and fair.

Learn more at [www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership](http://www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership)



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS

National Urban Fellows seeks to inspire excellence and diversity in public service leadership.

Founded in 1969 to counter the under-representation of people of color and women in leadership, National Urban Fellows is one of the oldest leadership development organizations in the United States, and a premier voice of authority on leadership diversity for the public, private and nonprofit sectors.

The organization's range of mid-career leadership development programs includes: the 40-year-old MPA Fellowship, a 14-month program linking graduate-level academic training with a critical leadership experience in a large nonprofit or government agency; an alumni program offering life-long networking, career enhancement and personal development opportunities; and America's Leaders of Change, a career acceleration program for leaders on the rise in the government, nonprofit and private sectors.

Today, together with its fellows, alumni, mentors and community leaders across the country, National Urban Fellows is making an impact on social justice and equity by identifying issues, shaping solutions and forming equitable public policies.

National Urban Fellows develops the leadership for a changing America.

Learn more at [www.nuf.org](http://www.nuf.org)



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

America was founded on the principles of justice, equality and inclusion. As a nation, we continue to strive for full participation and equality for all citizens, upon whose shoulders rest the responsibility for upholding these principles. America is a multicultural society dedicated to inclusive participation in our democracy, and our laws and social policies have evolved over time to reflect this commitment.

For our nation, we endeavor to build upon the diversity of our citizens to embrace the fullness of our democracy, and in doing so we advance inclusion as both a moral imperative and an excellent business model. The public service sector—from government and academic think tanks to foundations and nonprofit organizations—must be inclusive if we are to develop fair and effective structures to fulfill the intention of our democracy. This can be accomplished through removing cultural and structural barriers as well as individual acts of discrimination or bias.

Though growing in population, people of color remain under-represented in the leadership of the public service sector, an issue that can and must be resolved if we are to effectively change our nation's most pressing social issues—from education to health, the environment and justice.

Our country is now composed of one-third, or 34 percent, people of color—a population that will grow to 54 percent by 2042. However, federal government leadership is only 16 percent people of color<sup>1</sup>. On the state level, only 15 percent of statewide elective executive positions across the country are held by people of color<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, only 18 percent of nonprofit leadership positions are filled by people of color<sup>3</sup>, and only 17 percent of foundation executives are people of color<sup>4</sup>.

When current disparities in public service leadership are addressed, the public service sector will have greater ability and appeal to people of color with the leadership skills to solve social policy dilemmas. The participation of people of color and the infusion of diverse voices and experiences into decision-making processes ensure a sense of cultural competency and effectiveness within policy-based solutions to social issues.

The National Urban Fellows Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative inspires and advocates for excellence and diversity in public service leadership for America. With a dual emphasis on individuals and systems, and through research, communications, stakeholder mobilization, and action, the Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative will develop a new, inclusive paradigm of public service leadership.

**As champions of transformational change, our goal is to not only achieve proportional representation in the public service sector by building a pipeline of talented, highly skilled candidates of color, but also to dismantle the barriers to inclusion of people of color in leadership positions and to support the public's recognition that diversity in leadership leads to organizational excellence.**

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, August 2008

<sup>2</sup> *Membership of the 111th Congress: A Profile*, Congressional Research Service, December 2008

<sup>3</sup> *Change Ahead: The 2004 Nonprofit Executive Leadership and Transitions Survey*, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> *Daring to Lead*, CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2006, p.25

## INTRODUCTION:

### GOING BEYOND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY AT THE TOP

More diversity in the workplace is reflective of our increasingly diverse society. It can also lead to healthier, more vibrant organizations and more democratic environments. These benefits are even more promising when an organization's senior leadership, not only its staff, is diverse. Therefore, it is a lost opportunity when leaders of color are under-represented in public service, the sector that addresses our most pressing social issues—from education to health, environment and justice.

Public service organizations have made strides in achieving diversity among their staff, but have been less successful in diversifying their leadership ranks. This under-representation is a reflection of a complex set of challenges at the individual, organizational and systems level. Well documented structural barriers hinder the professional advancement of people of color. Meanwhile, organizations, despite the best intentions, have had varying success with their diversity efforts. Moreover, the experiences of people of color who make it to top leadership positions become invisible when the dominant leadership paradigm draws most of its narratives, references and practices from white leaders.

It is time to ask the question: What would it take to move the diversity achieved across the public service workforce to the highest levels of leadership in the field?

We believe that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand and that advancing diversity at the top levels requires developing an inclusive culture that celebrates and leverages the contributions of people of all races.

The ideas that we present in this guide emerge from the research and experience of two organizations working together to advance the diversity agenda.

Getting diversity right is complex work. While organizations expect positive outcomes, negative consequences such as a backlash against a group of people, overt conflict and lost efficiency have been reported. It is no surprise that public service organizations struggle with advancing diversity at the top.

What complicates the matter is that we do not know for sure, based on the state of available knowledge, why organizations have mixed experiences or what leads to less than optimal outcomes on the diversity front. We do, however, know of practices and approaches based on research and experience that hold promise for advancing diversity at top levels and creating more inclusive organizations.



# Leading Change:

## A WINDOW INTO WHAT WORKS FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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The genesis of this guide is the bringing together of National Urban Fellows' 40-year experience inspiring excellence and diversity in public service leadership with studies by NYU Wagner's Research Center for Leadership in Action into race, diversity and leadership.

The 2010 National Urban Fellows (NUF) 40th Anniversary research report, *Changing the Face of Public Service Leadership*, finds that it is not enough that people of color have improved access to leadership positions; they must also have power to make change while in those positions. The report finds that it is imperative to develop public service leaders of color to move from access to influence to power in order to impact public policy and social justice. Compelled by this statement of purpose, NUF has convened a series of national and regional leadership diversity summits with the goal of shifting the national leadership paradigm to include leadership models found in diverse communities, to embrace collective approaches and to define a new institutional diversity standard. This call to action has resulted in the national Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative (PSLDI).

PSLDI is a national collaborative network of government and nonprofit leaders and organizations working together to implement a campaign action plan supporting the advancement of highly skilled leaders of color in public service. The network of over 125 partners is working to create awareness of the need for leadership diversity and inclusion, while developing a pipeline of people of color who are prepared and ready to attain leadership positions of influence and power.

The vision for the Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative is to inspire diversity and excellence in public service. Yet looking forward also requires looking back and building on NUF's 40-year practice developing leaders of color. With this in mind, NUF developed the Inclusive Leadership Model (ILM). ILM seeks to capture the elements at the core of NUF's success so it can serve as a compass both for NUF's work going forward and other organizations and individuals looking to learn from NUF's experience.

Meanwhile and for the past decade, NYU Wagner's Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) has been developing knowledge and capacity for leadership at all levels of organizations and across diverse sectors of society. In particular, RCLA scholars have been looking into the connections between race and leadership and how people can work and learn together across potential divisions like race and gender. Given the close alignment in goals between RCLA and NUF, the two organizations are working together to further the leadership diversity agenda.

