

Inclusive Language Guide

SEPTEMBER 2023



ATL
Moving Atlanta Forward

Mayor's Office of
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (MOEDI) welcomes you to use this Language Guide as a resource developed to promote understanding, foster conversations around inclusive language, and create more inclusive and equitable spaces.

This guide covers a wide range of topics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and health equity. It is continually updated to reflect evolving terminology, emerging frameworks, and best practices.

Recognizing the vital importance of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, this guide provides clear and concise definitions of key terms, and concepts intended to normalize inclusive language that avoids using words, expressions or assumptions that would stereotype, demean, or exclude people from differing identities and backgrounds.

The Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion works to identify and develop systems and behavioral change solutions that advance equitable outcomes to continue Moving Atlanta Forward. We value your input and feedback as we strive to create more equitable and spaces across the City of Atlanta. Please send questions, comments, suggestions, or other items to MOEDI@atlantaga.gov.



ANDRE DICKENS
MAYOR



CITY OF ATLANTA

55 TRINITY AVE, S.W.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0300

TEL (404) 330-6100

Greetings:

As the 61st Mayor of Atlanta, I am pleased to introduce the City of Atlanta's new Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (MOEDI) Inclusive Language Guide.

This is a powerful tool that speaks volumes about our commitment to fostering an environment of belonging, respect, and understanding. As we continue to grow and evolve, so does our language, and with it, the power to shape perceptions and attitudes. This guide represents an important step toward ensuring that our communication prioritizes care for each other when navigating the extensive diversity that enriches the city of Atlanta.

The MOEDI Inclusive Language Guide is not just a mere set of linguistic guidelines, it is a testament to our dedication to growth and transformation with equity, diversity, and inclusion at the forefront. It signifies a collective effort to advance the best practices that allow language to be a bridge rather than a barrier.

It will also serve as a beacon, guiding us toward a future where every individual feels welcomed and valued regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, and all other markers of identity.

In conclusion, I encourage the members of our community to embrace this guide as a foundation for everyday interactions. Let us demonstrate our shared allegiance to creating a city where every voice is heard, every story is respected, and every person feels they truly belong - A City of Opportunity for All.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andre Dickens", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mayor Andre Dickens

MISSION STATEMENT

The **Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (MOEDI)** works to identify and develop systems and behavioral change solutions that advance equitable outcomes to Move Atlanta Forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Mayor's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, would like to extend gratitude to the dedicated leaders, teams, and departments listed for their contributions to the Inclusive Language Guide. Your commitment to this work is a testament to the City's collective dedication to Moving Atlanta Forward.

Andre Dickens, 61st Mayor of Atlanta

Odie Donald, II, Chief of Staff

Theo Pace, Deputy Chief of Staff

Austin Wagner, Deputy Chief of Staff

Mayor's Office of Communications

Mayor's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs

Department of Human Resources

Department of Law

MOEDI Team:

- Candace Stanciel, Chief Equity Officer
- Gabrielle Slade, Deputy Chief Equity Officer
- Malik Brown, Director of LGBTQ Affairs
- Bridgette Binford, Executive Assistant
- Ashley Hodges, Project Manager
- Tahajnah Spence, Community Affairs Coordinator

CONTENTS

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	6
Race and Ethnicity	10
Gender and Sexuality	13
Health Equity	15
Ability	17
Socioeconomic Status	18
Immigration and International Affairs	19
Messaging Guide	20
References	22

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Definitions

Ableism Prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental, and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illnesses, disabilities, or less developed skills/talents.

**Accessibility/
Accessible** Refers to a site, facility, work environment, service, or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity by a person living with a disability.

Ageism Ageism is the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. Ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs.

Ally Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice and equity.

Anti-racism The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism tends to be an individualized approach, established in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts.

Antisemitism Prejudice against or hatred towards Jewish people.

Bias A prejudice in favor of or against a person or community. Biases foster negative attitudes against individuals and groups who come from marginalized communities.

Explicit/Conscious Bias Overt prejudice that can be expressed through physical and verbal harassment or through more subtle means such as exclusion.

Implicit/Unconscious Bias: Unintentional, automatic prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.

Bigotry Intolerance and prejudice that glorifies one's own group and denigrates other groups and their members.

Colonialism/colonizing The invasion, dispossession and subjugation of a people that results in long-term institutionalized inequality in which the colonizer benefits at the expense of the colonized.

