

# Course Overview

This course recognizes the benefits of diversity in our workforce and FEMA's commitment to valuing the diversity of its employees and customers. By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Define what is meant by diversity.
- Describe how diversity benefits us individually and collectively.
- State FEMA's Vision of Diversity.
- Describe the agency's commitment to diversity as stated in FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- Describe how culture influences our interactions with others.
- Describe the actions you can take to optimize diversity.

## Transcript - Our Commitment to Diversity - Video

Diversity means acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating the variety of characteristics that make each of us unique. By valuing differences, we strengthen our commonalities including a shared mission of serving our Nation.

FEMA's vision for diversity is: "An inclusive environment in which the Agency leverages diversity to achieve mission goals and business objectives, and maximize individuals and the organization."

When FEMA reflects the diverse communities we serve, we establish trust and build relationships—both of which are essential for communities to assume responsibility for their own recovery.

Equally important, leveraging workforce diversity makes business sense. Workplace diversity is vital because of the breadth and depth of organization and abilities required for us to accomplish our mission. Diversity benefits us all by broadening our horizons and by giving us opportunities to learn from another.

In this training, you will learn more about FEMA's vision for diversity and the Agency's Diversity and Inclusion Plan. FEMA has always emphasized the importance of leveraging diversity by ensuring that FEMA provides an environment that values and embraces the contributions and potential of every member of our diverse workforce. As an agency, we are all responsible for ensuring that FEMA consistently reflects the diverse fabric of American society.

## Lesson Overview

This course is divided into the following topic areas:



Defining Diversity



Valuing Diversity



Optimizing Diversity

This lesson describes the characteristics and dimensions of diversity. Upon completion of this lesson you should be able to:

- Define diversity.
- Describe how diversity benefits us individually and collectively

# Diversity Definition

Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and respecting the variety of characteristics that make individuals. These personal differences:

1. Include race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, and much more.
2. Affect how we think, learn, work, interact with and react to others, and how we live our lives.
3. Influence how we perceive others and their behaviors, as well as how others perceive us.

Through diversity, FEMA cultivates an inclusive culture that connects each employee to the organization; encourages collaboration, flexibility and fair and leverages these attributes so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential.

# A Diverse Nation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the middle of this century, the population of the United States will be larger and more racially and ethnically

Some quick facts:

As of 2016, individuals who identify themselves as Hispanic, African American, Asian American, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, mixed race comprised approximately 39 percent of our population. By 2060, these groups are projected to make up more than 55% of the U.S. population.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Vespa, Jonathan, Medina, Lauren, Armstrong, David (March 2018). [Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections 2020 to 2060](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf) (<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf>). Available from the U.S. Census Bureau publication library.

# EEO, Affirmative Employment, and Diversity: Know the Difference

Diversity is often mistaken for equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative employment.

Federal EEO laws help to ensure that race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation), national origin, age, genetic information, and disability and other legally protected characteristics are not considered in employment decisions. Additionally, EEO laws prohibit retaliation because an individual has engaged in protected activity. EEO protections flow from Federal, State and local laws that govern all employer related actions.

Affirmative employment efforts help to proactively identify and remove barriers to the hiring and the advancement of minority populations, to include women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans.

**A commitment to diversity builds on and extends beyond this legal and regulatory framework.**

# Discrimination

It is unlawful to deny a person their equal opportunity for employment or advancement (either deliberately or unintentionally) based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, genetic information, disability, or participation in a protected activity.

The Federal Government has also enacted protections against discrimination and harassment based on parental status, marital status, and political affiliation.

# Protected Categories

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual based on any of the following:

## **Race and Color**

Equal employment opportunity cannot be denied any person because of their:

- Racial group or perceived racial group.
- Race-linked characteristics (e.g., hair texture, color, facial features).
- Skin pigmentation/complexion.
- Marriage or association with someone of a particular race or color.

## **Religion**

- Employees or applicants cannot be treated more or less favorably because of their religious beliefs or practices.
- However, employers are required to accommodate employees' sincerely held religious beliefs unless to do so would cause an undue hardship. An employer cannot require participation in a religious activity or exercise as a condition of employment.

## **Sex**

Laws regarding sex discrimination specifically address the following:

- Discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- Sexual harassment
- Discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition is illegal. These conditions should be treated as other temporary illness or conditions.
- The Equal Pay Act requires that men and women be paid equally for equal work.

## **National Origin**

A person cannot be treated more or less favorably because he or she:

- Is born and/or has lived in a particular place.
- Has a particular ethnicity or accent.
- Is believed to have a particular ethnic background.
- Is married to or has other association with someone of a particular nationality.

Employers must verify that all applicants and employees are authorized to work in the United States: only asking for verification from people who are perceived to look or sound foreign is discriminatory. Employers may make an English-only rule, or have a fluency requirement, only if there is a clear performance or safety reason for it.

## **Age**

- People who are 40 and over cannot be discriminated against in employment.
- Agencies may only impose an age requirement when they can show that age is a bona fide occupational qualification.

## **Disability**

The ADA Amendments Act of 1990 was amended on September 25, 2008 (ADAAA) and became effective on January 1, 2009. The ADAAA made a number of significant changes to the definition of "disability." These changes apply to Federal employees through the Rehabilitation Act. An individual with a disability is a person who:

1. Has physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. Has a record of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limited a major life; or
3. Is regarded as having such an impairment.

## **Genetic Information**

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 added protection regarding genetic information. Employees or applicants may not be discriminated against based on their genetic information or family health history, such as having the breast cancer gene or the gene that causes Lou Gehrig's disease.

## **Retaliation/Reprisal**

Employees are protected from retaliation or reprisal based on their participation in a protected activity.

# Discriminatory Practices

The following are brief summaries of discriminatory practices. Contact the Office of Equal Rights(OER) for more detailed information or assistance.

#### **Disparate Treatment or Impact**

- Disparate treatment: Treating an individual differently because of inclusion in a protected class.
- Disparate impact: The adverse effect of a seemingly neutral employment practice (e.g., subjective interviewing techniques) on a protected class.

