

We Are Utah

A Toolkit For Building Belonging In The Workplace



Corn Mandala: Flower of Life
by Jorge Rojas was created
in a process that requires
presence, repetition, and
connection—key ingredients
in building belonging.

**There's a difference
between assimilation,
limited inclusion, and
belonging. Assimilation
says, "be like us and leave
parts of you behind."
Limited inclusion says,
"be part of us and bring
some uniqueness, but not
too much." Belonging says,
"you belong here; this
place is better because you
are here, and you are free
to take up space."**

**Terence Lester
Activist, Writer, Storyteller**



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Acknowledgments

The Economic Development Corporation of Utah (EDC Utah) and the Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging (CEOB) developed this toolkit to help Utah employers foster welcoming workplaces where everyone – regardless of their background – can feel they belong.

The suggestions listed here were curated from national sources, Utah focus groups, and Utah employers, and vetted by leaders from Utah's multicultural communities.

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Cover

Jorge Rojas, Corn Mandala: Flower of Life, 2021, Corn, 10' diameter, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art (UMOCA). Photo courtesy of the artist.



Jorge Rojas is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, and educator from Morelos, Mexico, who makes his home in Utah. He studied Art at the University of Utah and at Bellas Artes in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and is included in multiple public collections. In 2022 he was selected as a Visual Arts Fellow for the Utah Division of Arts & Museums, and received the Salt Lake City Mayor's Artist Award.

What Is Belonging?

We've all had moments when we felt like we didn't belong. Think of a time when you were in a room full of people and still felt disconnected. Think about the employee who started working last month but eats their lunch alone everyday. By intentionally fostering belonging, we can make Utah — and especially our workplaces — a place everyone feels welcome.

As a practice, belonging ensures that each individual has a place in the community and an important role to play. Belonging allows people to show up fully as themselves, be warmly welcomed, and build interpersonal connections.

The Value of Belonging in the Workplace

In a recent study, the Harvard Business Review observed that “high belonging was linked to a whopping 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and 75% reduction in sick days. For a 10,000-person company, this would result in annual savings of more than \$52 million.” (The Value of Belonging at Work, 2021)



Similarly, McKinsey's Great Attrition Survey observed that “the top three factors employees cited as reasons for quitting were that they didn't feel valued by their organizations (54%) or their managers (52%) or because they didn't feel a sense of belonging at work (51%).”

In organizational cultures of high belonging, employees feel like they are integral parts of a company. Fostering belonging enhances employees' feeling of security and value, with positive effects on retention, innovation, and productivity.

A sense of belonging ties directly to a person's ability to thrive in their environment.

Intentional belonging is the next step in the evolution of a company's diversity, equity, and inclusion journey.



How Utah Employers Can Help



This toolkit provides an entry point for Utah employers to understand the business case for belonging and tactics to build belonging into their workplace cultures.

The writers of *Cultivating Belonging in The Workplace: An Employer Guide* note that “many companies are rightfully troubled by our country’s increasing polarization and what it means to the future stability of their business.

But companies are not powerless over this trend... The trust workers have in their employers, the diverse makeup of the workplace and the unrivaled capabilities of the private sector, [give] companies the ability to reshape the belonging crisis for the good of the bottom line and our nation.”

Utah employers are uniquely positioned to positively impact the lives of Utah residents. By intentionally cultivating belonging in the workplace, employers can unlock improvements in talent attraction, retention, and contribution for their companies. At the same time, these efforts can help build broader communities of empathy, trust, and connection.

We facilitated a series of focus groups on belonging with community members throughout Utah. Here’s how they defined belonging:

“A feeling of safety.”

– Equality Utah Focus Group (right)

“Being invited to the table and having a voice at the table; ‘nothing about us without us.’”

– Mexican Consulate Focus Group

“A feeling of acceptance, joy, and calm; a feeling that you can be of service, that you are part of something bigger than yourself.”

