INCLUSION TIPS FOR PROGRAM AND FIELD STAFF

The following tips have been compiled to give some guidance on how to make some practical changes to your programs to make it more inclusive of diverse cultures, genders, sexual orientations, faiths, ethnicities, and more. These practices will be helpful regardless of whether you know how your participants or colleagues self-identify with respect to these various facets of diversity.

Pre-Program

- **Teambuild**: Focus on the diversity within your team and identify ways you can be inclusive of each other. This is particularly important when there is a diversity of communication styles, leadership styles, and cultural norms.

- **Read participant files carefully**: Try to remember at least one important aspect of every participant and impress them by knowing who they are when you meet them. If applicable, call the participants' mentors to find out more about the participant and their goals, strengths, and challenges.

- **Allyship**: Don’t believe that because you are from a dominant community—“a White dude”—that you are not in a position to be a good ally (in fact you make the best ally many times).

- **Program planning**:
  - Add appropriate D&I curriculum – it should fit the needs of your participant group, be something you feel moderately comfortable facilitating, and an activity/discussion that you have adequate time to debrief.
  - Take on roles that defy stereotypes: To encourage participants to rethink gender norms, be intentional about the class list. For example, a male-identified instructor could talk about backcountry hygiene and how to bake cinnamon rolls, and a female-identified instructor could teach a component of technical rock climbing and help fix tent zippers.

- **Program progression**: Be versatile and flexible with the program progression and structure—some participants tend to have far less outdoor experience and are far more outside their comfort zone; to ensure all participants’ learning needs are met, stay flexible in program structure.

Your First Participant Interaction

- **Don’t single people out**: Unless a person asks to have a one-on-one conversation with you about their unique needs, do not single people. All of the below practices should be done structurally with the entire course.

- **Language**: Role model inclusive language from the very first interaction. Here are some common language
  - Start your program orientation with the simple statement “We welcome everyone regardless of race, creed, color, ability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation.”
Create an environment where participants are welcomed to give you and others feedback on language, tone, and body language.

Use language of empowerment, empathy, and encouragement not “tough love.”

Refer to romantic partners as “partner” instead of “boyfriend,” “girlfriend,” “husband,” or “wife.”

Use the language "As a self-identified man/woman, I . . ." just once during the first day or two of a course—this can go a long way to express alliance.

Instead of referring to “men” and “women” or “girls” and “boys,” stay “whom I perceive to be male/female” or “whom I perceive to be a girl/boy” if you actually don’t know how people identify.

Use the language “any gender” or "all genders", instead of "either gender" or “male and female” or “girls and boys.”

Ask about participants’ about their guardians and family, since some participants do not have parents around or have traditional family structures.

Use “storm-proof” rather than “bomb-proof.” This can be a trigger for some, particularly veterans.

A person is not “diverse.” When referring to participants who are different from the norm, refer to them specifically such as “female participants,” “participants of color,” “participants who identify as LGBTQ,” etc.

If you often refer to a group of people as “you guys” regardless of gender, keep in mind that this can negatively impact someone. Think about gender-neutral group references such as “y’all,” “folks,” “people,” or something else. If that doesn’t feel genuine and “you guys” is a habit, just add a disclaimer when you talk to participants that this is part of your culture and you don’t mean to imply that everyone identifies as a guy.

When you meet with instructors, don’t call it a “powwow”—this has a unique definition within the indigenous American culture.

Visible Flags of Allyship: If it feels authentic to you, raise a “flag of allyship” by sporting a rainbow or similar symbol of allyship sticker on your water bottle, gear, or apparel.

Meet participant’s where they are at: All participants have a different experience and comfort levels in the outdoors and with specific skills. Meet participants where they are at and be sure to validate their experience, even if it is something you’ve done hundreds of times (e.g. making it to the top of a climb).

Gear

Be intentional during the issue process as this is where many participants regardless of where they come from feel intimidated and afraid. Take care to make sure participants have adequate gear and they know they have adequate gear.

Don’t assume that the participant wears certain clothing because they appear to be either male or female. For example, don’t steer the young participant who presents as female to the pink women’s puffy jackets.

Recommend gear that is good enough for the course, and not top-of-the-line or high-end gear. Remember that you have fine-tuned your systems for multiple courses and that your
participant’s gear just needs to work for this course.