#### **Basing Employment Decisions on Stereotypes**

It is unlawful to base employment decisions on stereotypes or assumptions about the abilities, traits, or performance of individuals of a certain group.

#### **Basing Employment Decisions on Relationships**

It is unlawful to deny employment opportunities to a person because of marriage to, or association with, an individual of a protected group.

## Diversity: External and Internal Characteristics

The term “diversity” is often associated with race and ethnicity; however, diversity encompasses both external and internal characteristics that make each of us unique.

For example, "diversity of thought" can be achieved when people work together who have different:

- Work experiences.
- Social-economic backgrounds.
- First languages.
- Educations.
- Communication styles.

## Generational Differences

Diversity also applies to the different generations in the workplace. Different age cohorts are often raised with different core values and norms. As these differences across generations are explored, it is important to keep in mind that these are simply trends and do not necessitate the internalization of the norms and values by any specific person born in that generation.



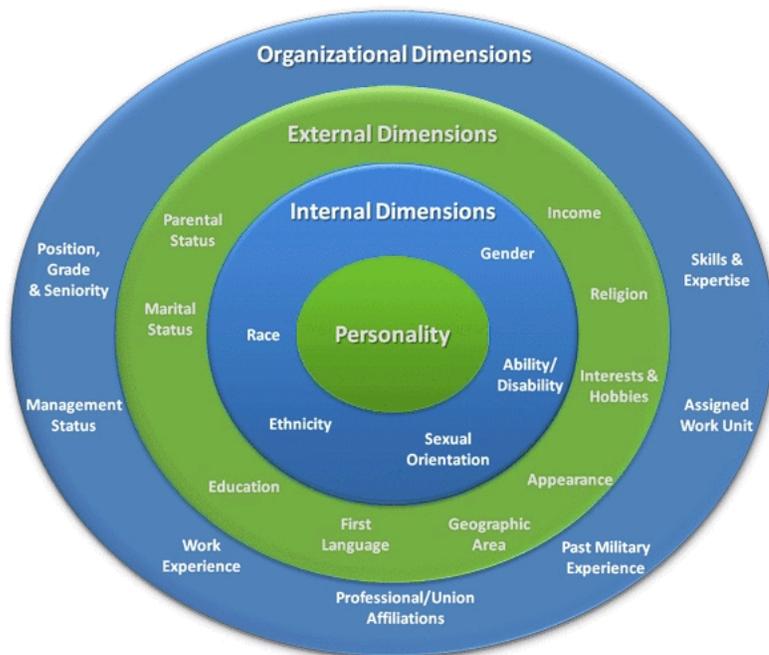
Generations may have different values, ideas, work ethics, attitudes toward authority, and outlooks on life. However, not everyone of a given generation ascribe to the trends in values and norms. Though the trends exist, it is important not to stereotype individuals due to their generational cohort.

## Generational Traits Comparison Chart

	Other Names	Core Values	Work Ethic
G.I. GENERATION 1901 – 1926	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Greatest Generation</li> <li>• Generation of Firsts</li> <li>• WWII Generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Team Players</li> <li>• Community Minded</li> <li>• Energetic Do'ers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action-Oriented</li> </ul>
SILENT GENERATION 1927 – 1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans</li> <li>• Seniors</li> <li>• Matures</li> <li>• Lucky Few</li> <li>• Traditionalists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication / sacrifice</li> <li>• Respect for authority</li> <li>• Delayed reward</li> <li>• Duty before pleasure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated</li> </ul>
BABY BOOM GENERATION 1946 – 1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boomers</li> <li>• Baby Boomers</li> <li>• The Boom Generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Team orientation</li> <li>• Personal gratification</li> <li>• Health and wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driven</li> </ul>
GENERATION X 1965 – 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 13th Generation</li> <li>• MTV Generation</li> <li>• Boomerang Generation</li> <li>• Baby Busters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Thinking globally</li> <li>• Balance Techno-literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced</li> </ul>
MILLENNIAL GENERATION 1981 - 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Y</li> <li>• Generation Why?</li> <li>• Echo Boomers</li> <li>• The Net Generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Civic duty</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Sociability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determined</li> </ul>
HOMELAND GENERATION After 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Z</li> <li>• Boomlets</li> <li>• Nexters</li> <li>• The iGeneration</li> <li>• Digital Natives</li> <li>• Plurals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk-Averse</li> <li>• High Achievers</li> <li>• Detail-oriented</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conscientious</li> </ul>

## Summary: Diversity Dimensions

The Dimensions of Diversity wheel summarizes the complexities of understanding diversity and the many elements that shape each of us.



## Lesson Summary

This completes this lesson. In this lesson you learned:

- The definition of diversity.
- How diversity benefits us individually and collectively.

Diversity is generally defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and respecting the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique. The term “diversity” can be applied in many ways. Diversity applies to the different generations in the workplace. It is often associated with race and ethnicity; however, diversity encompasses both external and internal characteristics that make each of us unique. Diversity is also distinctly different from equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative employment. In its broadest context, diversity means valuing, rather than merely tolerating, the perspectives brought by each individual to the FEMA organization.

Creating a diverse culture where each individual feels appreciated and heard, helps contribute to an inclusive, multicultural agency that is capable of serving our increasingly diverse Nation. Optimizing diversity must be regarded as a required organizational state of being—a required element of success. All employees have the responsibility for incorporating diversity into the workplace, and for treating all persons in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner.

## Lesson Overview

This lesson describes the actions FEMA is taking to value diversity.



Defining Diversity



Valuing Diversity



Optimizing Diversity

Upon completion of this lesson you should be able to:

- State FEMA's Vision of Diversity.
- Describe the agency's commitment to diversity as stated in FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

## Relationship Between Diversity and Mission

FEMA's mission is to help people before, during and after disasters.

FEMA's workforce is the means to the successful accomplishment of that mission - which makes diversity a critical business imperative.

## Diversity Benefits

A diverse workforce benefits us all by broadening our horizons and giving us opportunities to learn from each other.

Valuing workplace diversity:

- Helps us consider different points of view.
- Brings a variety of experiences that can solve problems faster.
- Provides us with additional skills and knowledge needed to meet our mission and advance our careers.