– Faith-based Focus Group



1.

Building a Foundation for Belonging

Authentic commitment from company leadership is critical to building a sustainable culture of belonging. If you need to help your leadership understand the value of belonging, start with the business case, such as the Harvard Business Review or McKinsey studies on page four of this toolkit.

Adopt A Company Statement On Belonging: If your company mission, vision, and values do not already address belonging, draft and adopt a belonging statement. Make sure it's visible on your website, in your recruiting materials, on your social media, etc.

Invite Employee Feedback: Survey employees before launching new belonging strategies to get a baseline on your belonging culture. At regular intervals after the strategies have begun, survey employees again to evaluate shifts in sentiment. Search online for the Cultivating Belonging in the Workplace toolkit from Belonging Begins with Us for questions to include in an employee survey.

Communicate Consistently And Clearly: Participants in the Equality Utah focus group highlighted the importance of clear communication from company leadership. For example, you can launch your belonging initiative by sending out a company-wide email and publicly encouraging allyship and authenticity. Then, reinforce the importance of belonging at company-wide meetings throughout the year.

Build Equitable Ownership: A Harvard Business Review article notes that women and minorities are often expected to carry the extra labor of culture-building initiatives — such as the strategies in the We Are Utah Toolkit — on top of their regular duties. (Research: Women Leaders Took on Even More Invisible Work during the Pandemic, 2021) Before implementing any of these strategies, decide who will be in charge of implementation and how they will be compensated for their work.

Create Employee Resource Or Affinity Groups: Creating resource groups for employees from underrepresented backgrounds shows them that the



Allyship is accomplished by cultivating people's understanding of diverse communities. Providing accurate education about diverse communities empowers individuals with the knowledge to build connections and mutual respect.

Authenticity is accomplished by ensuring the conversation keeps going; that it is not just a single event. When we spread out the conversation over the entire year we ensure it becomes part of the culture of a company.

Equality Utah Focus Group

organization is committed to their well-being. Provide necessary support for these groups including a budget, visible support from leadership, and schedule flexibility. Include allies and welcome employees from all backgrounds to participate.

Broaden Your Hiring Pool:

Double check the language in your job descriptions for biased, gendered, or noninclusive terms that could discourage candidates from applying for certain jobs. Familiarize yourself with resources from Utah Department of Workforce Services for reaching underrepresented candidates such as Utahns with disabilities, veterans, and foreign-credentialed employees.

Consider Flexibility Benefits: Prove to your employees that belonging is a core value in your company by building flexibility for employees who are also caregivers. Make some hours of work more flexible – for example, by allowing employees to work from home for the last two hours of the day so they can pick their kids up from school. Review all benefits and HR policies for opportunities for inclusion, such as domestic partner coverage, dress codes that accommodate diverse identities, etc.

Consider Mental Health Benefits:

Gartner emphasizes the importance of ensuring that mental wellness is a priority to the company. (Build a Sense of Belonging in the Workplace, 2022) Ensure that mental health coverage is part of your health care plan and consider offering paid mental health days in addition to paid sick leave.

Evaluate Onboarding Processes:

If you don't already have a thorough and documented onboarding process

for new employees, consider developing one. Train managers on the process regularly to ensure company-wide buy-in. During your onboarding process, educate all new employees on company policies and practices.

Conduct an Accessibility Audit:

Studies have shown that hiring people with disabilities correlates with increased retention, lower training costs and turnover, access to new business markets and increased innovation. Disability:IN Utah offers resources to help businesses actively include people with disabilities in the competitive work force and as consumers.

Design a Workplace that Works:

Make sure the layout of your office encourages social interaction, and offers options for employees who need quiet time to focus or recharge during the workday. Make the office kitchen accessible for all and have food for employees to eat. Small touches like having a refrigerator and a microwave can support employees who may not be able to eat out for lunch. Keep accessibility in mind for team members with physical disabilities, and solicit employee feedback on ideas for continuous improvement.