**The First 48 Hours**

- **Role model positive interactions with all staff:** Be courteous and acknowledge all in-town staff, including logistics, assistants, facilities and maintenance staff, kitchen staff, and more. Introduce them to the participants as invaluable to your programs.

- **Hygiene talk:** Consider talking to all participants about backcountry hygiene, including menstruation-related hygiene, without making assumptions as to who is male/female. During the hygiene talk, be sure to refer to “people who menstruate,” as not all females menstruate and some trans men do menstruate.

- **Privacy in the field:** In some field situations such as grizzly bear country, sailing courses, river courses and courses that travel on glacier and tundra, attempt to create a toilet system that respects everyone’s privacy. For example, in grizzly country you could recommend traveling as a group and then dispersing within earshot and quick access but out of sight.

- **Tent groups:** If there is a single gender tent policy in your program, frame it as a tactic for same-gender bonding, rather than policing sexual activity, as some of your participants may not be heterosexual. If you have any genderqueer or trans participants, ask what tent arrangement they would most comfortable with.

- **Creating your Learning Environment:** Rethink the social norms of the course when discussing the learning environment, including language, behavior, jokes, nicknames, etc. Oftentimes, something we consider “out of the norm” is well within the norm for participants from certain communities. For example, loud and rambunctious behavior may be a sign of group bonding, and not fighting. Statements we consider “mean” or “rude” may be a cultural communications style that shows familiarity and love. Nicknames based on race, body shape, etcetera may be done in affection and not to make people feel excluded.

**Check-Ins/Coaching**

- Conduct frequent informal check-ins with participants (like on the trail). Try to have a meaningful conversation with every participant on course within the first 24 hours.

- Rather than using check-ins as a way to provide feedback and go over the participants’ goals, use the early check-ins to build rapport.

- “Challenging” participants? Flip your mind set to, “there are no challenging participants, only challenging situations.” This mindset encourages staff to think about how the social environment may contribute to the issue at hand.

**Classes**

- **Leave No Trace:** Think about LNT differently
  - When it comes to the noise levels, participants from certain communities relate to the outdoors through community and fun, including singing, talking loud, being rambunctious.
  - With certain communities, participants may want to leave offerings to honor their

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info@avarnagroup.com  www.theavarnagroup.com
ancestors or the spirits.

☐ **Cultural curriculum:** Even if there is no cultural component to your course, integrate human history curriculum the same way you would natural history.

**Informal Activities**

☐ **Costume parties:** Though cross-dressing can be liberating for some participants who either feel trapped by societal constraints on what is appropriate apparel for “men” versus “women” or some participants who are experimenting with sexuality and gender, they can also go over the line. Costume parties can result in reinforcement of stereotypes when participants make caricatures of the opposite gender. Just be vigilant that a safe environment is maintained throughout your party.

☐ **Sharing circles:** Share personal stories from the beginning so participants can look beyond socioeconomics—“sharing circles” is an alternative to “Hot Seat” where you can pose one important question to all the participants and have them share their responses (“Who is a role model in your life and why?” “What do you want to tell the world you have accomplished when you are on your death bed?” “What does ‘family’ mean to you?”)

☐ **Empowering participants:** Do lots of community building early on through games, nightly readings, singing while you hike, and stories, etc. and have the participants lead these activities.

**Instructor Bias**
Whenever you enter a “classroom” (traditional or outdoor), ask yourself the following questions:

☐ **Activities & Resources for Instruction**
  - Which participants in terms of gender, culture, immigration status, socioeconomic status can relate to these activities and this material?
  - How can I relate these activities to the experiences, prior knowledge and goals of all the participants?
  - What examples/illustrations can I use to connect the key concepts to participants’ lives?

☐ **Nature of Learning Tasks**
  - What do I want participants to learn from these tasks?
  - Have I included a range of tasks to engage the realities of experiences in the room?
  - Is the purpose of the task clear and challenging to all participants?
  - If participants are not on task, what are they doing instead?
  - Is there a pattern in terms of gender, culture, language background, race, seating arrangements, status in the classroom among those who are on-task and those who are not?