An appreciation of diversity:

- Builds relationships that foster community-based preparedness.
- Helps us to plan for and respond to the needs of a diverse survivor population.

## Diversity and Workforce Synergy

Valuing diversity requires that we take steps to understand and respect each other rather than simply tolerate our differences.

FEMA employees comprise a culturally diverse workforce. Being part of a diverse workforce energizes our thinking. We learn from one another and gain different perspectives.

An inclusive and diverse workplace motivates employees to perform to the best of their abilities. It promotes understanding between people, creating a stronger and more focused team.

## Understanding the Communities We Serve

One disaster survivor stated, "I would see [disaster personnel] go into a situation . . . they felt that their presence alone and the fact they were there to provide a service should be reason enough for these people to be accepting of them and accepting of the care that they wanted to give.

"And although your heart might have been in the right place and this is your job . . . if you don't understand or take the time out to try to understand the culture and what makes them tick, your services may, although be needed, may not be wanted."

## Disaster Impact and Cultural Diversity

All populations are vulnerable in disasters. However, some cultural norms or geographical separations because of cultural norms can expose some populations to disparate vulnerability.

Some impacts of disasters include:

- People who are culturally or geographically isolated may have greater risk and be disproportionately vulnerable to disaster.
- Communities may not take needed actions unless disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation information is communicated using norms and languages that are culturally appropriate and easily understood.
- Some groups of individuals may be reluctant to seek Federal assistance due to cultural differences that value self-sufficiency and pride in autonomy.

## Cultural Responses to Evacuation Information

A common reaction to a potential disaster is disbelief. Individuals often try to confirm that there is a threat by seeking additional information about the situation.

Researchers have found racial and ethnic differences in the likelihood of evacuation in some disasters. For example, during Hurricane Katrina:

- The Vietnamese population preferred to seek assistance through informal networks such as families, friends, and churches.
- The Latino population was more likely to seek assistance through official channels, though concern about proof of identity and immigration status prevented many survivors from seeking help.
- American Indians evacuated to other reservations or did not relocate at all, and were seeking support from tribes and Native organizations across the country, as well as from smaller nonprofit organizations.

Often, the way in which a community responds is greatly impacted by available resources and historical context.

## Promoting Community-Based Resiliency Through Diversity

Valuing diversity helps us foster community-based resiliency by:

- Learning from local leaders, and community members of different cultural groups about their values, family norms, traditions, community political issues, and needs ideally before a disaster strikes.
- Involving staff and community outreach workers who are bilingual and bicultural whenever possible. Involve trusted community members to enhance credibility.
- Determining the most appropriate and acceptable ways to introduce yourself, and define your program and services to be culturally sensitive.
- Recognizing cultural variation in expression of emotions, as well as in manifestation and description of problems.
- Providing community education information in multiple languages, multiple sources, and multiple accessible formats.

## Accommodating Cultural Differences

During Hurricane Sandy, there were efforts to meet cultural needs and expectations by integrating those considerations into available disaster resource information. For example, meals ready to eat (MRE) were made available in accessible packaging, Kosher, non-pork, infant and children, and vegetarian, as well as recipes where possible.

Information presentations for impacted communities utilized accessible formats for languages and persons with disabilities.

## Accommodating Cultural Differences During the Northridge Earthquake

After the Northridge earthquake, a crisis counseling brochure featured the color red. In serving the Hmong population, the crisis counseling program used the color red in many printed materials and supplies because Hmong culture includes a belief that red symbolically wards off evil spirits. Another consideration involved the Hmong belief that floods are an omen of doom and that shaman cleansing rituals are needed to counter the bad luck this omen portends. As a way of acknowledging and respecting this belief, the staff developed and provided a referral list of shamans in the local area.

## Civil Rights Advisors/Specialists

Civil Rights Advisors/Specialists use their specialized expertise to:

- Work proactively with FEMA organizational elements, including temporary disaster field organizations (e.g., Joint Field Offices, Disaster Recovery Centers, etc.) to resolve individual or group civil rights issues.
- Consult with FEMA program officials to ensure all eligible recipients are provided with access and equal opportunities.
- Provides guidance on the needs and interests of internal and external FEMA customers and stakeholders.
- Ensure accessibility at all FEMA facilities, or other meetings and events.

The job of the Equal Rights Specialist often is described as “providing mitigation for people.” Just as FEMA works with individuals and communities or lessen the impact of natural hazards, Civil Rights Advisors work proactively to mitigate current and future people problems.

## Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams and Other External Affairs Personnel

FEMA’s Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams (DSA Teams) are among the first to reach out to the disaster-affected community after a presidential disaster declaration. Their priority is outreach and communication regarding the assistance available through FEMA. They seek to identify special requirements of the community that might hinder getting information or registering for disaster assistance, including identifying those who are Limited English Proficient. External Affairs and the Joint Information Center (JIC) at the Joint Field Office are tasked with communicating with the public and other external audiences. Disaster communication messages must take into account the varied reactions that people have during emergencies, including those reactions related to educational status, language, and cultural norms.

## Tribal Liaisons

There are approximately 550 federally recognized tribes in the United States, each with its unique history and culture. After a disaster, FEMA works directly and indirectly with affected tribes.

Some challenges those unfamiliar with tribal culture might experience:

- Protocol requires an invitation from the tribal leaders—you do not just show up.
- Time is treated differently. You will be on tribal time and should never interrupt tribal leaders.
- Ceremonies are important facets of life and allowing time for such events is a show of respect.

Tribal Liaisons are well versed in the cultural diversity of tribes and can establish positive relationships to support the disaster recovery.

## Disability Integration Advisors

Within FEMA, the Disability Integration Advisor (DISA) provides advice, technical assistance, subject matter expertise, information, and training to F staff on disability integration, including:

- The accessibility of current service delivery systems in the community that are used by disaster survivors with disabilities or access and functional needs.
- Ensures the concept of disability is integrated into Agency operations, delivery of services and policy development.
- 508 accessibility of materials published by FEMA's Office of External Affairs
- Use of Assistive Technology (AT) in a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

In the community, the Disability Integration Advisor provides coordination, information, and technical assistance. The DISA supports a network of local organizations that advocate for and provide services to people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. The Disability Integration Advisor interfaces with the Office of Equal Rights to ensure the needs of the community are met.