Use the Buddy System: A 2017 study by Heidrick & Struggles found that minority employees were more likely than their non-minority peers to participate in company-sponsored mentorship programs. Formalize mentorship or buddy programs to provide employees with more opportunities to grow and learn.

Subject: Belonging in the workplace

Dear Team,

One of our leading organizational values is [xxxxxxx], and living this value requires action. I'm excited to share that in the coming weeks, we will be implementing new strategies to help foster a culture of belonging in the workplace.

We've all had moments where we felt like we didn't belong. We all want to feel safe and welcome in the community we call home. In reality, many of us experience exclusion, isolation, harassment, and even violence on the basis of identity.

Belonging is a key aspect in making sure that our company culture reflects our values. While belonging is a part of organizational culture and leadership choices, it's up to all of us to foster belonging with each other. Each of us has the power to make our neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools more welcoming.

Please watch out for more information on how to get involved in the coming weeks—including events, training opportunities, and team-building activities. I welcome your feedback as we embark on this journey.

Best,

Management

2.

Fostering a Culture of Belonging Through Individual & Collective Efforts

The success of your belonging initiatives will depend on a combination of individual and collective efforts.

Individual Efforts

Employers can support individual efforts to build belonging in the workplace by giving employees time to learn about the value of belonging and opportunities to get involved.

Share Your Story: Storytelling has enormous power to combat isolation and build warm personal connections. Ask your co-workers to share their stories and offer up your own. For local inspiration, check out EDCUtah's We Are Utah video series, available on their website. Explore Belonging Begins With Us for a national collection of belonging stories.

Learn More About Disabilities and Other Cultures: Educating yourself on disabilities and other cultures can build empathy and allyship. An online search for "cultural curiosity" pulls up resources with best practices for cultural learning. The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation has a business resources team that offers training as well as assistance with job postings and workplace accommodations.

Start a New Conversation: Engage someone you've never spoken to in conversation. Even offering someone a compliment can go a long way. By reaching out to other employees, you are actively combatting work isolation.

Offer a Warm Welcome:

Write a welcoming card for a new hire. Invite your colleagues to sign it with you. Make someone's first day a great one.

YOU'RE A
SUPER BIG DEAL.
THANKS FOR
JOINING OUR
SUPER BIG DEAL.

Collective Efforts

Whether employer or employee-led, or a combination of both, simple collective efforts can begin to create a culture of belonging by bringing people together in new ways.

Make Introductions: When a new employee comes to the company, make sure that the people working with and around the new employee are intentionally introduced. Have new employees and current team members share short personal biographies — not just professional resumes — to begin to build personal connections.

Do Lunch: Host monthly, no-agenda lunches to help employees build relationships and new connections. *Welcoming America's Taste of Belonging Cookbook* pairs recipes from diverse cultures with activities that connect people around a shared table and get them working together on a common goal.

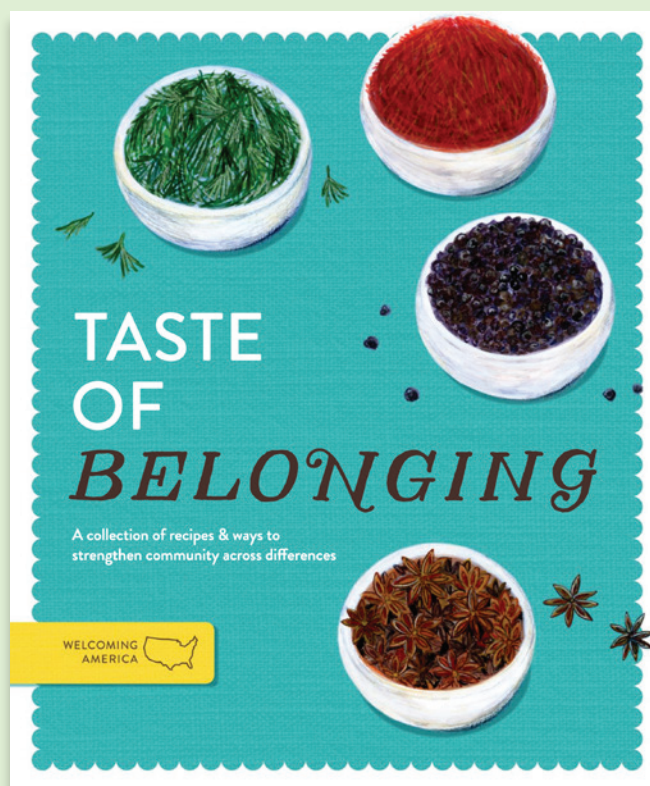
Serve Together: Encourage employees to identify a cause they'd like to support, and schedule time during core hours for them to serve the local community together. Make sure to do a debrief afterward to get feedback on people's experiences. Check out *UServeUtah* for local volunteer opportunities.