☐ **Participant Talk**
  - Which participants are talking while I am teaching?
Is there a pattern among those who are talking and among those who appear to be listening? (such as, proximity to me, their relationship to the topic I am teaching about, etc.)

What are these participants talking about?

Do I incorporate participant talk into my teaching?

What are some of the times when these same participants have been engaged?

What are the agreements we have in place for listening to and learning from everyone in the room who is part of our learning community?

How can I use these questions to understand what is taking place and to redirect the participants' attention to the subject at hand?

**Participant Participation**

- Which individuals are not participating?
- Which groups of people are not participating? (e.g. a particular gender, English language learners, white participants, participants of color)
- What is the nature of the participation I am expecting?
- What have I put in place to encourage whole class discussion or to create opportunities for many voices to be heard during the class?
- Is there opportunity for participants who speak English as a second language to rehearse their answer in pairs for example?
- How can I cultivate a climate in which "mistakes" or partially correct answers are acceptable and perceived as opportunities for learning?
- Am I giving appropriate wait time for different participants depending on their need and strength?
- How much am I talking in comparison to the participants’ talking?
- What opportunities and support have I created for participants to lead the discussion and ask some of the questions?

**Teacher Attention**

- Where do I seem to direct my questions?
- Do I seem to get the answers from the same participants most of the time?
- What is my proximity to those participants who seem to be engaged and those who do not seem to be engaged?
- Do I move around the room and make contact with different group of participants in terms of their seating arrangements, their familiarity with the language of instruction, racial backgrounds?
- Do I address my questions or attention to the participants who are not raising their hands?

**Teacher Tone**

- What words and tone of voice do I use to express my expectations of the class?
- Do I begin by threatening, highlighting the negative consequences that will ensue if the participants don’t comply with my expectations?
Do I stress the positive intrinsic outcomes that will be experienced through their participation?
Do I express high expectations of all participants in terms of my knowledge of them as individuals who are capable of demonstrating their best effort?
Do I redirect participants to the task at hand by finding out what has taken them away from it?
Do I redirect their attention by reminding them of an instance when they did good work and made a sincere effort?

Teacher Directions
- Which individual participants and which groups are following my directions?
- Which ones are not?
- Is there a pattern with either group?
- What strategies have I used to ensure that my directions are heard, understood and that the logic of my instructions is clear?
- Did I attract the attention of the whole class before I began giving the directions?
- Do I give directions in both spoken and written form?
- Do I give a chance for questions and clarifications after the directions have been given?
- Do I sometimes build in an opportunity for a participant to review the directions with the class so that I can see if they are understood and whether they reflect my intentions?
- Do we have agreements in the class that encourage participants to help each other in the spirit of a learning community to work on the activities at hand?
- What are the participants doing when they are not following directions?
- How can I use this information to change the situation?

General Inclusion Tips
- Role models: Point out role models from a participant’s community (especially when you hear the participant invoke popular myths as a rationalization for their struggles such as “poor people don’t camp” “black people don’t swim” etc.)
- Ask, “what specifically worries you about being different?” Sometimes the participant just wants to be heard.
- Relevance: Redefine the “how” and “where” of outdoor recreation. The “how” can be a family picnic. The “where” can be in an urban park. “Wilderness” is not the only place to recreate.
- When inclusion ends up being exclusion: Avoid assuming that any one participant can represent “her people” (e.g. looking to the one Latina girl on the course to educate you about Latina culture)
- Celebrate, don’t ignore, diversity: Don’t ignore the differences (e.g., don’t say, “let’s not focus on differences-let’s focus on the common experience we are going through’ or “let’s be color-blind”). Differences should be acknowledged, embraced, and a source of learning.
- Mess up! It’s okay! When faced with a concern that is outside of your comfort zone,
don’t worry about messing up during a conversation. A great disclaimer is, “hey, I’m not exactly sure I’ll be able to express myself clearly, but I think this conversation is important for us to have, so please bear with me.”

Trans* Concerns
- Ask for all participants’ preferred gender pronouns.
- Check in about any specific medical needs they might have regarding their transition. Remember that each person transitions differently and that the prevailing terminology is “gender confirmation surgery” not “gender reassignment” or “sex change operation.”
- Give the person adequate privacy – if you’re not sure what their privacy needs are, ask!

