

**2021**

EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY &  
INCLUSION

**STRATEGY  
ROADMAP**



## **LETTER FROM THE** PRESIDENT & CEO

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It is with much excitement to share Destinations International's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy roadmap for the travel and tourism industry.

We firmly stand by our belief that the travel and tourism industry should be open to everyone for opportunities and growth and that it is critical for destination organizations to commit to implementing an EDI strategy to drive a vision for change within their communities.

In 2017, with the support of our board of directors, Destinations International made the decision to prioritize this work, elevating EDI as a strategic goal for our organization. From that point forward, and through the support and leadership of EDI committee co-chairs—Kellie Henderson of SearchWide Global, Al Hutchinson of Visit Baltimore and John Percy of Destination Niagara USA—and the entire EDI Committee, the strategic roadmap that follows will help to advocate and recognize that our industry must be a leader in cultivating an environment where everyone is welcome, where there is equitable access for all, and where everyone's voice and perspective can be heard. Here are just a few milestones that have helped build a foundation for our work:

- July 2018: Hosted our first Diversity & Inclusion meeting during our Annual Convention in Anaheim, CA.
- August 2018: Announced a member-wide call for committee participation to form our first Diversity & Inclusion Task Force.
- December 2018: In partnership with Association Forum, hosted a dialogue with key industry leaders from the association and CVB communities to brainstorm potential strategies to cultivate a welcoming environment for meeting and event attendees.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO CONTINUED...

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- February 2019: Launched a study to collect a snapshot of racial and workforce diversity examining demographics of board leadership, executive, staff and some general policies.
- March 2019: In collaboration with the Philadelphia CVB/PHL Diversity, convened a Meetings & Conventions Leaders Roundtable designed to guide industry leaders through the process of developing a common language and vision for diversity and inclusion within the Meetings and Convention industries.

Over the course of 2019 and into 2020, our work continued by implementing educational opportunities across signature events including our Annual Convention and discipline-focused summits. Additionally, we have worked to cultivate new industry partnerships with the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality and the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners. Most recently in November 2020, we released our first EDI Study on Destination Organizations examining overall demographics and perceptions on EDI within our member destination organizations.

In 2021, Destinations International is committed to implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies and best practices and promise to work with our members and industry leaders to be the catalyst for change. There is much work to be done and we must all come together to advance these sometimes difficult, but important, conversations to drive solutions.

We look forward to working collaboratively across the travel and tourism community to implement this plan and hope you will join us.

Sincerely,



**Don Welsh**  
President and CEO  
Destinations International

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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McKinsey & Company researched the financial impact of diversity of companies across industries. Their May 2020 report, [Diversity Wins](#), reviewed 1,000+ companies in 15 countries globally. They found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 36% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians and 25% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians for gender diversity. In contrast, their report also revealed the negative impact to companies in the bottom quartile for both gender and ethnic and cultural diversity as being 29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability than were all other companies in their data set. “Companies in the top quartile for both gender and ethnic diversity are 12% more likely to outperform all other companies in the data set,” according to the 2020 Diversity Wins report by McKinsey & Company.

In addition, there have been countless published research studies from academia, corporations and other organizations that further support that diverse and inclusive teams tend to be more creative and innovative than homologous teams by bringing different experiences, perspectives and approaches to solving day-to-day business challenges. Diverse teams are also better equipped to target and serve diverse customer markets, such as women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ communities who currently represent an increasing share of consumer purchase power that is often overlooked or not leveraged by many organizations.

Also, according to the McKinsey & Company Report, the business case for diversity suggests that diversity beyond gender and racial ethnicity, as well diversity of experience, are also likely to bring some level of competitive advantage for organizations that are able to attract and retain diverse talent.

In the strategy roadmap that follows, Destinations International will highlight the opportunities and importance of why initiating Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) best practices will be critical for the recovery and growth of our industry.