Read Together: Host diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) book clubs and provide lunch. In her *Dare to Lead Read Along Workbook*, Brene Brown suggests a few exercises to help groups to establish safety before discussing new, difficult, or vulnerable topics.

Celebrate Together: Celebrate holidays of all cultures and religions represented by employees. Make sure employees are given time off for the holidays they choose to celebrate.

Invest in Training: The Mexican Consulate focus group emphasized the power of investing in formal training to build allyship and belonging. One great local option is the Business Equality Leader Certification by Equality Utah.

Share your Progress: Share on your social media accounts which strategies you are implementing in your workplace. Highlight stories of employees finding belonging in the workplace and how these strategies have positively impacted their work and life.



Welcoming America's Taste of Belonging Cookbook.
Download it for free at welcomingamerica.org.



Something as simple as hosting a monthly lunch can cultivate belonging and camaraderie in your office. Make it a regular event with a little longer lunch break. It will give people in the office some time to get to know each other without an agenda and free from office or project pressures.

3.

Cultivate Belonging in Your Community Through Partnerships

Companies belong to a larger community. Foster these relationships by engaging, partnering and learning about the communities where you do business and where your employees live, work and play.

Explore Magnify Utah: The Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs (MCA) created the Magnify Utah database to promote the diversity of Utah.

Search for places to eat, destinations to visit, events to attend, and ways to volunteer that support and uplift all of Utah's diverse communities.



Support Community Efforts: Support the communities where you do business by funding initiatives that are meaningful to them. Don't just write a check – show up, participate, and build connections. Then do it again. It takes repetition and investment to build trust and authentic relationships with communities.

Visit the UVU Museum of Art: The UVU Museum of Art is launching a new exhibit titled “The Art of Belonging.” See how BIPOC artists in Utah have imagined new visions for how we can all contribute to social, racial and economic justice.

Go to the Library: Libraries are places of community and can be a powerful tool for engaging outside of the workplace.

Partner with Interfaith Communities: Host conversations with interfaith communities to identify ways your company can support diverse faith community celebrations and initiatives.

Connect with the Utah Division of Indian Affairs: Visit their website for information on Utah's Indigenous communities and ways to get involved.

Engage with the Center for Economic Opportunity and Belonging (CEOB): Co-invest in community-led solutions to close the equity gap in Utah.

4.

Measuring Your Progress

Creating a culture of belonging is an ongoing effort; not a project to complete. Monitor your company's progress to see which strategies are working and which can be improved.

Set Belonging Goals: Keep track of participation rates in company belonging activities. Also, keep track of your employee retention rates, especially of those from underrepresented groups. Look for improvement as you implement intentional belonging strategies into your workplace culture.



Incorporate Belonging into Performance Reviews: Add a section in employee performance reviews that discusses their contributions to belonging in the workplace. Focus accountability on the leaders and managers who are responsible for putting these belonging strategies in place.