One of the first steps in this endeavor has been a review of the latest scholarly thinking about leadership diversity in the United States, with a focus on public service. The goal of the report, *Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion: Insights from Scholarship*, is to establish a broad and shared knowledge of the latest thinking about leadership diversity and to ground PSLDI in a strong theoretical and scholarly foundation. RCLA has also scanned leadership programs for people of color or committed to diversity more broadly in order to understand the landscape of offerings available to advance leadership diversity. This report is titled *Advancing Leadership Diversity and Inclusion: A Review of Leadership Development Programs in the US*.

In comparing the Inclusive Leadership Model and insights from RCLA's research, we found that there are many areas where insights from practice and findings from research intersect and reinforce each other. We used those areas of convergence to create this guide to share insights, practices and approaches with organizational leaders seeking to support leadership diversity.

## WHERE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CONVERGE: THREE CONDITIONS FOR ACTION

Practical and research insights converge around three conditions that must be satisfied for public service organizations to become more diverse and inclusive.

### *The vision: inclusion*

Achieving leadership diversity requires more than just having diverse-looking faces in key roles. It is achieved when there are both more diverse leaders at the helm of organizations (representation) and the organizational conditions that make it possible for those leaders to thrive (inclusion). So the first condition for developing an inclusive organization is to establish inclusion (rather than representation) as the vision.

Superficial attempts to “represent” various racial groups without creating an overall supportive structure are not sufficient to achieve diversity and inclusion. They stop short of building democratic organizations and reaping the benefits of diversity.

A “diverse” organization is heterogeneous in its demographics and perspectives. While diversity can be achieved through certain strategies like hiring, true inclusion requires organizational transformation at the level of values and norms. Inclusive organizations are dynamic in their appetite for learning and development in that they adopt an ongoing integrative practice to achieve inclusion.

### *The work: leadership*

Any initiative to advance diversity and inclusion needs to be solidly tied to the organizational context and reality. There is no one size that fits all and no quick fix. Doing diversity well and creating inclusive cultures is precisely the complex work that requires leadership rather than management solutions. So the second condition for advancing diversity and inclusion is to treat it as the work of leadership—using creative and adaptive practices, working to change organizational culture, and fostering commitment across all ranks.

RCLA and NUF believe that organizations that foster (racial) diversity and inclusion are better positioned to deal with complexity and uncertainty. Inclusive organizations that can better address the multiple forms of diversity prevalent in their complex environments become better at adapting to

change rather than reacting on the cuff. Beyond race and ethnicity, diversity can also take the shape of increasingly globalized issues or the need to partner across sectors and/or with unlikely allies to tackle intractable social problems.

### *The focus: multiple levels*

Because leadership is embedded in context, advancing inclusion requires developing inclusive leaders AND inclusive organizations. Even when people have fantastic acumen and qualifications, they may still encounter various ceilings if their organizations and systems do not nurture them or activate their potential. Meanwhile, organizations also need support to better harness diversity. They need to experiment with different initiatives and innovations, establish commitment and responsibility, and manage for results—all of which require time and other resources. So the third condition to fostering inclusion is to work on multiple levels, addressing individual and organizational issues in tandem.

Inclusive leaders and inclusive organizations are tightly linked. An inclusive organization emerges when it is led, staffed and supported by inclusive leaders. Meanwhile, inclusive leaders thrive when their organization supports their own development and the leaders around them.

The three conditions of the vision, the work and the focus must be in place for the following four key elements to take effect.



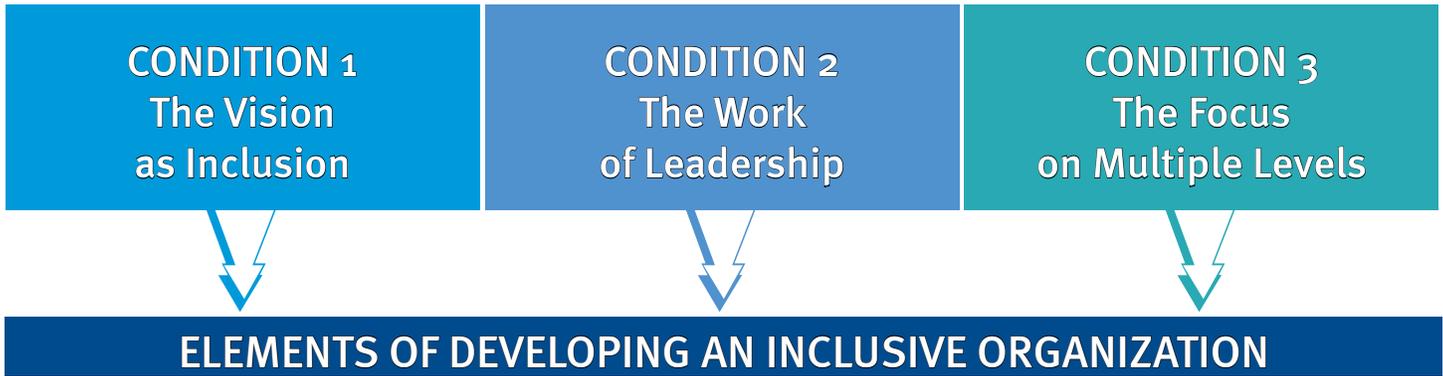
## FOUR KEY ELEMENTS TO UNDERSTANDING AND ADVANCING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Looking across the RCLA’s research and NUF’s Inclusive Leadership Model, we have found that insights from research and wisdom from practice converge around four key elements:

- Diversity as an approach: understanding the spectrum of inclusion
- Diversity as a resource: leveraging difference to nurture inclusion
- Diversity as a competence: developing the skills to practice inclusion
- Diversity as a responsibility: establishing shared accountability for inclusion

### CONDITIONS FOR ACTION

THREE CONDITIONS work together to set the stage for the work of developing an inclusive organization: 1) the vision must be creating an inclusive organizational structure and culture, 2) the work must be understood as that of leadership rather than band-aid solutions and 3) the work must focus on multiple levels, addressing individual and organizational issues.



Once the three conditions are in place, organizations can consider four key elements to become inclusive: 1) they need to articulate an approach to diversity and inclusion and determine where they want to be on the spectrum of inclusion, 2) they need to value and act upon diversity as a resource, 3) they need to develop the skills and competences needed to practice inclusion, and 4) they need to transform commitment into an ongoing responsibility for inclusion.

These elements are critical to advancing leadership diversity and developing inclusive public service organizations. We have seen that organizations that “do” diversity well:

1. have an articulated approach and understand where they are on a spectrum of inclusive practices;
2. treat diversity as a resource at the heart of the organization’s core tasks;
3. develop certain competences at the organizational and individual level in order to achieve inclusion; and
4. assign diversity and inclusion as key responsibilities with dedicated staff and resources.

In what follows, we cull key points from the Inclusive Leadership Model and RCLA’s research to discuss each of these elements. In each section we offer our insights, followed by implications for professionals charged with advancing diversity at their organizations.