Colorblindness The belief that race should be ignored as a strategy for creating a more equal and inclusive society. Colorblindness perpetuates discriminatory practices by allowing people to ignore circumstances that cause racial disparities.

Colorism The global practice of discriminating against people with a dark skin tone. Colorism typically happens among people within the same ethnic or racial group.

Critical race theory A critical analysis of race and racism that examines the intersection of race, law, and power. Critical race theory recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is a term that is typically used within legal, academic, and government institutions.

Cultural appropriation Theft of cultural elements for one's own use, commodification, or profit — including symbols, art, language, customs, etc. — often without understanding, acknowledgment, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant culture's right to take other cultural elements.

Cultural competence A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural humility An attitude of openness, and willing to learn from others while recognizing, and respecting the complexity, diversity, and fluidity of different cultures while also acknowledging our own limited knowledge of other's lived experiences. This develops a humble and respectful approach to engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Cultural relativism The principle of regarding the beliefs, values, and practices of a culture from the viewpoint of that culture itself. It emphasizes that no culture is superior or inferior to others.

Culture A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication.

Decolonialize A set of practices and beliefs that seek to undo the damaging impacts of colonialism.

Discrimination The unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Disparities A difference in level or treatment, especially one that is seen as unfair. Disparities are often able to be proven numerically through data.

Diversity Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender, but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance.

Dominant culture The cultural values, beliefs, practices, language, and traditions that are assumed to be the most common, accepted, and influential within a given society.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CONTINUED

Environmental justice	The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no population bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or from the execution of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.
Equality	The belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognizes that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex, and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination.
Equity	The state where predictability of success or failure is not correlated with identity or cultural markers such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. Equity strives to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups, increase justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.
Inclusion	The act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.
Intersectionality	A term first coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw that acknowledges the interconnectedness of race, gender, class, ability, etc. Intersectionality describes how the presence of social identities among individuals and communities alongside oppressive systems create overlapping systems of discrimination and disadvantage.
Macroaggression	Vast, systemic forms of oppression rather than interpersonal forms of bias or discrimination.
Marginalization	A social process by which individuals or groups are intentionally or unintentionally, distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged when compared to dominant social groups.
Microaggression	A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group. Microaggressions inflicted on individuals belonging to marginalized groups and could be viewed as acts of violence and harassment no matter how unintended.

Oppression	The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group.
Privilege	Unearned access to resources and social power that are only readily available to some people because of their positionality within dominate, widely accepted social groups.
Religion	A personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.
Social justice	A concept premised upon the belief that each individual and group within society is to be given equal opportunity, fairness, civil liberties, and participation in the social, educational, economic, institutional, and moral freedoms and responsibilities valued by the society.
Social oppression	Oppression that is achieved through social means and that is social in scope—it affects whole categories of people. This kind of oppression includes the systematic mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse of a group (or groups) of people by another group (or groups). It occurs whenever one group holds power over another in society through the control of social institutions, along with society's laws, customs, and norms.
Under-invested	Refers to the fact that neighborhoods, schools, institutions, and communities have been historically excluded from equitable distribution of resources. This term, or a variation, can help ensure we are not using language that places blame on communities or populations.
Underrepresented	A term used to describe populations who have historically been insufficiently and disproportionately represented within socially and economically impactful spaces
Underserved (under-resourced) communities	A portion of the community that lack access to essential resources necessary for their well-being and development. Under-resourced populations can experience barriers which include financial, educational, healthcare services, and infrastructural support that led to significant disadvantage.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Definitions

AAPI	Acronym for Asian American and Pacific Islander. It is used to describe all people of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins to those respective geographic regions.
African American	A nation-specific term that is used to describe people with sub-Saharan African ancestry who reside in the United States.
American Indians, Native Americans, Native	A member of any of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America, especially those Indigenous to what is now the Continental United States.
Anti-Black	A term that acknowledges the specific forms of racism contingent upon or cast through the denigration, disenfranchisement, and disavowal of Black people. Anti-Blackness hones in on the particular forms of interpersonal, structural, and institutional forms of racism that Black people face.
APIDA	Acronym for Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi American. APIDA is used as a more inclusive acronym than AAPI as it includes Desi, a term that represents South Asian identifying people.
Asian American	Asian American is the proper term for people who come from Asia or descend from people who lived in Asia and reside in the United States.
BIPOC	An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Pronounced “bye-pock,” this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups. The use of BIPOC demonstrates solidarity among communities of color while simultaneously acknowledging the unique differences across communities of color.
Biracial	Refers to people who have parents of two different races.
Black	A racialized term that refers to people with sub-Saharan African ancestry regardless of national origin.
Ethnicity	A social construct not rooted in biology, referring to the social characteristics people may have in common such as language, religion, regional background, traditions, and culture. Ethnicity is a broader term than race as it does not refer to one’s physical attributes.
Hispanic	An umbrella term referring to a person whose ethnic origin is in a Spanish-speaking country, as well as those living in the United States with Latin American ancestry, except for those from Brazil, which is not a Spanish-speaking country.
Indigenous	A term that describes any group of people native to a specific region. In other words, it refers to people who lived there before colonizers occupied their native lands.