# ESTABLISHING A BENCHMARK

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With any strategy, it is critical to begin with research. To develop and advance strategies to achieve our vision, we needed to gather baseline data from our members to establish a starting point on behalf of the destination marketing and management industry. In 2019, Destinations International launched its first study to benchmark the diversity of our destination member organizations by examining demographics of board and executive leadership, as well as some general policies. In August 2020, we looked to further document and collect baseline data by directly surveying individuals across the Destinations International membership to help establish a snapshot of our workforce by examining overall demographics and perceptions on EDI within their destination organizations. The report outlines baseline results, collected from 718 respondents.

Our findings identified the need and desire for destination organizations to take full advantage of the opportunity to drive growth in diverse leadership representation at the executive and board levels, the need to be deliberate in cultivating a diverse and inclusive talent pipeline and understanding the business case for diversity to drive innovative thought and financial opportunity to help our destination organizations prosper and maintain relevancy.

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy roadmap that follows, was designed based on the following opportunities suggested in this report:

- **Establish an actionable leadership pledge for the industry** to solidify the commitment to implement EDI best practices to strengthen leadership accountability and advance opportunities for diverse talent into executive, management and board roles.
- **Develop and offer opportunities for deeper learning** on self-awareness training and EDI educational programming.
- **Set industry best practices and standards** to help develop and cultivate diverse candidates for leadership roles within destination organizations by providing access to resources and career-advancing opportunities.
- **Continue to identify, benchmark and track metrics** to annually measure progress and growth within destination organizations to establish industry standards and promote accountability for EDI best practices and initiatives.
- **Develop and launch an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit** to support and provide Destinations International members with the resources and guidance to implement EDI strategies within their respective destinations.

Findings of the full report can be found [here](#).

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AT DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Destinations International recognizes and advocates the importance of cultivating a unified travel and tourism community where everyone is welcome, there is equitable access for all, and where existing power structures can be reshaped so that systemically marginalized voices and perspectives can be consistently heard and valued.

We are committed to transforming destination communities through thought leadership, best practices and tools based on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles through an anti-racist lens that empowers our members, so their destinations are true reflections of their communities.

## GOAL

Through meaningful ongoing and long-term collaboration, Destinations International will lead and engage strategic planning and programmatic development initiatives and opportunities to enable structural social change for the benefit of our members' communities.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop and implement an **ongoing public facing advocacy and communications strategy** to drive awareness on the role and value of destination organizations and the broader tourism industry targeting diverse audiences.
- **Identify, benchmark and track metrics to measure progress and growth** within destination organizations to establish industry standards and promote accountability for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion best practices and initiatives.
- Develop and implement strategies to **cultivate, foster and leverage critical partnerships** to further Destinations International's EDI strategic roadmap.
- Develop **resources and best practices** for destination organizations to implement EDI principles within their respective destination communities.
- Develop and **implement EDI principles across Destinations International's day-to-day operations** and strategies to lead by example and reflect universal EDI best practices and standards.

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION PRIORITIES

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We firmly stand by our belief that all industries should be open to everyone for opportunities and growth and that it is critical for industry CEOs and executive leaders to commit to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to drive a vision for change and be accountable for implementing that change. A diverse and inclusive workplace is central to our industry's ability to attract, develop and retain the talent it needs to remain competitive, drive innovation and maintain relevancy. We stand committed to our vision to implement Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies and best practices and promise to work with our members and industry leaders to be the catalyst for change. There is much work to be done and we must all come together to advance these dialogues to drive solutions. Our 2021 EDI Strategy Roadmap will be driven by the following priorities:



## **Self-Awareness & Personal Investment**

Industry professionals must acknowledge their role as fundamental changemakers in defining success for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and commit to doing the work first before asking the same of others. Destinations International will work to facilitate peer-to-peer engagement to have these tough, but critical, conversations to drive leadership commitment, board diversity and executive mentorship.



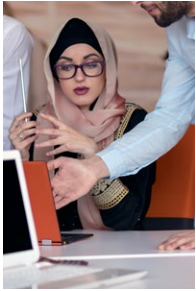
## **Education & Awareness**

We are part of a highly collaborative and engaged community that leverages the benefits of cooperative learning and shared growth. Destinations International is committed to having open, honest conversations by sharing knowledge to build EDI best practices and collecting metrics to measure action and progress.