**Diversity as an Approach:  
Understanding the Spectrum of Inclusion**

Once diversity and inclusion are established as priorities for an organization, the way these priorities are approached will have an impact on employees’ experiences, diversity outcomes and overall organizational culture. This of course implies that an organization has or should have an overall approach to the way it manages diversity.

Organizational approaches to diversity and inclusion fall on a spectrum. On one end is a legalistic approach that emphasizes quota-based hiring. Here, racial diversity is only seen as a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity, fair treatment and an end to discrimination. The legalistic approach uses a color-blind strategy for managing people that ignores the potential link between race and privilege. It

assumes that individuals will rise to leadership based on merit and regardless of their race. The organization avoids any deep understanding of race or cultural group identities and either ignores identity-based formations within the organization or tries to realign them with a larger identity or goal.

On the other end of the spectrum is a multicultural approach that actually seeks and leverages racial diversity, treating it as a source of strength for the organization. An organization taking this approach encourages members to discuss openly their different points of view because differences, including those explicitly linked to cultural experience, are valued as opportunities for learning. Here, diversity is at the heart of the organization’s core tasks. This is an organization that goes beyond having diverse staff to establishing an inclusive culture.

Establishing “identity safety” is important to an organization taking a multicultural/inclusive approach. This organization creates an environment where each individual feels safe despite his/her racial identity. In this culture, people of color do not feel like they need to assimilate to a dominant culture or behave in a certain way to fit in. Each person feels respected for their unique experience, which includes their racial background.

Falling somewhere between these two ends of the spectrum is an organization that acts opportunistically, rather than strategically, toward diversity. Here diversity is seen as a potential resource but only to gain access to and legitimacy with a diverse market or constituency. Organizations taking this approach uphold the typical “business case” for diversity, which emphasizes that staff (and leadership) diversity mirrors that of clients or constituents. Similar to the color-blind approach, this approach is expected to heighten feelings of tokenism at an organization, where people are chosen for certain roles not because of what they bring, but because of how they look.



*In summary*

- An organization's overall approach to managing and leveraging diversity will influence employees' experiences, how the work gets done and the overall culture.
- How an organization practices diversity and inclusion will fall on a spectrum of approaches—from the legalistic/color-blind approach to the multicultural/inclusive model.
- There is some indication that organizations using the multicultural/inclusive approach can maximize the benefits of diversity. Yet going from one end of the spectrum to the other, and from an organization dominated by one racial group to a diverse one, is no easy task.
- As in all change management efforts, certain risks should be anticipated and addressed.

*Implications for practice: Begin by assessing*

Before deciding where to take your organization on the spectrum, it is helpful to start by assessing where your organization is. The gap between current and desired states will determine the types of strategies and resources needed.

For instance, consider an organization that is not very diverse but is starting to take an equal opportunity approach. What it really wants is to become an inclusive organization where each individual is celebrated for his/her unique perspective. In this case, quite a radical shift in culture and policies is needed. Going from one end of the spectrum to the other may require significant dedication and



resources. While the former is usually abundant, the latter can be scarce in the public service sector.

It is fair to expect that for any approach to go beyond achieving representation, it will need to go beyond recruitment. If inclusion is the goal, then it needs to be embedded in multiple moments in the talent management cycle—performance evaluation, management systems and reward structures. Following implementation, evaluation will help you assess the extent to which your initiative's goals have been achieved. After a realistic span of time, you can reassess to see where your organization now falls on the spectrum.

*Questions for reflection and action*

If you are responsible for taking your organization to the next level in diversity and inclusion it may be helpful to start by asking the following questions.

- Why is diversity important to your organization?
- How does your organization think about diversity?
- What are the clues in organizational policies and systems that indicate that a particular approach is being used, and do these reflect a gap between desired and actual approach?
- Does the way your organization defines and frames its commitment to diversity reflect its values?
- How are differences in thinking/doing treated? Is difference suppressed or welcomed?

These questions can help you reflect on where your organization falls on the spectrum of inclusion. They can also be the subject of conversation with others at the organization to help the group confront issues that may have been pushed to the side in the past.

*A word of caution*

Organizations can expect some rockiness in the short-term from taking a different approach (or one at all) to diversity. Members of dominant groups may contest the initiative. People of color may feel like they are receiving too much unwanted attention. There may be more overt conflict that gets in the way of efficiency. These are risks common to all change initiatives, and like in any good change management process, need to be anticipated and addressed.

### **Diversity as a Resource: Leveraging Difference to Nurture Inclusion**

We have seen in the section on diversity as an approach how a multicultural organization seeks and leverages racial diversity, treating it as a source of strength. When individuals within the organization see their own race and diversity as a source of strength, this also helps to foster inclusion. It is hard to imagine an effective multicultural organization whose staff and leaders shy away from drawing on their own race and culture to conduct their work.

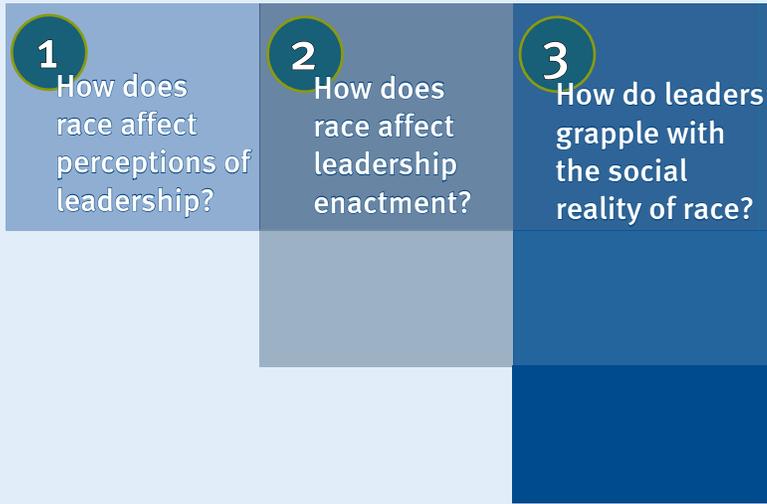
It is not always easy for non-white groups to exercise their authority or to practice leadership in a way consistent with their cultural heritage. Some leaders of color, especially those in predominantly white work environments, have reported facing constraints in their work because of how they are perceived by others. Often these leaders feel disadvantaged because, for various reasons, they are not perceived as legitimate by their subordinates and colleagues.

On the other hand, some leaders of color deliberately and consciously draw on their racial identity to perform leadership. These leaders turn oppression into a successful means for change, and race, otherwise a constraint, into a leadership resource. They draw on their cultural heritages and life experiences to help them lead, understanding that while race is a social construct, it has become a reality that colors perceptions, interactions and relationships. Examples of this ability include using cultural references that inspire their team members to transcend their personal interests and perform in the interest of the group, or developing the capacity to resonate with multiple cultures by switching language, references and styles. So while structural inequities often impose stereotypes and other constraints, leaders of color have also been able to shift how others perceive them and shape meanings of race through their own actions. It should be noted, though, that while structures can be malleable, changing them is no easy task.