## FEMA's Vision for Diversity and Inclusion

FEMA's vision for diversity and inclusion is:

**“An inclusive environment in which the Agency leverages diversity to achieve mission goals and business objectives, and to maximize the potential of individuals and the organization.” (FEMA Diversity and Inclusion Plan FY 2015-2019, p. 1)**

FEMA's leadership is committed to creating a diverse work environment and challenges each employee to promote inclusion, equity, and respect in the workplace.

It is important that we continue to foster a culture of inclusion and respect, and promote a culture that embraces diversity and allows each and every one an opportunity to achieve their full potential. Each person's skills, talents, experiences, and characteristics broaden the range of approaches to FEMA's

## Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce

In August 2011, President Obama issued an executive order establishing a coordinated government-wide initiative for promoting diversity and inclusion. Executive Order 13583, President Obama states:

*To realize more fully the goal of using the talents of all segments of society, the Federal Government must continue to challenge itself to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce. Further, the Federal Government must create a culture that encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential.*

This executive order requires the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop a government-wide strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan; identify best practices for establishing a diverse and inclusive workplace; and, to establish a reporting system to monitor the progress of Federal agencies.

Executive Order 13583 further requires all Federal departments and agencies to implement the plan developed by OPM and to establish agency specific actions toward implementation.

## FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan

The success of the Diversity and Inclusion Plan requires that Agency leaders embrace and champion its implementation. The plan includes elements that are measurable, allowing for the evaluation of progress and success regularly to ensure accountability. The following three principal goals are based on and support the core tenet of the plan for 2015-2019:

1. Build a work environment that promotes diversity and inclusion.
2. Build, develop, retain and engage a diverse workforce.
3. Build a sustained leadership commitment to a diverse FEMA through education, accountability, and total workforce engagement.

FEMA's mission and core values are supported by each of the above goals in the achievement of the Agency's diversity vision.

[Select this link to review FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.](#)

# Leadership Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

In support of the third goal of FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan, FEMA's executive leadership, managers, and supervisors at all levels must be committed to actions that demonstrate diversity is more than a social imperative—diversity is a critical business imperative.

This means that FEMA's leaders at all levels must:

- Accept responsibility to foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture;
- Participate to the fullest extent possible in the formulation and execution of FEMA's diversity-related programs, policies, strategies, and initiatives;
- Lead initiatives to integrate diversity into all organizational planning processes;
- Help to build, develop, retain, and engage a diverse workforce through recruitment, hiring, and retention initiatives;
- Be accountable for creating a work environment that is inclusive and promotes diversity principles and values;
- Be accountable for creating a work environment that is inclusive and promotes diversity principles and values;
- Engage and include organizational employees in diversity strategies; and
- Recognize that diversity management is a significant part of their role as FEMA's leaders, and that they are held accountable for sustaining a diverse workforce.

## FEMA Inclusive Diversity Council

The Inclusive Diversity Council (IDC) is a FEMA advisory group, under the direction of the Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer (OCCHCO) and the Office of Equal Rights (OER), brought together to assist with addressing matters of diversity, inclusion and employee engagement. Each iteration of the IDC will consist of 20 FEMA employees from across the agency, bringing together a diversity of experience, perspectives and ideas.

## Lesson Summary

This completes this lesson. In this lesson you learned:

- FEMA's Vision of Diversity.
- FEMA's commitment to diversity as stated in FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a Nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. FEMA's workforce is the means to successful accomplishment of that mission - which makes diversity a critical business imperative.

FEMA's vision for diversity and inclusion is:

**“An inclusive environment in which the Agency leverages diversity to achieve mission goals and business objectives, and to maximize the potential of all individuals and the organization.” (FEMA Diversity and Inclusion Plan FY 2015-2019, p. 1)**

The three principal goals of FEMA's Diversity and Inclusion Plan are to:

- Build a work environment that promotes diversity and inclusion.
- Build, develop, retain and engage a diverse workforce.
- Build a sustained leadership commitment to a diverse FEMA through education, accountability, and total workforce engagement.

Valuing diversity helps us foster community-based resiliency. Before interacting with community members, it is important to learn about their values, norms, traditions, and community politics. It is important that we take steps to understand and respect each other rather than simply tolerate our differences. FEMA has many resources available to bridge cultural or other divides that can otherwise hinder disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. FEMA's executive leadership, managers, and supervisors at all levels must be committed to actions that forward FEMA's vision and mission for diversity and inclusion. A diverse workforce benefits us all by broadening our horizons and giving us opportunities to learn from each other.

## Lesson Overview

The previous lesson focused on FEMA's organizational commitment to diversity. This lesson presents personal actions you can take to optimize diversity.



Defining Diversity

Valuing Diversity

Optimizing Diversity

Upon completion of this lesson you should be able to:

- Describe how culture influences our interactions with others.
- Describe the actions you can take to optimize diversity.

## Optimizing Diversity

Optimizing diversity is not just an issue of being nice to each other. We must value and utilize the unique perspectives and talents of all employees. Optimizing diversity includes:

- Recognizing the differences that make each of us unique.
- Attracting people of all backgrounds to work together and serve as change agents to create a respectful work environment.
- Creating an environment where everyone is appreciated and has a chance to succeed.
- Recognizing how attitudes toward differences influence our interactions with others.

## Awareness and Acceptance of Difference

Optimizing diversity begins with your acceptance of and respect for differences. Acceptance of differences means you believe that:

- FEMA is a stronger organization because the Agency is comprised of individuals from different backgrounds.
- Different insights, choices, beliefs, and points of view all make for a stronger and more prepared community.

Resistance to change is an indicator of a lack of tolerance of differences. A prevailing “we’ve always done it this way” mentality silences new ideas, in progress, and limits diversity.