### **Community Engagement**

Destination organizations must be deeply connected to the communities that make up their destinations and be committed to nurturing broader cultural and institutional change. Destinations International will work to support best practices and thought leadership to help drive equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives in communities to demonstrate how our industry can enrich the lives of those living in our destinations.



### **Workforce Development**

We recognize how critical inclusivity is to foster innovation and bring together a wide variety of voices when promoting tourism and sustaining our economies. Destinations International will work to encourage industry executive leadership and boards to grow an inclusive and equitable workforce that reflects the level of diversity we wish to welcome to our destinations.



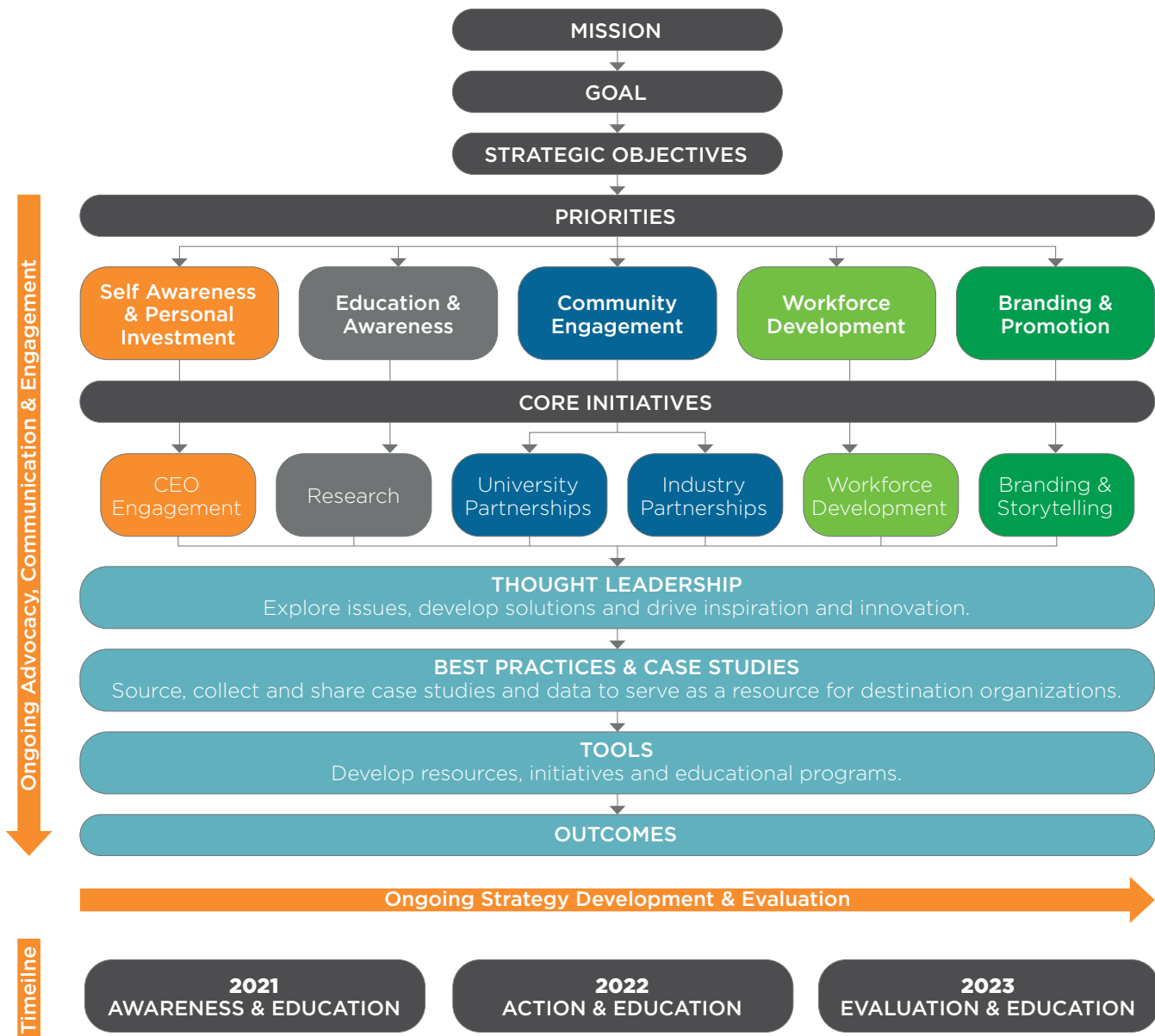
### **Branding & Promotion**

We firmly believe in the transformative power of travel and are dedicated to including those the industry has historically ignored. Destinations International will work to establish industry standards to push towards inclusive and equitable marketing practices that are essential to tourism marketing and destination brand stewardship.



# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY OVERVIEW

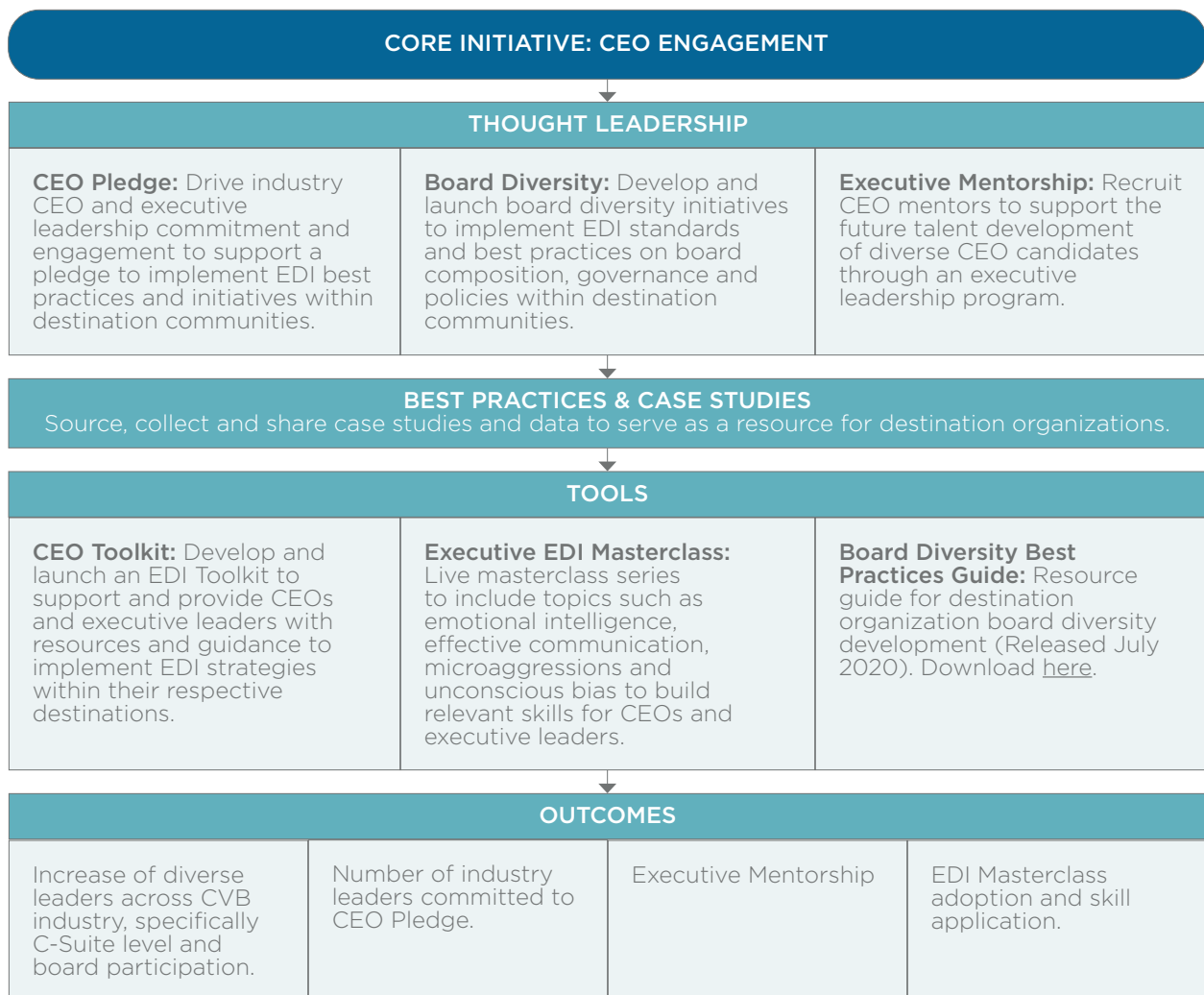
The following organization chart provides a high-level view of our approach to implement an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy roadmap at Destinations International.



