

Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Work Environment for All

Is your workplace truly welcoming, equitable, and inclusive- or is it toxic and oppressive?

Does your organization present a polished exterior while crumbling and struggling with internal challenges?

Are you ready to examine and uproot what's beneath the surface?

Let's begin by delving into five key areas that shape thriving workplaces: (1) Leadership & Decision-Making, (2) Communication, (3) Employee Well-being & Wellness, (4) Culture & Inclusion, and (5) Growth, Development & Collaboration. By reflecting on these areas, you can identify opportunities for growth and intentionally create more welcoming and supportive workplaces for all.

Moving from this...	Envisioning this...
Ego-driven leadership focused on individual power, top-down control, and ego.	Collaborative, transparent, leadership that acknowledge all perspectives and contributions and empowers all voices through shared decision making.
Leadership obsessed with gaining external influence and appearance, prioritizing validation and recognition from outside of the organization.	Leadership prioritizes staff satisfaction and contentment over external validation.
Lack of trust between leadership and employees, and decisions are made without input from the team. Employees are expected to follow instructions without questioning – the what, when, and why.	Leadership encourages and fosters trust by encouraging open communication and collaboration, valuing employees' input in decision making, and allowing inclusive processes for questions and feedback.
One-way communication. Employees are not welcomed to share their concerns or ideas.	Two-way communication where feedback is encouraged, listened to and acted upon.
Employees face micromanagement and constant scrutiny.	Employees are trusted to manage their work and make relevant decisions.

Moving from this...

Envisioning this...

Surface-level perks mask underlying toxicity and lack of genuine care for staff.

Genuine care and intentional practices that create a culture where staff feel valued and supported, and are protected from burnout and isolation.

Information is hoarded, miscommunicated, or not shared at all. Employees are left in the dark about key decisions.

Transparency in decision-making and clear communication with all staff.

Little or no attention given to employee well-being, and mental wellness support.

Mental wellness, wellbeing and work-life balance are prioritized with accessible supportive resources.

Limited opportunities for growth, advancement, and professional development.

Equal access to growth opportunities for all employees, with clear pathways for support and professional growth.

Insensitive to diverse cultures, identities or backgrounds.

Diverse cultures and identities are celebrated, respected, valued and integrated into all aspects of the workplace.

Exclusion of diverse voices and perspectives in decision making.

Inclusive decision-making that reflects diverse voices, perspectives and lived experiences at all levels of the organization.

Unclear or biased methods for resolving conflicts, with unfair and unequal consequences.

Transparent conflict resolution processes that prioritize shared accountability.

Rigid "traditions" with outdated and unfair policies that harm marginalized employees.

Policies that prioritize equity and inclusion, centering the leadership and voices of marginalized and oppressed groups- with regular reviews for effectiveness and improvements.

Employee performance based on biased criteria.

Employee performance is inclusive and based on individual contributions and collective impact.

Lack of recognition for accomplishments.

Positive reinforcement that promotes celebration and growth.

Feedback is vague, discouraging or based on false promises.

Courageous conversations and constructive feedback that promotes growth, trust, vulnerability, and transparency.

Moving from this...

Lack of accessibility; barriers for employees requiring accommodations.

Lack of emotional safety; fear of retaliation or job loss for speaking up.

Employees “go along to get along” – avoiding conflict or don’t address difficult issues.

Focus on chasing funding without a clear connection to mission and core values.

Project-driven goals that prioritize numbers and rigid outcomes while neglecting people’s needs.

Unrealistic, burdensome workplan that don’t drive impact or creativity. Employees feel pressured to meet unrealistic demands.

Employees are left to fend for themselves without targeted, individualized support, mentoring or coaching.

Toxic competition and organizational culture that fosters rivalry rather than collaboration.

Avoidance: sharing past trauma is considered a taboo; employees are ignored, undermined, or dismissed when they try to speak about it.

Workplace culture makes individuals feel guilt, shame and unsupported when mistakes are made. There is no encouragement to learn from mistakes.

Envisioning this...

Active and ongoing efforts to ensure accessibility and provide reasonable accommodations for all employees.

A brave space where emotional safety is prioritized, and employees can freely speak up without fear of retaliation.

Encourage and actively model accountability with care and grace, promoting respectful and honest dialogue.

Funding is pursued based on alignment with the organization’s core values, purpose, mission and vision.

People-centered goals and objectives focused on community care, human connection, growth and well-being.

Realistic, purposeful, and achievable workplans that fuels creativity and nurtures innovation. Employees feel supported and motivated to succeed in their role.

Individualized onboarding, supportive supervision (coaching), and ongoing opportunities for growth and development are offered and accessible for all.

Teamwork and collaboration are prioritized over individual competition. Collective growth is emphasized, fostering a learning community where knowledge is shared freely and openly.

Culture of healing and repair, acknowledging and addressing both harm and trauma, including historical trauma.

A trauma-informed environment where employees receive non-judgmental support, and are treated with empathy, grace, and respect.

Moving from this...	Envisioning this...
A scarcity mentality, <i>fighting for crumbs</i> , rooted in the belief that there are limited resources, leading to competition and fear.	A culture of abundance that promotes resource sharing, collaboration, and growth for all.
Board stacking, based on friendships and personal connections, not necessarily expertise and lived experience.	Actively recruit visionaries, thought leaders, and individuals with diverse expertise and lived experience for leadership roles.
Culture of fear “walking on eggshells” with anxiety over retaliation, exclusion or negative consequences for speaking up or making mistakes.	Culture of equity and liberation: everyone feels empowered to take risks, contribute openly, and be seen and heard.
Negative or hostile workplace vibe, with employees feeling stressed, undervalued, or even personally attacked.	Positive workplace culture where employees feel a deep sense of belonging. They feel valued and supported.

At the TooREL Institute for Social Change, we specialize in supporting organizations through the critical process of transforming from toxic, oppressive work environments to inclusive, healthy, and thriving workplaces.

We work alongside organizations to strengthen leadership, enhance communication, prioritize employee wellness, and cultivate values-driven cultures rooted in collective care and shared accountability.

Our goal is to co-create welcoming, inclusive and supportive environments where all employees can excel and thrive. We help organizations to identify where improvements are needed and create actionable strategies for transformational and lasting change.

If you're ready to start this journey, contact us today at info@toorelinstitute.org, and let's work together to foster a culture of inclusion, collaboration, growth, and well-being.