## Attitudes Toward Differences

Recognizing how you feel about some differences and increasing awareness of your own attitudes can be a challenge. Everyone has preconceived notions. Predispositions are often related to our own cultural background, life experiences, or other dimensions such as age, race, religion, occupation, and so on.

Knowing where you stand in terms of your own beliefs is a crucial part of being able to form relationships with coworkers, FEMA customers, and others who are different from you.

## Cultural Awareness and Diversity

Our cultural values inform every part of our day—how we dress, how we act, and how we react. Many people are unaware of just how strongly their culture influences:

- Beliefs and reactions to situations.
- Norms, codes of behavior, and ethical standards for decision-making.
- Verbal and nonverbal communication styles and expectations.
- Notions of time.

To develop cross-cultural skills you need to go beyond what you see on the surface. You need to understand **why** different people have these cultural differences.

## Your Own Cultural Values

Becoming aware of your own cultural values is an important aspect of being able to optimize diversity. Your cultural values stem from the group(s) with which you most identify. This association is often passed from generation to generation, but not all cultural values are formed in childhood.

**Ask yourself: Who do you interact with today? Who do you talk to, socialize with, and work alongside? Who are your customers?**

The more diverse your associations, the more developed your cultural values and understandings will be.

## Overcoming Boundaries

The ability to interact effectively with a diverse set of individuals and groups requires that you:

- **Are aware of your own viewpoint and influences.** Understand that the similarities and differences among people are both important.
- **Understand your preconceived notions and attitudes toward differences.** Accept that there are multiple ways to reach the same goal and to lift barriers, and builds awareness, appreciation, and understanding of differences among people.
- **Communicate.** Be motivated and have the skills to communicate and interact with a diverse set of individuals and groups.

## Avoid Miscommunication

Cultural differences can lead to misperceptions and communication breakdowns. Miscommunication due to cultural differences may:

- Increase tension and frustration in the workplace as well as perpetuate stereotypes.
- Reduce productivity and cause job satisfaction to decline.
- Prevent disaster survivors from having access to services.
- Lead individuals to believe that they have received discriminatory treatment.
- Impact our ability to deliver effective customer service.

If a cultural communication misstep does occur, a sincere apology and willingness to learn usually suffice. Remember, you can also consult with the Office of Equal Rights, FEMA's Inclusive Diversity Council and/or FEMA Employee Resource Groups (FERGs).

## Approach others with interest and openness

Approach generational and cultural differences with interest, not fear or negativity. Take interest in the interests of others. You can learn fascinating things about other people if you choose to do so.

## Speak clearly and concisely

Focus on slowing down your speech. Try not to rush your communication. Remember it takes more time to correct miscommunication and misunderstanding. Speaking clearly and concisely using normal conversational cadence is respectful of cultural differences. Where language differences exist, presenting in different relevant languages promotes diversity.

## Ask for clarification

Focus on slowing down your speech. Try not to rush your communication. Remember it takes more time to correct miscommunication and misunderstanding. Speaking clearly and concisely using normal conversational cadence is respectful of cultural differences. Where language differences exist, presenting in different relevant languages promotes diversity.

## Check your understanding frequently

Check both that you've understood what's been said and that others have fully understood you. Use active listening to check your own understanding ("So what you are saying is . . .") and use open-ended questions to check other people's understanding.

## Avoid generational or cultural idioms

Language is contextual and has cultural implications. Examples of idioms include sports or other expressions, such as: "ace in a hole" and "a long row hoe." As a good general rule, if the phrase requires knowledge of other information—be it a game, generational event, or metaphor—recognize that this reference may make your communication more difficult to be understood, or even worse, offensive.

## Be careful of jargon

Watch the use of TLAs (Three-Letter Abbreviations) and other language or jargon that may not be understood by others. Many abbreviations may mean something different to others.

## Be patient

Cross-cultural communication may take more time.

## Nonverbal Communication

When verbal and nonverbal channels of communication are out of sync, most people tend to rely on the nonverbal message, and disregard the verbal c  
Many believe nonverbal messages reflect our inner thoughts and intentions more honestly than verbal communication.

We all respond to these nonverbal signals and cues whether we are consciously aware of this process or not. In a face-to-face interaction, our body lang  
(including facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact) and tone of voice alone account for more than 90% of message we send to others. Our words a  
for only 7% of the message.

Our beliefs and cultural backgrounds add meaning to these nonverbal cues, which can differ greatly between cultures. Perceptual differences, such as v  
hearing impairments can also add variance to how these nonverbal cues are communicated and interpreted. Misunderstandings can quickly occur wher  
misinterpret unspoken messages.

## Common Gestures and Cultural Interpretations

Below are just a few of examples of how common gestures and body language can have different meanings.

### **Thumbs-Up**

In Western cultures the thumbs-up is a positive, indicating a job well done (probably stemming from World War II pilots using the signal to communic  
they were “good to go” with ground crews).

In most of the Middle East, Latin America, and West Africa, as well as Greece, Russia, Sardinia, and the south of Italy, the thumbs-up is considered an  
obscene gesture.

### **Hands on the Hips**

In the United States, hands at the hip may denote openness and acceptance to the talker while in other cultures the gesture is seen as arrogance, while t  
thumbs at the belt may transmit naughty implications in some countries.

### **Soles of Shoes**

In many Middle Eastern and Asian cultures, the soles of shoes, sandals, or feet are considered unclean. When crossing legs, feet, or shoes should not b  
pointed toward anyone.

### **Eye Contact**

In the United States, making eye contact with another person is thought to be confident and bold (and boldness is considered a good trait!). However, i  
Asian, African, and Latin American cultures, extended eye contact may be seen as an affront or a challenge of authority.

## Creating Norms for Effective Teams

Respecting diversity recognizes that there may be some differences in how cultures, generations or geographical populations view similar concepts.  
Developing norms helps to ensure that the culturally diverse team is on the same page and have similar operational expectations. Norms provide conte  
how team members will interact, communicate, and respect the work environment. Sample norms include:

Sending an acknowledgement in response to important email messages.

When you've made a commitment you can't keep, let the other coworkers know as soon as possible.

Treat all team member issues and concerns as valid even if you don't agree with them.