Continue To Seek Employee Feedback: If you launched your project with a baseline survey on your belonging culture, continue to check in to measure progress and look for new opportunities. Remember that building belonging is a journey, not a destination.



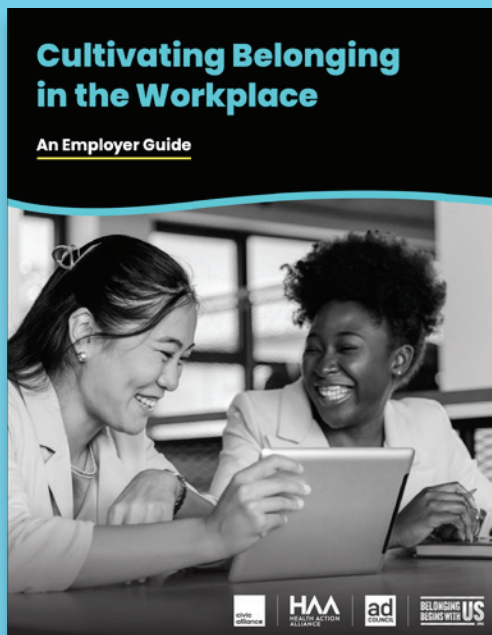
Since 1972, the University of Utah has proudly used the “Ute” name with the permission of the Tribe. Both the U and the Tribe understand the importance of encouraging, inspiring and supporting tribal youth to lead healthy lives and pursue their educations.

Ute Proud — University of Utah

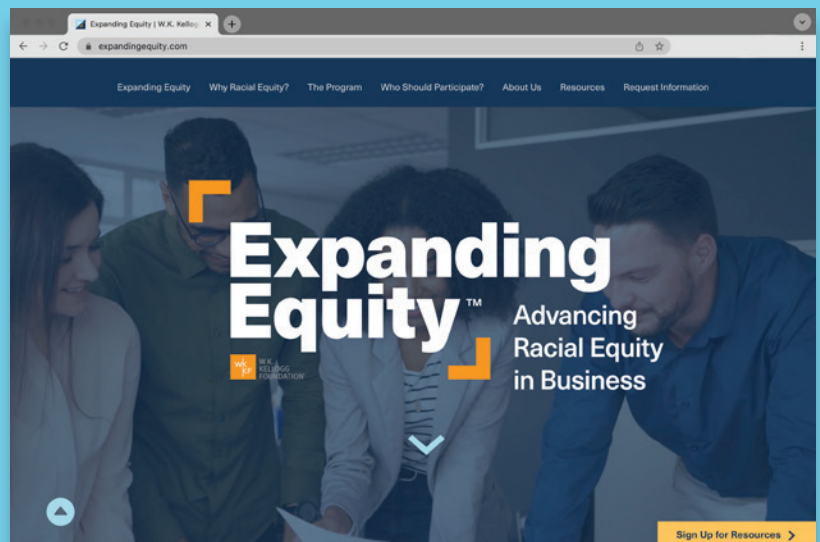
Which activities from this toolkit can you commit to launching? After your organization has made some progress, we'd love to get your feedback on this toolkit and the activities you implemented. Take our 7-minute survey and tell us what you think.

Achieving all elements of belonging — including social connection, inclusion, psychological safety, influence, value and authenticity — is a long-term commitment. It will require companies to go beyond the strategies in this toolkit. If you're ready to enter the next stage of building belonging at your organization, we invite you to connect with the following partners:

Scan QR Code below to access survey.



Belonging Begins With Us:
Cultivating Belonging in the Workplace



W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Expanding Equity:
Advancing Racial Equity in Business

EDCUtah envisions a prosperous and resilient economy for generations of aspiring Utahns. We catalyze strategic economic opportunities, capital investment, and quality job growth in Utah:
edcutah.org



The Center for Economic Opportunity engages with communities of color and catalyzes private and philanthropic partnerships to remedy racial disparities in economic opportunity, education, health, and housing in Utah:
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