While the racial identity of leaders of color might be a constraint, in as much as others superficially impose judgments, this identity can also be turned into a savvy, multicultural ability to lead across difference.

At the level of the team, diversity can also be a strong asset. Organizations have reported that among the strengths of diverse teams is their ability to advance projects requiring innovation, adaptability and creativity. It may take time





We have found that there are three ways that individual leaders and leadership development practitioners can think about the relationship between race and leadership. As one moves from the inner circle outward, one develops an increasingly complex and nuanced understanding of power, context and the relationship between race and leadership. In the first circle, race is seen largely as a constraint. Here, people of color feel that race inhibits their leadership potential and white people feel unable to understand any race but their own. In the second circle, race is drawn on as a resource for performing leadership. Here, leaders of color, in particular, can respond to and often rise above constraints through their own actions. In the third circle, race is thought of more fluidly by considering the collective dimension and the ways in which it forms one layer among many in a person’s identity. The

following table summarizes how each approach conceives of key variables in the race-leadership relationship.

**A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT RACE AND LEADERSHIP**

	<b>1. How does race affect perceptions of leadership?</b>	<b>2. How does race affect leadership enactment?</b>	<b>3. How do leaders grapple with the social reality of race?</b>
<b>Race/ Leadership relationship</b>	Race influences perceptions of legitimacy and constrains the performance of leadership	The way leadership is performed is informed and strengthened by race; racial stereotypes are shifted through leadership action	Both race and leadership influence each other and are fluid concepts; race is a social construct and reality that influences all relationships, not only leadership, and is also influenced through action
<b>Race</b>	Race is a personal trait; it is mainly perceived as a constraint	Race is a personal trait; it is used as a resource by leaders	Race is a social or political issue with personal and collective meaning, not only an individual characteristic
<b>Power</b>	Negative, top-down view of power	Power is recognized for both its negative and positive properties	Diffuse view of power; power is not a ‘thing’ that can be wielded, but a social construct that permeates all relationships and operates at the level of discourse
<b>Context</b>	Limited understanding of context as an “out there” force	More active understanding of context as influencer of both race and leadership	Context is actively considered as integral, not external, to the race-leadership relationship; incorporation of a systems perspective

to implement and integrate divergent ideas. Yet a diverse team goes through an “intellectual workout” as it addresses different perspectives among members. This makes for a more thorough and creative outcome than that possible by a homogenous group. On the other hand, organizations have also reported cooperation and trust as more evident in groups of little or no racial diversity.

Balancing unity and diversity is an inevitable task in any work setting as organizations face seemingly conflicting demands. On the one hand, increasingly fragmented environments and loose structures heighten the need to find common purpose. On the other hand, increasingly diverse demographics and the potential benefits of having diverse staff and leadership demand that organizations value and leverage difference. The trick for organizations is to find unity while making sure not to suppress and, better yet, to value difference.

#### *In summary*

- An inclusive organization is strengthened when its staff and leaders draw on their race as a resource and valued difference.
- There are three ways to think about the connection between race and leadership: as a constraint that triggers negative perceptions, as a resource that helps an individual lead, and as a social reality that affects all interactions.
- Diversity can also be a resource for the team. Diverse teams have been reported to do better at creative and innovative tasks than homogenous teams.
- There is a tension between fostering unity and leveraging diversity. The trick is to find unity while not suppressing, and better yet, valuing difference.

#### *Implications for practice: Understand the strengths of diverse teams*

If you are putting together teams to handle certain projects, it is helpful to be aware of what diverse teams are potentially good at and where they may meet challenges. Understanding how racial dynamics play out and affect team performance is an important step in learning how to leverage difference.

It may be helpful to develop a regular reflective practice by asking teams to think about their own dynamics and process, in addition to how they did on a task, as part of their debrief. Instituting this as a regular practice will begin

to illuminate how a team’s diversity can enable or hinder the accomplishment of a task.

#### *Implications for practice: Explore different views of race through leadership development*

An individual’s race may shape how he/she is perceived and how this person enacts leadership. If you are in charge of leadership development at your organization, it might be helpful to incorporate a reflective component that invites participants to explore when and how their race constrains or enables their leadership. This would also be a helpful way to develop cultural competence, as we will discuss in the next section.

#### *Questions for reflection and action*

These questions can help you explore how the dynamics discussed above show up in your workplace.

- To what extent do leaders of color bring the full richness of their identities to the workplace?
- What are the formal and informal support mechanisms for people of color within your organization?
- What is the experience of diverse teams at your organization? Are they paralyzed by difference or are they able to eventually work through it?
- When you consider decision-making processes with teams and the organization, what are the explicit and subtle ways that that diverse voices and viewpoints may be encouraged or inhibited?
- Do leaders prematurely resort to fostering a sense of unity or consensus?
- To what extent do staff (and in the case of nonprofits, Board members) acknowledge the role of identity in your work, particularly in terms of the stakeholders and populations you work with and serve? Is a critical race lens applied to your policy analysis and programming?

#### *A word of caution*

It is important not to generalize that diverse teams do well at creative tasks and homogenous teams do well at routine tasks and short deadlines. The composition of diversity in a team may also have an effect on the team’s experience and performance. The splintering of a group into smaller homogenous subgroups based on race or any other attribute has a strong effect on group dynamics. Moreover, race forms only one layer of identity. Teams can be diverse in



many ways, including gender, age, sexual orientation, and professional background.

Similarly, be careful not to contribute to generating new stereotypes by thinking that people lead in a certain way because of their cultures. We will discuss the risk of “tokenism” more in the following section.

### **Diversity as a Competence: Developing the Skills to Practice Inclusion**

Developing an inclusive organization may benefit from a multicultural approach that views difference as a resource. It also requires people with the competences to navigate and leverage difference and ultimately foster inclusion.

Successful leaders of color are often skilled at “bicultural fluency,” a competency that enables them to effectively lead their own teams while navigating within the dominant culture. For example, a South Asian leader running an advocacy organization for the South Asian community may be excellent at leading her staff in a way that taps their cultural roots. Meanwhile, she understands that she and her organization operate in an environment in which South Asians are not dominant, so she may not be able to use the same cultural references in dealing with whites. She becomes adept at navigating both worlds, so that she is not considered “exotic,” or too outside the dominant frame. She metaphorically lives in two worlds, constantly switching and transitioning between different cultures. She and other leaders must demonstrate that they understand both how their racial group functions and also the inner workings of a white-dominated environment.

Successful leaders of color have developed bicultural fluency by virtue of the expectation that they need to traverse difference and navigate environments in which they are not dominant. This is a skill that majority leaders may not be compelled to develop. Yet a truly inclusive organization needs *all* leaders to be culturally competent.

Similarly, an inclusive organization cannot depend solely on leaders with binary cultural understanding. Leaders need to develop a meta-skill—a higher-level capacity to navigate not only their own cultures and that of dominant groups, but any culture. This “cultural competence” is the ability for leaders to draw on what they know as well as their general problem solving and adaptive skills to function in a culture that they may not know. It is like knowing how to engage with, and not necessarily become an expert in, any genre of book—fiction,

biography, and politics—not only one kind.