**CORE PRIORITY:**

# SELF AWARENESS & PERSONAL INVESTMENT

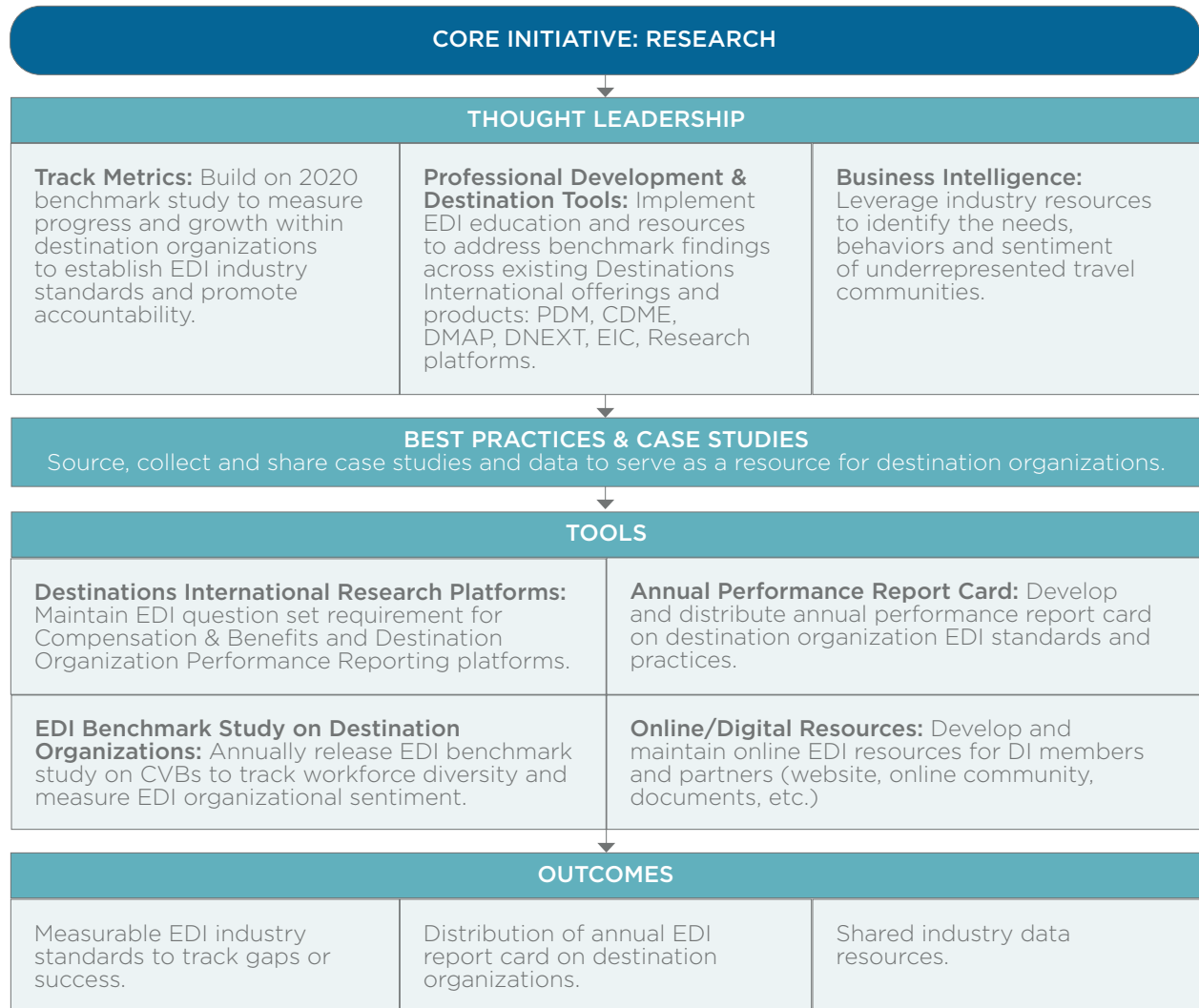
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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