Be specific. Spell out your expectations and deadlines. Instead of saying: “Please get back to me shortly,” say: “Please email the completed report by 5  
Eastern Standard time on Wednesday, February 21.”

## How to Create Norms

At the beginning of a meeting or project, all team members should be invited to offer a norm, or guideline, by writing them down or verbalizing them. assigned team member posts all of these norms on chart paper or whiteboard until all suggestions have been offered. The full team discusses the norms. The norms listed may be altered and questioned, but a complete list of norms should be agreed upon by all team members before moving forward with project.

Contradictions should be resolved before moving forward. For example, someone might ask how he or she can be expected to attend a Friday meeting he or she works from home on Fridays. The resulting discussion helps team members brainstorm solutions to issues that arise that, if not addressed, can lead to frustration and resentment. The discussion may also address personal preferences with regard to team support. For example, one team member asks others to offer help if he is under pressure whereas another team member requests to be left alone to concentrate on the work.

The discussion will help others appreciate that asking others what they prefer in any given situation is better than assuming all team members want the kind of treatment.

Periodically reviewing the norms offers team members the opportunity to raise concerns, address grievances, and make adjustments as needed. Remember, norms are not static and can be revised at any time to reflect what is important to the team.

## Disability Awareness

Understanding and including people with disabilities is more than just a moral obligation, it is also a legal obligation. In order to meet these obligations, the following must:

- Define disability as a legal term
- Outline the broader definition of the term disability
- Explain our role in providing reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities
- Understand FEMA's mission for disability integration in order to implement it
- Describe "hidden" disabilities
- Practice good disability etiquette and know what language to avoid

## "Disability" As a Legal Term

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended in 2008, a "person with a disability" is a legal term that describes a protected class within the Department of Justice's civil rights legislation, in order that they may be entitled to certain benefits and accommodations.

The ADA defines a "disability" as, "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the individual's major life activities."

The ADA defines an "individual with a disability" as an individual who fits one or more of the following conditions:

- An individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- An individual who has a history/record of such an impairment. This part of the definition could apply to a person who had such an impairment, but does not have the impairment at the present time.
- An individual who is regarded as having such an impairment. This part of the definition addresses a case when a covered entity takes an action prohibited by the ADA because of an actual or perceived impairment that is not both transitory and minor.

## A Broader Definition of "Disability"

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA) made a number of significant changes to the original definition of "disability" outlined in the American Disabilities Act of 1990.

One significant change was to broaden the definition of "major life activities." In the new definition:

Major life activities now include the operation of major bodily functions, including functions of the immune system, special sense organs and skin, normal cell growth, digestive, genitourinary, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain,

respiratory, circulatory, cardiovascular, endocrine, hemic, lymphatic, musculoskeletal, and reproductive functions.

As a result of the ADA's recognition of "the operation of major bodily functions" as major life activities, individuals with certain types of impairments can be identified as having a disability. In effect, this change means the definition of a "person with a disability" is more inclusive in the ADA of 2008 than it was in the original ADA of 1990. Under this new definition, some chronic diseases can be considered disabilities.

## Individuals with Dexterity and Mobility Limitations

Dexterity disabilities may include quadriplegia, paraplegia, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), cerebral palsy (CP), stroke, upper body amputation, or significant repetitive stress injuries.

## Individuals Who are Blind or Have Low Vision

Individuals who are blind, have low vision or have visual impairments, are considered to have different limitations and should be treated accordingly.

## Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Deaf refers to individuals who are unable to hear well enough to understand speech, preventing the use of speech as a means for processing information. Hearing limitations can range widely from the ability to hear only environmental sounds to those who can understand speech, usually with the help of hearing aid or cochlear implants.

## Individuals with Cognitive Limitations

Individuals with cognitive limitations can include: individuals who experience memory loss, perception problems or other issues which can be caused by dyslexia, ADHD, stroke, PTSD, TBI or other conditions.

## Individuals with Communication Limitations

Communication limitations can be caused by Cerebral Palsy, stroke, traumatic brain injury, ALS, MS or other conditions.

## Accommodating an Aging Workforce

As employees and federal workers stay on the job longer, more employees may encounter age-related disabilities.

# Your Role: Providing Reasonable Accommodation for People with Disabilities

## The Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The legislative changes from the ADA-AA apply broadly to all Federal agencies as part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under the Rehabilitation Act, Federal agencies have a legal obligation and responsibility to provide equal opportunity for people with disabilities in the course of conducting all of their programs, services, and activities.

## "Hidden" Disabilities

Many impairments meeting the legal definition of a disability are not readily visible and may not even be present at all times for the individual. These "hidden disabilities" may include, but are not limited to:

- Chronic diseases, such as:
  - Cancer
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Multiple Chemical Sensitivity/Environmental Illness (MCS/EI)
- Psychiatric disorders, such as:
  - Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Stroke

## Disability Etiquette

A person with a disability is an individual FIRST - treat them with the same respect and dignity that you would show any other individual. When speaking with someone who has a disability, always put the person first. For example, refer to a person with multiple sclerosis as a "person with MS," not an "MS patient."

The following are some tips for interacting with people.

- ALWAYS...Ask before you act!
- Don't make assumptions.
- Think before you speak.
- No need to shout or speak loudly.
- Be sensitive about physical contact.
- Respond graciously to requests.
- If a person has an interpreter or companion, speak to the person, not to their companion or interpreter.
- Never touch or play with a service animal when one is being used.

## Language to Avoid

When speaking of, or directly to, a person with a disability, avoid the following language.

- Avoid the term "confinement." As in, "confined to ..."

- Avoid negative, disempowering words, such as, “victim” or “sufferer.”
- Avoid using idiomatic expressions, such as:
  - “Let’s take a walk.”
  - “See you later.”
- Avoid outdated terms like “handicapped,” “crippled,” and “retarded.”
- Avoid euphemisms. Examples to avoid include:
  - “Differently-abled”
  - “Physically Challenged”

## FEMA’s Mission for Disability Integration

FEMA has made equal access to its programs and services a priority, as part of its broader mission to strengthen the whole community’s capacity to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate the impact of disasters. FEMA’s Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC), established in 2010, is the mission of:

Lead[ing] FEMA’s commitment to achieving whole community emergency management, inclusive of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, by providing guidance, tools, methods and strategies to establish equal physical, program and effective communication access.