Race & Ethnicity Concerns
- “People of color” is the prevailing term rather than “minorities” within the US.
- Race conversations: Don’t be afraid to talk about race and ethnicity
- Don’t assume a participant of color is on a scholarship: Talk about scholarships with all participants, but don’t assume that a participant comes from economic disadvantage simply because they are of color.
- Honor specific ethnic identities: How someone looks to you may not be how they identify. Pay attention to whether someone identifies as “Latino” versus “Hispanic” or “African American” versus “Black.” They mean different things and we shouldn’t mix them up.

Faith & Spirituality Concerns
- Attire, observing the Sabbath, and other needs: If your participant has specific needs outside the “norm” of the course (e.g., wearing a hijab, observing the Sabbath by not moving on Saturdays, praying five times a day), let them know you will do our best to honor their needs but that you will get back to them about this after consulting with your program supervisor. Consider whether the request will negatively impact course schedule, learning, safety, or legality. If not, then it should be honored.

Age Concerns
- Highlight how much people of different ages can learn from each other. Role model how each age group holds valuable, yet different life experience and perspectives.
- Research shows that adults learn best through peer learning. In a group of adults, facilitate peer learning.

Veterans
- Do not assume a veteran is differently abled.
- There is no universal veteran or veteran experience – they are young, old, of many ethnicities, classes, etc
- Ask a veteran what part of the military they served or what their MOS (military occupational specialty) code was; often veterans have very strong ties to the work they did in the military.
- The majority of veterans do not have PTS(D) or TBI (traumatic brain injury), but a majority
do struggle to reintegrate. The outdoors and community in the field can play a positive role in that process.
Glossary of Terms

**Diversity** connotes the unique differences among individuals in a group based on which we may be treated differently. Race and ethnicity is not the only way in which we are diverse as a group. There are countless visible and invisible facets of diversity. Furthermore, a person cannot be “diverse” (as in “diverse candidate”).

**Inclusion** means embracing, celebrating, welcoming, and valuing the strengths of our diversity and ensuring everyone feels welcomed and valued for who they are. Inclusion is not tolerating or overcoming differences. Diversity is what we are, and inclusion is what we do.

**Cultural competence** is the ability to interact effectively across various facets of diversity, to flex with differences. Cultural competence is what we need to be inclusive.

**Race versus ethnicity:** While race and ethnicity share an ideology of common ancestry, they differ in several ways. Race was socially constructed based on a person's physical traits in order to propagate power differentials. You can only have one race. Furthermore, you have no control over your race; it's how you're perceived by others. Ethnicity is cultural and you can have multiple ethnicities. The most common example of the difference is that a person may be racially White/Caucasian but ethnically Latino or Hispanic.

**Gender:** The socially constructed roles, behaviors and attributes that society associates with sex.

**Sex:** The biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women, typically assigned to a person at birth by society, family, and/or a doctor. Some gender theorists hold that gender is socially constituted and sex does not exist.

**Gender identity** refers to how people see and identify themselves; for example, some people identify as female; some people identify as male; some people as a combination of genders; as a gender other than male or female; or as no gender. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Gender Expression** refers to how people express their gender identity. Everyone expresses their gender identity in different ways: for example, in the way they dress, the length of their hair, the way they act or speak and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up.

**Sexual Orientation** can refer to sexual activity, desire and identity (e.g. gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, etc.). Sexual orientation and gender identity are two separate things!

**Nonbinary gender** is an umbrella term covering any gender identity or expression that does not fit within the gender binary of male and female.
**Queer:** Originally a derogatory label used to refer to lesbian and gay people. More recently, this term has been reclaimed by some members of the LGBT community as an inclusive and positive way to identify all people targeted by heterosexism and homophobia.

**Gender nonconforming** refers to people who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transgender:** When gender identification does not match designated gender assignment at birth. Some trans people identify as being in the process of transitioning; some identify as spanning multiple genders; and some identify as having transitioned from one gender to another. A trans person may choose to confirm his/her identity through dress, gender pronouns, hormone therapy, surgery, some combination or none of the above. (“Transgender” replaces formerly used “Transvestite” or “Transsexual”.)

**Cisgender:** Someone whose gender identity matches his/her gender designation at birth.