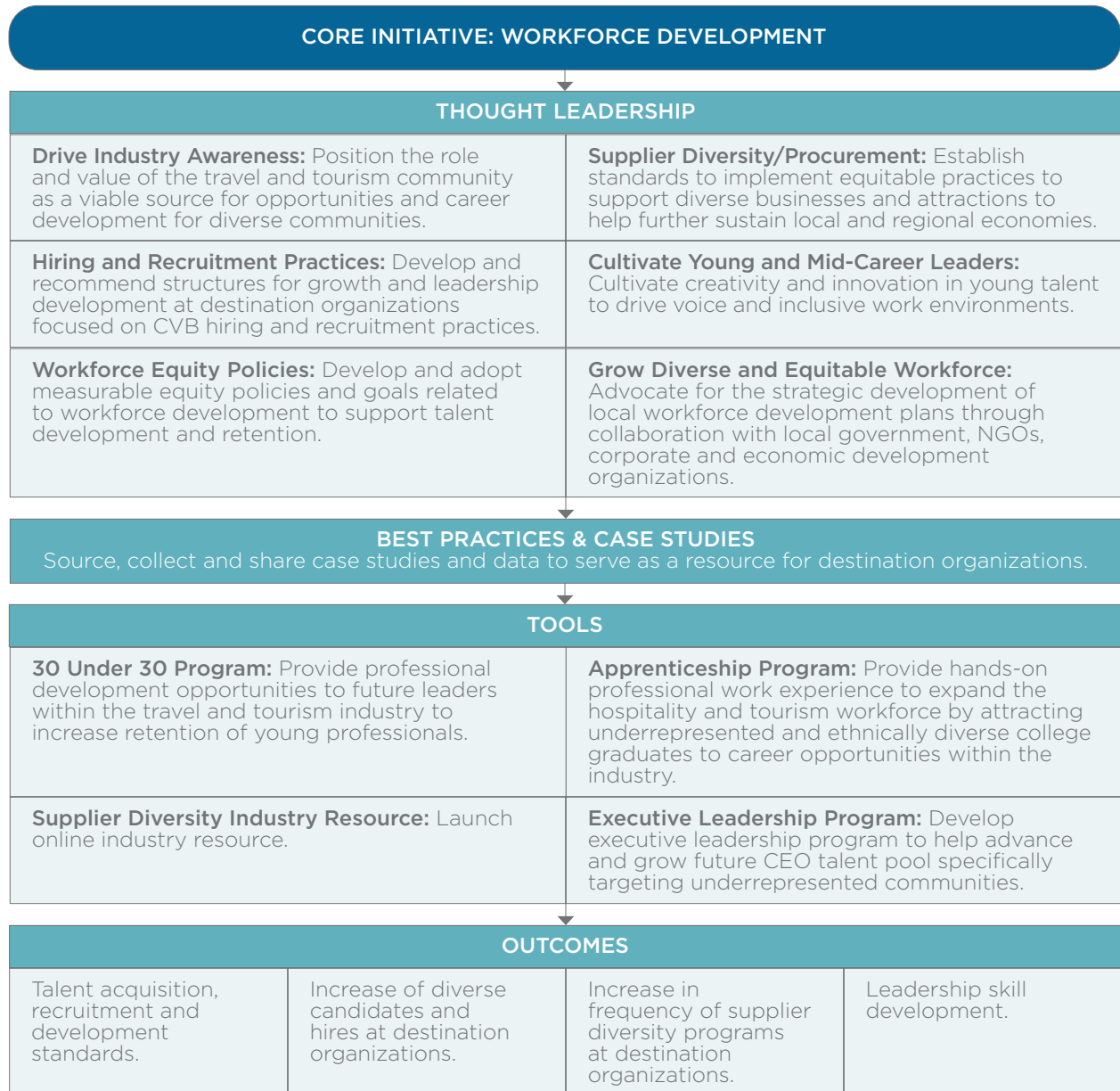
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**2020**