FEMA’s ODIC aims to achieve inclusion, integration, dignity, independence, accessibility and self-determination for individuals with disabilities before, during and after a disaster.

FEMA’s National Response Framework defines “people with disabilities and access and functional needs” according to a need or limitation. This is a function-based definition that serves individuals who may or may not meet the definition of disability as defined by law. This function-based definition supports FEMA’s mission by keeping the focus on what the individual needs in terms of access or accommodation, rather than on identifying the particular disability.

## What is Section 508?

According to the US Census, twenty percent (20%) of the population has one or more disabilities affecting one or more major life functions. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that Federal employees and members of the public with disabilities have access to information and products which is comparable to that of people without disabilities.

Electronic and information technology (EIT) products that are procured, developed, maintained, or used by a Federal agency, including products that store, process, transmit, convert, duplicate, or receive electronic information must meet Section 508 accessibility guidelines. Some of the most common EIT products include:

- public-facing and internal websites
- office documents (e.g., Word, PDF)
- videos
- computers
- software
- copiers
- fax machines
- other telecommunications products

## Yes, You Do Have a Role

Section 508 affects every employee within FEMA, not just those who work with technology or procurement. As a part of our culture of inclusion, each employee must take proactive steps to ensure that our workplace and the electronic information we distribute are equally accessible to everyone. You have an active role when you serve as a:

- Requirements Official
- Procurement Official
- EIT Vendor or Partner
- EIT Professional Disaster Response Employee
- Meeting Host (e.g., Conference call, Online Presentation)
- Content Author (e.g., Office documents and Websites)
- Distributor or Publisher of information (e.g., Websites and Broadcast E-mail)

## Online Resources and Training for Section 508 Compliance

The FEMA Section 508 Resource Center serves as a comprehensive source for accessibility standards, guidance, governance, testing, training and job support of employee and Agency accessibility efforts. The DHS Office on Accessible Systems & Technology (OAST) offers several hands-on courses Section 508 compliance which are available at no cost to employees and contractors and includes:

- Section 508 Awareness training for all FEMA employees.
- Specialized training for COR's, Program and Project Managers.
- Instructions for creating accessible office documents, PDFs, and fillable forms.
- Certification in Software and Web-based Applications compliance testing.

The following are additional sources of information on Section 508:

- FEMA Section 508 Coordinator Email: [FEMA-Accessibility@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Accessibility@fema.dhs.gov)
- Section 508 Accessibility Resource Center <http://intranet.fema.net/help/section508>  
(Only access through FEMA's intranet.)
- DHS Office of Accessible Systems & Technology Helpdesk
  - Phone: 202-447-0440
  - TTY: 202-447-5857
  - Email: [accessibility@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:accessibility@hq.dhs.gov)
- Additional Resources:
  - <http://www.Section508.gov>
  - <http://www.Access-Board.gov>

## Overcoming Barriers: LGBTQIA+ Awareness

As stated earlier, the ability to interact effectively with a diverse set of individuals and groups requires that you:

- Are aware of your own viewpoint and influences.
- Understand that the similarities and differences among people are both important. Understand your preconceived notions and attitudes toward differences. Accept that there are multiple ways to reach the same goal and to live life.
- Learn about differences. Participate in awareness events. Be curious. Curiosity expands your current assumptions, breaks down cultural barriers, builds awareness, appreciation, and understanding of differences among people.
- Communicate. Be motivated and have the skills to communicate and interact with a diverse set of individuals and groups.

All the above considerations serve to increase your self-awareness and your understanding of differences between yourself and others.

## What Does LGBTQIA+ Stand For?

LGBTQIA+ stands for:  
Lesbian

A term given to females who are primarily attracted sexually and emotionally to some other females.

#### Gay

A term given to people of the same gender who are attracted sexually and emotionally to each other. More commonly used to describe male-to-male than female-to-female attraction.

#### Bisexual

A term given to people who are attracted sexually and emotionally to some males and females.

#### Transgender

A general, umbrella term given to people whose gender expression is at least sometimes contrary to what the gender they were assigned at birth. It applies to a variety of individuals.

#### Queer or Questioning

Queer is an inclusive umbrella term for the variety of identities within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Questioning refers to individuals who are exploring and discovering their sexual orientation and as a result are “questioning their gender identity.”

#### Intersex

An individual who is intersex is a person who is born with atypical reproductive, hormonal, or chromosomal anatomy, who does not seem to fit the typical biological definitions of female or male. An intersex individual may identify as part of the trans community, but most do not.

#### Asexual or Ally

An individual who identifies as asexual does not generally feel sexual desire or attraction. An ally is a person who does not identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, but supports the rights and safety of those who do.

## Terms Related to Gender Identity & Gender Expression

Understanding some of the common terms related to gender identity can help to better understand the LGBTQIA+ community. The following are some additional terms and their definitions:

- **Gender Expression. (How a person outwardly presents).** This refers to the external display of an individual’s gender, often indicated through dress/adornment and actions. Typically, gender expression exists on a femininity to masculinity continuum. A person’s gender expression may or may not correlate to their gender identity, gender assigned at birth, and/or sexual orientation.
- **Gender Identity. (How a person feels inside).** This term is used to describe a person’s internal psychological sense of their gender. A person’s gender identity may or may not correlate to their gender expression, gender assigned at birth, and/or sexual orientation.
- **Sexual Orientation.** Sexual orientation refers to an individual’s gender sexual preferences (what gender the individual is attracted to).
- **Transgender.** Transgender is an umbrella term which refers to individuals whose gender expression and/or identity at least sometimes does not match their gender assigned at birth. It includes transgender men and transgender women, whether or not they are in transition or intend to transition.
- **Non-Binary.** The term non-binary refers to individuals whose gender falls outside of commonly recognized binary of male and female. This may include those who are genderqueer (a person whose gender is not binary), genderfluid (a person whose gender identity varies), bigender (a person who has two genders), or agender (a person who does not identify as having a specific gender).
- **Cisgender.** The term cisgender refers to an individual whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth correlate.