Developing an inclusive environment depends on a talent pool of culturally competent people. *All leaders, not only leaders of color need to develop cultural competence. And leaders of color and white leaders alike need to be able to navigate multiple cultures, not only the ones with which they are most familiar.*

#### *In summary*

- Leaders of color often develop a bicultural fluency that their white counterparts may not be compelled to develop.
- Meanwhile, all leaders need to develop a multicultural fluency that matches their multicultural organization.
- Learning how to navigate only specific cultures is not enough. Leaders need a meta-skill that enables them to lead across difference more broadly.

#### *Implications for practice: Draw on your In-house expertise*

If you are interested in further developing cultural competence, a first step is to draw on the in-house expertise of people who are skilled at transcending boundaries. This can take the form of these individuals designing and leading sessions as part of a formal curriculum for development or a series of informal conversations at the organization. Often people of dominant groups may be unaware of the effects of their privilege and may not understand that agency and skill are required to understand and work well with people of different backgrounds. While potentially contentious, it could be invaluable for mixed groups to try to understand, through reflective conversations, what those competences are. For leaders of color it may be an opportunity to verbalize practices and competences they think are second nature. For white leaders, it could be a window into what competences they need to be effective in a multicultural environment.

### *Questions for reflection and action*

The following reflection questions may help you assess the extent to which cultural competence is valued and demonstrated at your organization:

- In your organization how many people are familiar with more than one culture? How many are familiar with multiple cultures?
- Is there resistance to doing work in unfamiliar environments, be it working with groups of different cultures or work in a new country?
- Are those people who exhibit bicultural or multicultural competence being pulled into too many directions or serving on too many teams? Are they invited as token leaders or for the competences they bring?
- What formal and informal supports and resources are available to staff to enhance their cultural competence? (e.g., trainings, diversity tools, discussion groups, etc.)

### *A word of caution*

Being sensitive to the special skills of a group should not mean tokenizing leaders of color. It is common among leaders of color to feel over-exposed, whether because they are under more scrutiny in environments where their legitimacy is doubted or because they are constantly requested to speak about their experience or mentor others. It is important to balance the need to draw on and support leaders of color with the potential risk of burnout or over-exposure.

Cultural competence also should not mean generalizing that a certain people behave in a certain way. On the contrary, being culturally competent means that leaders develop the reflective capacity to know when they are acting based on cultural assumptions—to catch themselves in action and to shed those assumptions. The ultimate cultural competence is learning how to deal with the whole person, where race constitutes only one layer of identity among many.

### **Diversity as a Responsibility: Establishing Accountability for Inclusion**

When there is a commitment to creating an inclusive culture at the leadership level, it is more likely to be achieved, and efforts that clearly establish responsibility for achieving leadership diversity lead to the broadest gains. Simply put, a commitment at the top is needed to establish inclusion throughout an organization.

When an organization pays lip service to diversity, without assigning responsibility to specific individuals for achieving it and mechanisms for measuring performance, it will only think of hiring the usual suspects or through the usual channels. Hiring itself is an important, but insufficient, step toward inclusion. Strategies to develop an inclusive culture start before and go beyond recruitment. Before hiring, an organization needs to make sure it communicates its commitment to diversity through its Web site and other materials. Otherwise, it will not appeal to anyone but the dominant group.

When diversity becomes a shared responsibility with clearly defined goals and accountability mechanisms, an organization can leverage its resources and work with stakeholders to achieve it. For example, nonprofit Boards can play a larger role in finding and supporting executive directors of color, and staff can contribute more to hiring by tapping their personal networks.

An organization's talent management cycle is sometimes choked off in one of the most critical places—the organization's own network of contacts. Leadership development programs have always advised leaders of color (and all leaders) to develop and draw on their personal networks for work. While everyone thinks that people of color find it more difficult to find work because they are disconnected from networks, research suggests the opposite. It seems leaders of color are actually more likely to have obtained their jobs through networks than white leaders. The problem is, those networks are considered by some experts in the field to be “bad networks” because they lead to lower pay or compromised opportunities. New research has found that this notion may be overstated. When organizations close off their networks as potential avenues for hiring, this can be a far more constraining mechanism for people of color than that of the “bad network.”

There is a need then to embed diversity and inclusion practices in multiple moments in an organization's talent management cycle, from recruitment to training to performance appraisals to team building. An integrated Human Resource management system needs to be put in place that helps implement change by translating the principles of inclusion via competencies into observable and measurable behavior. Such behavior needs to be developed, recognized and reinforced. Among those competencies is collaborative leadership that trusts group wisdom, draws on difference and seeks achievements that are shared by the group.

*In summary*

- When there is clear responsibility and leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion, advances are more likely to be achieved.
- When responsibility and commitment are established, an organization is more likely to leverage its resources and work with stakeholders to achieve inclusion. Boards become more actively engaged.
- While a particular team or leader should be ultimately responsible for the organization's diversity efforts, strategies to achieve diversity and inclusion need to be embedded in multiple moments in the talent management cycle.
- An organization's networks and those of its staff are important resources for finding qualified candidates of color.

*Implications for practice:  
Tips for formal diversity initiatives*

When there are clear responsibilities assigned for components of a diversity initiative, such as training, evaluation, networking and mentoring, it is easier to see the effects of those activities.

The following are helpful hints for seeing that diversity programs are implemented and lead to positive results:

- Devote resources to them
- Establish specific components of the program, a point person or team, scheduled functions and standardized literature
- Ensure management accountability
- Develop a theory of change that makes a link between the components of the program and the goals it seeks to achieve
- Promote internal advocacy groups while emphasizing shared values among stakeholders
- Communicate about the program in a clear, consistent way that is frequently articulated by credible sources
- Champion initiatives from the top while garnering support from all levels of the organization

Specifically in leadership development, the following have been identified as important components:

- Capitalizing on personal initiative and having the support of the supervisor

- Ongoing monitoring and continued mentoring
- A mix of developmental activities from classroom to team work to individual projects
- Life management skills such as dealing with stress and work/life balance
- Individual long-term career planning and organizational succession planning
- Growing leaders from within
- Paying attention to core competencies

*Questions for reflection and action*

- Is there any one person or group who has responsibility for tracking and demonstrating results for diversity progress?
- At the same time, does everyone feel vested in and contribute to building an inclusive organization? Is there a sense of shared responsibility? What are examples of how this sense of shared responsibility is enacted that could be built on or enhanced?
- Does fostering diversity and inclusion appear as a value or competence in your organization's performance assessment process?
- What role does diversity play in your broader organizational performance metrics?
- Do your Web site and other materials communicate your commitment to diversity?
- Do your organizational narratives highlight various identities, cultures or traditions? How do they resonate with various audiences?
- How diverse is your Board of Directors?
- What resources are being consistently invested over time in inclusion initiatives?