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Destinations International's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee supports the strategic planning and programmatic initiatives and opportunities focused on 5 sub-committees: CEO Engagement, Industry Partnerships, University Partnerships, Research and Workforce Development. We would like to thank and acknowledge the below members for their volunteer time and commitment to contribute to the development of our 2021 EDI strategy roadmap.

## **COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

- Kellie Henderson, SearchWide Global
- Al Hutchinson, Visit Baltimore
- John Percy, Destination Niagara USA

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

- Karin Aaron (CEO Engagement Co-Chair)
- Cleo Battle, Louisville Tourism (Workforce Development Co-Chair)
- Bennish Brown, Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Martesha Brown, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
- David Burgess, Miles Partnership
- J. Auvis Cole
- Chris Collinson, Connect
- Terence Concannon, Lake Havasu City Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Gregory DeShields, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau/PHL Diversity (University Partnerships Co-Chair)
- Lorne Edwards, Visit Phoenix
- Christina Erny, Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority
- Amir Eylon, Longwoods International
- Elliott Ferguson, Destination DC
- Jennifer Foster, STR, Inc.
- Cara Frank, Simpleview (Industry Partnerships Co-Chair)
- Danny Guerrero, MMGY
- Gretchen Hall, CDME, CMP, Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Monique Holmes, Tourism Toronto
- Leonard Hoops, Visit Indy
- Charles Jeffers, Visit Baltimore
- James Jessie, Travel Portland (Industry Partnerships Co-Chair)
- Miranda Ji, CMP, Victoria Conference Centre & Business Events Victoria
- Cambria Jones, Visit Southlake (City of Southlake, Texas)
- Dzidra Junior, MGM Resorts International
- Nicole King-Smith, Lee County Visitor Convention Bureau

- Connie Kinnard, Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (Research Chair)
- David Kliman, The Kliman Group, Inc
- Alex Krosney, Travel Manitoba
- Devin Lewis, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority
- Isaiah Little, Greater Newark Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Monya Mandich, Expedia Group
- Nan Marchand Beauvois, U.S. Travel Association
- Michelle Mason, Association Forum
- Angela Nelson, Experience Grand Rapids (University Partnerships Co-Chair)
- Brenda Newbern, VisitCape-Cape Girardeau Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Wendy Olson Killion, Expedia Group
- Jason Outman, Explore Branson
- Lauran Peoples, CGMP, Richmond Region Tourism
- Marci Ross, Maryland Office of Tourism
- Dasha Runyan, Richmond Region Tourism
- Andrew Said, Tourism Toronto
- Bruno Schwartz, Destination DC
- Milton Segarra, Coastal Mississippi (CEO Engagement Co-Chair)
- Neetu Singhal, Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Butch Spyridon, Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
- Jessica Strasser, Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Marie Sueing, Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
- John Tanzella, IGLTA
- Rickey Thigpen, Visit Jackson (Mississippi)
- Roberta Tisdul, Visit Indy
- Crystal Walker, Dayton Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Najauna White, Discover Durham (Workforce Development Co-Chair)
- Dan Williams, Experience Columbus
- Sabrina Wilson, Miles Partnership





**DESTINATIONS  
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