## Offensive vs. Non-Offensive Language Related to LGBTQIA

The following are some examples of derogatory terms related to transgendered individuals:

- Tranny, She-Male, He-She, It, Gender-bender, Shim
- Refusing to use the proper pronoun when addressing a transgender individual

When describing an individual or group who is transgendered, the following terms are appropriate and non-offensive:

- Transgender woman
- Transgender man
- Transgender people

The term “gay” is an accepted and widely-used and non-offensive term, referring to a male homosexual. The term “lesbian” is a similarly widely-used non-offensive term, referring to a female homosexual.

The following are some examples of derogatory terms and figures of speech related to homosexual individuals, which should be avoided:

- Queer, Fag, Faggot, Fruit, Fruitcake
- Dyke, Lesbo
- “That’s so gay.”

## Workplace Concerns for the LGBTQIA+ Community

The LGBTQIA+ community share many concerns related to inclusion and respect in the workplace. The following are some terms that describe a few areas of concern:

- **Heterosexism.** (inclusion or exclusion)
- **Fear.** (homophobia and transphobia)
- **Harassment & Hostile Work Environment.** (jokes, comments, threats)
- **Lavender Ceiling.** (advancement/promotion)
- **Unconscious Bias.** (What we don’t know can get us in trouble.)
- **Use of restrooms.** (OPM guidance states agencies should allow access to restrooms based on employee's gender identity.)

## Landmark Supreme Court Decision on Same-Sex Marriage

On June 26, 2015, in a landmark United States Supreme Court case, the Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples. This ruling effectively legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, its possessions and territories. The ruling requires all states to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and to recognize same-sex marriages validly performed in other jurisdictions.

There are many federal benefits for married spouses and families, under federal law, such as health insurance and social security benefits. As of June 26, 2015, these federal benefits are afforded equally to both same-sex married couples and opposite-sex married couples and their families.

## Landmark Supreme Court Decision on Protections in the Workplace for the LGBTQIA+ Community

On June 15, 2020, in the matter of *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the United States Supreme Court affirmed non-discrimination employment protections for the LGBTQIA+ community, holding that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects employees against discrimination based upon their sexual orientation or gender identity. The ruling is considered one of the most important legal decisions regarding LGBTQIA+ rights.

## Lesson Summary

This completes this lesson. In this lesson you learned:

- How culture influences our interactions with others.
- The actions you can take to optimize diversity.

Respecting diversity recognizes that there may be some differences in how cultures, generations or geographical populations view similar concepts. Developing norms helps to ensure that a culturally diverse team is on the same page and have similar operational expectations. Norms provide context on how team members will interact, communicate, and respect the work environment.

FEMA has made equal access to its programs and services a priority, as part of its broader mission to strengthen the whole community’s capacity to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate the impact of disasters.

Section 508 accessibility is an important component of this mission. As a part of our culture of inclusion, each employee must take proactive steps to ensure that our workplace and the electronic information we distribute are equally accessible to everyone.

Understanding and including people with disabilities is both a moral obligation and a legal obligation. Every employee plays a part in meeting these obligations by treating people with disabilities with the same respect and dignity that you would show any other individual, and by taking proactive steps to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities.

Understanding and including members of the LGBTQIA+ community is also both a moral and a legal obligation. The LGBTQIA+ community share many concerns related to inclusion and respect in the workplace. Understanding some of the common terms related to gender identity and expression and some of the common workplace concerns shared by the LGBTQIA+ community can help us to proactively foster inclusion and respect in the workplace. The legalization of same-sex marriage means that same-sex married couples will have equal access to the same legal benefits and entitlements as opposite-sex married couples. Further, the landmark ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County* affirms employment protections for the LGBTQIA+ community by including sexual orientation as a protected class under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

## Diversity Awareness Video Transcript

“I prefer to work with men. They are strong and do all the work.”

“Can the Disabled do this?”

“Why can’t they speak English?”

“How many holidays do you celebrate?”

“Are you planning to retire soon?”

“Where are you actually from?”

“These kids they don’t appreciate anything”

“Women are always moody”

“HQ, Regional, NPSCs”

“What’s your employment status?”

In FEMA, managing diversity means acknowledging people's differences and recognizing these differences as valuable; it enhances good management practices by preventing discrimination and promoting inclusiveness. When managed properly, diversity in the workplace can leverage the strengths and complement the weaknesses of each employee to make the impact of the workforce greater than the sum of its parts.

Most people believe in the golden rule: treat others as you want to be treated. The implicit assumption is that how you want to be treated is how others are treated. We may share similar values, such as respect or need for recognition, but how we show those values through behavior may be different for different groups or individuals. How do we know what different groups or individuals need? Perhaps instead of using the golden rule, we could use the platinum rule: "treat others as *they* want to be treated."

Ignoring diversity issues costs time, money, and efficiency. Some of the consequences can include unhealthy tensions; loss of productivity; increased inability to attract and retain talented people resulting in lost investments in recruitment and training; complaints and legal actions.

From a study by the Government Business Council, that surveyed government employees including federal leaders from more than 30 departments and agencies, one survey respondent stated, “Inclusion and Diversity simply means relationships based upon respect for self and respect for others. We can accomplish much more if we make the effort to understand what respect means for each person in our sphere of influence and for the organization in which we work.”

Everyone is responsible for a respectful workplace.

## Every Employee’s Challenge

For FEMA employees appreciating and respecting diversity and cultural differences is crucial to mission success. We interact with diverse groups not only in the workplace, but—most importantly—as we serve the people and communities affected by disaster.

In his message to all FEMA employees, Agency Administrator challenged employees to join in ensuring that FEMA “better and consistently reflects the diverse fabric of American society.”

## Course Summary

Embracing diversity involves recognizing and respecting the cultural differences that make each of us unique. Recognizing our own attitudes, verbal communication styles, and nonverbal cues can have a positive influence on our interactions with others.

Optimizing diversity is not about creating a visually diverse workforce; it is about creating a productive workforce with opportunities for success.