*A word of caution*

While it is challenging to measure the impacts of such activities and establish a causal link between some measure of diversity/inclusion and the organization's efforts, it is important that teams make a commitment to take action and produce results. Without such commitment, even the best organizations get mired in planning, risk management and getting it right. Taking action and producing results must be an integral part of the culture of any inclusive organization.

## THE TIME IS NOW: MORE THAN THE OBVIOUS NEED FOR LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY

Whereas each of these elements can be treated independently, ideally they must be addressed together as building blocks for establishing an inclusive organization.

Organizational executives need to understand what their approach to diversity currently is and where it needs to be. But articulating an approach without putting in place the proper steps to achieve it will not get the organization very far. For organizations to become inclusive, they need to value and act upon diversity as a resource. They also need to develop the skills and competences needed to practice inclusion. Finally, they need to transform commitment into an ongoing responsibility for inclusion.

It is a known fact that America is becoming more racially diverse. Without diversifying public service leadership we are missing the opportunity to create more democratic and inclusive environments, and we are not bringing the whole spectrum of talents to bear on the country's most pressing social and public challenges.

There is another reason why advancing diversity and inclusion is critical in this moment in history. Our world is increasingly complex, uncertain and globalized, meaning that we are increasingly interdependent. No one can really

accomplish what they need without relying on a set of collaborators whose work is necessary or complementary. We are also more likely to encounter and work with people who are not like us in terms of race, geography or perspective. People's expectations about participation have also changed considerably. We have a stronger desire to be involved in setting our own direction, and while we are at different levels of readiness to participate, we are less ready to commit to work where we have no say.

Organizations have responded by creating new organizational forms that are starting to replace traditional bureaucracies. Functional silos are being replaced with a greater emphasis on teams, group work and units with flexible structures that change as needed. Organizations are more decentralized and increasingly networked. They also tend to be flatter, with fewer layers of hierarchy.

All of these conditions are cueing us to lead in new ways that are more collective and inclusive of diverse voices. Yet that is difficult to achieve when leaders themselves are not diverse. We are more likely to embrace and practice approaches to leadership that are distributed, collaborative and empowering when the top ranks of public service organizations are diverse.



# Key Findings from Research

## NYU WAGNER’S RESEARCH CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

The following is a snapshot of key findings from RCLA reviews of 1) the research literature on race, diversity and inclusion in public service and 2) leadership development programs addressing diversity. We offer the most salient points at the field, organizational, program and individual levels.

FINDINGS AT THE FIELD LEVEL	
Scholarly and research literature	Leadership development programs review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership studies tend to treat the experience of leaders of color as unique cases, rather than thinking of them as an instance from which to generalize to the human experience.</li> <li>• There is a shifting landscape of terms from diversity to inclusion in organizational management literature.</li> <li>• The public service field has made progress in workforce diversity, but much less in leadership diversity.</li> <li>• Nonprofit research on leadership and diversity is largely missing.</li> <li>• Findings about the connection between diversity and organizational performance are mixed.</li> <li>• Scholars present various cases for diversity ranging from the instrumental (market imperative) to the moral (the right thing to do), but it seems the ‘business case’/market imperative has run its course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The availability of different types of programs that advance people of color and support diversity is an encouraging sign of the commitment to diverse leadership in public service.</li> <li>• There is an abundant supply of programs, ranging from those targeting specifically people of color, to those developing public service leaders in general but committed to including a large pool of people of color, to those supporting people interested in promoting organizational diversity independent of their race.</li> <li>• One expert commented that many programs and initiatives are most concerned with finding their niche, rather than with taking a systems approach and asking how they add to others or how collectively they can contribute to having an impact.</li> </ul>
FINDINGS AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	
Scholarly and research literature	Leadership development programs review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing diversity and fostering inclusion are complex and context specific—they require leadership work and commitment.</li> <li>• An organization’s approach to diversity can influence employees’ experiences, how the work gets done and overall culture.</li> <li>• Scholars are calling for a move toward an inclusive/multicultural organization that leverages difference rather than suppresses it.</li> <li>• Diversity and inclusion can enhance adaptive organizational capacity.</li> <li>• Organizational networks play a large role in enabling or blocking the hiring of people of color.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations need comprehensive systems that include: recruitment and outreach strategies, including a plan for recruiting from under-represented groups; an approach that values differences, which is more normative in nature and considers whether employees and managers appreciate the different cultural assumptions and biases that employees bring to their work—this includes programs aimed at bridging cultural gaps; and pragmatic programs and policies that consist of a strategic set of management tools an organization can use to promote employee job satisfaction and performance.</li> </ul>

**FINDINGS AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL**

Scholarly and research literature	Leadership development programs review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to conduct more empirical research to unpack the connection between diversity programs and bottom-line results.</li> <li>• Advancing diversity and inclusion requires that organizations create holistic Human Resources systems.</li> <li>• An emphasis on diversity needs to be integrated into multiple stages in the talent management process, not only in recruitment.</li> <li>• Organizations that establish responsibility for diversity see better effects from diversity training and evaluations, networking and mentoring.</li> <li>• The more resources are devoted to diversity management programs, the more likely they are to be fully implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of the programs reviewed have cohorts of no more than 15 participants or fellows, and a number of programs have groups as small as three or four participants and yet they have large aspirations for impact.</li> <li>• Many programs lack rigorous assessments that go beyond defining success as program completion, yet must survive in a funding environment that increasingly values performance measurement.</li> <li>• Many are boutique programs with thoughtfully defined niches, but are taking similar approaches (focused on building skills and networking). The niche is defined according to a particular group or locale, not as having a markedly different approach to developing leadership.</li> <li>• The review suggests that very few of these programs explicitly incorporate a systems approach in their delivery, despite the fact that many programs seek to infuse their participants with systems thinking.</li> </ul>

**FINDINGS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**

Scholarly and research literature	Leadership development programs review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racial identity can be both a constraint and a constructive source of leadership.</li> <li>• People of color have been compelled to develop “bicultural fluency” in order to navigate dominant work environments.</li> <li>• All leaders require cultural competence—a meta-skill that enables them to interpret and function in any culture by drawing on their experience and knowledge.</li> <li>• How diversity is distributed in a team matters—the splintering of a group into smaller homogenous groups can be both positive and negative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a potential tradeoff between making repeated “asks” of influential leaders of color to speak on panels, serve as mentors in programs, and so on and their experience of burnout and tokenism. Ironically, often the objective of such engagements and programs is to widen the pool of leaders of color, with the desire to one day be able to tap a wider pool of influential leaders instead of the usual suspects.</li> </ul>

# Inclusive Leadership Model:

## AN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

### NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS

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#### Inclusive Leadership is the Foundation

The Inclusive Leadership Model (ILM) represents the foundation of National Urban Fellows' commitment to inclusive leadership development that we believe is a hallmark of successful individual leaders and organizations. The model describes the essential elements of effective leadership and how those elements produce both Inclusive Leaders and Inclusive Organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Best practices for inclusive leadership development show that it is an ongoing effort incorporating learning, action and feedback as each organization discovers new ways to support the development of board, staff and program participants to become Inclusive Leaders actively participating in an Inclusive Organization.

We also know that inclusive leadership is effective leadership. Effective inclusive leadership development becomes indistinguishable from the culture of an organization. It is not separate from the activities that successful organizations undertake to translate an inspiring vision into successful results. The ILM is designed to deepen the understanding of this dynamic process and to highlight the best research practices that have influenced its development.

For National Urban Fellows, the Inclusive Leadership Model (ILM) is at the core of our mission, programs and organizational excellence and it serves as an example of our practice of social justice and equity for all people. We have integrated the ILM in every aspect of the organization including its leadership, management, operations, and program offerings.

#### Inclusive Leadership Defined

Inclusive leadership is the practice of leadership that carefully includes the contributions of all stakeholders in the community or organization. Inclusion means being at the table at all levels of the organization, being a valued

contributor and being fully responsible for your contribution to the ultimate result. Inclusive leadership creates an organizational culture that consistently produces results that benefit all of those stakeholders.

We further define leadership as a functional practice required of all stakeholders, where individuals are fully responsible for their contribution, internally committed to assessment and growth and outwardly committed to a culture that invests in this same growth for everyone.

While there is a clear difference in the scope of responsible accountability held by a CEO versus a frontline staffer, we assert that the practice of approaching one's work with a clear awareness of the responsibility to contribute to the end result is a key practice of leadership. Therefore, we believe our model is applicable at all levels of participation and able to be employed in both organizations and communities. We further assert that organizational leadership is a similar practice of being responsible to both the organization and the community in which it operates. When organizations are responsible, they are consistent in both internal assessment and their commitment to the development of their key stakeholders (staff, board and/or community members).

#### The Inclusive Leadership Model

The National Urban Fellows' Inclusive Leadership Model is a unique framework for leadership action that produces individual and organizational results. The model is grounded in the core value of inclusion, or treating culturally different perspectives as an asset, and it embraces diversity as a strategic imperative. The integration of philosophy, skills/competencies and Breakthrough Action™ in the Inclusive Leadership Model drives individual and systems strategies for public service leadership results, including more effective solutions to social issues.

#### Why an Inclusive Leadership Model?

In order to further support the development of inclusive leadership as an individual and organizational practice, the development of a model becomes a natural step. It serves to illustrate, using a written and visual medium, what successful inclusive leadership looks like and how one may assess and improve both individual and organizational capacity and effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup>The Inclusive Leadership Model has been informed by the report, *Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion: Insights from Scholarship*, by Sonia Ospina, Waad El Hadidy and Grisel Caicedo with Amanda Jones, Research Center for Leadership in Action, NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, April 2011.

**The National Urban Fellows' Inclusive Leadership Model is a unique framework for leadership action that produces individual and organizational results. The model is grounded in the core value of inclusion, or treating culturally different perspectives as an asset, and it embraces diversity as a strategic imperative. The integration of philosophy, skills/competencies and Breakthrough Action™ in the Inclusive Leadership Model drives individual and systems strategies for public service leadership results, including more effective solutions to social issues.**

### **How Do I Use the Model?**

The model is designed to be a guide rather than a directive. The cyclic nature of the diagram invites individuals to start wherever they see fit and ask themselves key questions using the individual or organizational models as a map.

- 1) What components of this model are consistent with my own individual or organizational leadership practice or structures? Looking at the differences, where are the opportunities for me to inform, develop or expand my own individual or organizational practice?
- 2) What are the components of this model that I don't fully understand? For example, where are the opportunities to deepen my understanding and practical application of systems theory (as it is relevant to my organization) or Breakthrough Action™ practice (as it may assist my internal leadership development)?
- 3) Where might I contribute to the model by providing examples of best practices developed at my organization? The sharing of this model may inspire or assist other public service leaders in further developing their own culture of inclusive leadership, and we encourage you to submit these examples to National Urban Fellows at [www.nuf.org](http://www.nuf.org).

## NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL • THE INDIVIDUAL

### Summary

Best practices suggest that while there are many paths to leadership, individual Inclusive Leaders are characterized by their conscious development of four key factors. Inclusive Leaders start with a clear **philosophy** of leadership, continue with an ongoing commitment to building leadership **skills and competencies**, further develop a conscious practice of leadership that we call **Breakthrough Action™**, and end with a consistent commitment to **results**. This process is cyclical (see diagram) because leaders consistently revisit and expand their capacity in all four key areas.

**Philosophy:** A philosophy of leadership is inclusive of both the particular style and the key values that characterize an individual leader’s approach. The conscious articulation of style and values allows leaders to recognize when the situation is a good match for their preferred philosophy and also, importantly, when it is not. *For example, a firm authoritarian style, while perfect for an organization in crisis, may not provide the flexibility necessary for an organization attempting to be responsive in the face of shifting consumer needs.*

**Skills and Competencies:** An ongoing commitment to mastering key skills and competencies is essential as our culture changes and demands new leadership skills. Cultural competence is a good example; it challenges leaders to build diversity and inclusion into their organizational structures, even as the definitions of diversity and inclusion constantly shift. Leaders committed to organizational effectiveness must expand their skills and develop new competencies to compete and remain connected with an ever more diverse community of stakeholders.

**Breakthrough Action™:** This concept is based on the assumption that leadership is visible in the dynamic movement between the declaration of a goal and the delivery of a result. This leadership is a natural capacity that requires breakthrough rather than learning. Breakthrough action, as such, is a “systems”-based leadership practice implemented through the conscious application of three key principles: being responsible, being self-reflective and being committed to collective leadership (the leadership development of others). The practice of Breakthrough Action™ allows leaders to consistently expand beyond both self-imposed and structural barriers. By applying the principles, leaders break through to their natural leadership capacity.

**Results:** Finally, results-driven leadership is fundamental. While planning and assessment are essential, it is the capacity to make promises and deliver results consistent with those promises that defines effectiveness. A focus on results, both successful and unsuccessful, drives leaders to continuously reflect, evaluate and act to improve outcomes in support of their individual or organizational missions. Results-driven leaders are Inclusive Leaders when they ensure that diverse voices from the communities they serve are not just at the table for this process but are also able to contribute to and benefit from the eventual results.

## THE KEY AREAS OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL • THE INDIVIDUAL

### Philosophy

Inclusive Leaders start with the development of a conscious philosophy of leadership, articulating their values and style. Respect, integrity and courage are cornerstones of an inclusive leadership philosophy. *What are your values and how do they influence your effectiveness?*

### Skills and Competencies

Key skills must include cultural competence, systems thinking, group facilitation, organizational development, strategic planning and implementation, communication and financial acumen. *What would you add? Where will you invest next in your own leadership competencies?*

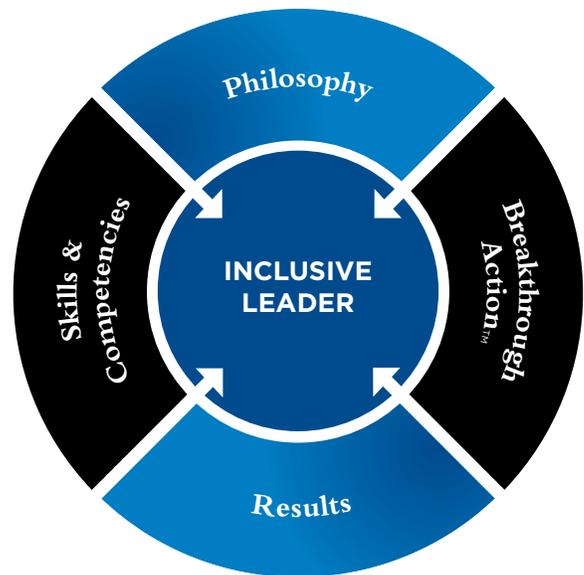
### Breakthrough Action™

Leadership is a natural capacity that requires breakthrough rather than learning. Breakthrough Action™ is a “systems”-based leadership practice implemented by consciously applying three principles: being responsible, being self-reflective and being committed to collective leadership (the leadership development of others). *Looking at your professional successes and failures through the lens of, “Where I have not been responsible?” usually reveals immediate opportunities for effective action.*

### Results

The capacity to make promises and deliver results consistent with those promises defines effective leadership. A focus on results drives leaders to continuously evaluate and improve outcomes in support of their objectives. Results-driven leaders are inclusive when they ensure that diverse voices are included, contribute to and benefit from the results. *Look at a professional area in your life where you are hesitant to make a decision and move forward. Whatever consistently keeps you from a decision followed by decisive action may represent a greater risk to your ongoing leadership success than the outcome of any single decision.*

## NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS Inclusive Leadership Model - The Individual



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## NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL • THE ORGANIZATION

### Summary

While there are different paths to both achieve and sustain an Inclusive Organization, we once again utilize four key factors to guide you through this exploration of success. Inclusive Organizations start by hiring and developing an **Inclusive Leader** and through that leadership they commit to building and expanding core **institutional competencies**. We also believe organizations must commit to the practice of their version of **Breakthrough Action™**. Finally, Inclusive Organizations exhibit a demonstrated commitment to pushing through their own organizational process and looking clearly at their **results**.

**Inclusive Leader:** Inclusive Organizations begin and end with inclusive leadership at all levels, but it is the leader at the top that sets the tone for the Inclusive Organization. Talking about organizations and organizational culture separate from the individuals who lead them tends to confuse the issue of who is responsible for the culture. Inclusive Organizations are created and sustained by Inclusive Leaders. If you are curious about the culture of an organization (its character, its values, and its style) look to the philosophy of the leadership! Any shift in culture can only be accomplished by leaders committed to making a change and skilled in the competencies necessary to lead an organization through that change process.

**Institutional Competencies:** It is notable that some organizations retain their effectiveness regardless of dramatic changes in the environment; they also possess a consistent cohort of competencies. These competencies, as well as the investment necessary to update them, are built into the culture. What we typically see is that these organizations are masters in the key areas of: strategic planning, assessment, ongoing education and training, and inclusive Human Resource systems (HR systems that recruit, sustain and support diverse employment pools). Additionally, we see them building inclusive team structures, characterized by trained leaders facilitating flexible cross-trained managers competent as coaches, directors and teachers. This complement of skills (while not exclusive) is consistently visible in thriving organizations.

**Breakthrough Action™:** Inclusive Organizations tend to exhibit well-trained employees with the dynamic capacity to apply that training even when they get stopped. We call this Breakthrough Action™ capacity and note that it shows up in organizational cultures where individuals at all levels hold themselves responsible and accountable for the end results to which they contribute. These organizations prioritize learning over punishment and emphasize the benefits from appropriate initiative and risk taking. Further characterized by the structural capacity to assess performance, behavior and results, Breakthrough Action™-based organizations encourage feedback as the only true way to know if results are consistent with goals. Recognizing there are always real consequences, feedback is generally welcomed regardless of its positive or critical nature. Finally, Breakthrough Action™ organizations are committed to investing in leadership development. They know, in practice, that behind the successful leader is an employee team where everyone takes their own leadership capacity seriously, and they reward senior staff members for building leaders around them.

**Results:** Of the four key components of the Inclusive Organization, a focus on results is the most obvious driver of effective organizational development. Our institutional results drive every other function (as they should) and yet it is frequently the case that organizations are trapped by the simple failure to ask, “What results are we producing right now?” The answer to this question (positive or negative) can dramatically shift both process and action and open the way to effectiveness. Results drive inclusive organizational effectiveness and therefore everyone, from the CEO to the entry-level staff, must be appropriately committed to and responsible for those results.

## THE KEY AREAS OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL • THE ORGANIZATION

### Inclusive Leader

At the core is a leader with a well articulated personal leadership philosophy, who is competent in key skill areas including cultural competence and systems thinking. Inclusive organizational leaders are deliberate in their practice of Breakthrough Action™ and develop organizations with a structure to consistently expand their mission capacity and produce effective results. Inclusive Organizations begin and end with inclusive leadership. *Consider the central importance of inclusive leadership. Where does your organization succeed and fail in investing in the development of its leadership at the top?*

### Institutional Competencies

Key competencies must include strategic planning, organizational assessment/development, education/training, inclusive/integrated Human Resource systems, an inclusive culture, adaptability, networking, coaching and mentoring. Organizations that establish these competencies must also create structures to constantly expand and update them to be truly effective. *Compare this list of competencies with your own organizational capacity. Where would your organization benefit from increased training and development?*

### Breakthrough Action™

Organizations are more likely to build and apply competencies if their culture is characterized by responsibility, internal assessment, feedback and a demonstrated commitment to developing each employee and stakeholder as a leader. These practices sustain organizations even when they lack particular competencies. Breakthrough Action™ is the practice of taking responsibility for and action to acquire and apply missing competencies. *If your organization is skilled but consistently fails to apply those skills, consider that the missing piece is a willingness to be responsible.*

### Results

Action and producing results must be an integral part of the culture of any Inclusive Organization. Simply asking the question, “What results have we produced?” can usefully shift the direction and process of any organization as a whole. A focus on results is essential for organizations to

maintain a successful commitment to inclusivity. If the structure and process are not inclusive the results will likely lack the inclusivity that defines success at all levels of public service leadership. *Simply ask the question, “What results have we produced so far and why?” Use this answer to decide if you are on track to reach your goals and achieve your mission.*

### Summary

Inclusive leadership is imperative for a changing America, as our nation’s people of color become the majority by 2042. Our nation is the most diverse in the world, and National Urban Fellows asserts that America’s promise of social justice can be realized with inclusive leadership practices. Challenges and structural barriers stand before us in our march to achieve equity, and they must be addressed with a sense of urgency. National Urban Fellows is proud to present our Inclusive Leadership Model, reflecting the experience of our 40-year history and continuing research. The evidence supports inclusive leadership as a new paradigm to achieve excellence and diversity in public service leadership for America.

## NATIONAL URBAN FELLOWS Inclusive Leadership Model – The Organization



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