Latinx/Latine Gender-neutral versions of Latino and Latina, whose -o and -a endings correspond to the masculine and feminine forms traditionally assigned to nouns and adjectives in the Spanish language. Although Latino is often used as the default gender-neutral form (both in Spanish and English), the words Latinx and Latine are used as a way to avoid gendered language when it's not relevant or specifically for use when referring to nonbinary people or groups in which more than one gender is represented.

Afro-Latinx Someone who is Latin American and of African descent.

Model minority A stereotype that asserts Asian Americans are more intelligent and hardworking than other non-White groups, thus they are more deserving of their economic, social, and academic successes. The model minority myth is rooted in anti-Blackness.

Multiracial Refers to people who have parents or ancestry of more than two races.

Pacific Islander A native or inhabitant of the Pacific Islands, especially an indigenous person of Polynesia, Melanesia, or Micronesia, or a person of Pacific Islands descent.

People of color A collective term for referring to non-White racial groups.

Post-racial A controversial term that describes a society that is devoid of racial preference, discrimination, and prejudice.

Race A set of physical traits that define an individual or group of individuals as belonging to a particular social category. Race is biological fiction, a concept with no basis in human anatomy or genetics. Like gender, race is a "social construct," meaning that how racial groups are defined and how people are assigned to them varies dramatically across countries, cultures, and historical time.

Racial equity Providing everyone with what they need to be successful by taking race and the impacts of racism into account. This is distinct from racial equality, which treats everyone the same. Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if someone's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how they fare. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, so it also includes work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.

Racial justice The work to uproot historically racist systems and replace them with fair, just, and equitable policies and practices. The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It goes beyond "anti-racism." It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

RACE AND ETHNICITY CONTINUED

Racism An unjustifiable, and negative, attitude based on someone's race. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Institutional racism: a term that describes how institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for White people and oppression and disadvantage for indigenous people, Black people, and other people of color.

Internalized racism: the acceptance of negative attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and stereotypes perpetuated by the White dominant society as being true about one's racial group.

Interpersonal racism: overt and subvert forms of racism that occurs between individuals.

Structural racism: the established hierarchy of groups based on perceived "race." The hierarchy was created to designate superiority to one group to benefit from the oppression and exploitation of other groups. We absorb the privileges, stereotypes, norms, and disadvantages that extend from this structure through socialization. Structural racism describes the phenomenon when the institutional racism of multiple institutions and systems overlaps to form a web of racism impacting marginalized people and communities.

Racist A person who believes that their own racial group is superior or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.

Tokenism The practice of doing superficial diversity efforts to give the appearance of being inclusive. Tokenism is accomplished by individuals or groups from privileged positions in society exploiting individuals from underrepresented groups.

White A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

White Supremacy Culture (WSC) The ideology that White people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of White people are superior to Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. White supremacy is ubiquitous within western societies, including but not limited to the United States, as it teaches us that Whiteness holds value within our culture.

White Dominant Culture (WDC) A term that is conceptually synonymous with White supremacy culture. It is a different way to name the set of cultural norms, practices, and expectations that attempt to function as an authority over the rest of society

Xenophobia Fear or dislike of foreigners, people from different cultures, or strangers based on an individual's perception.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Definitions

Ally (LGBTQ+)	A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender “allies,” as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an “ally” to the bisexual community).
Asexual	The lack of sexual attraction or desire for other people.
Bisexual	A sexual orientation characterized by romantic or sexual attraction to more than one gender.
Cisgender	A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
Gender	A social construct that relies on culturally norms and behaviors to categorize men, women, and those that lie outside the gender binary.
Gender binary	Describes the inaccurate concept that gender is categorized into only two distinct forms.
Gender dysphoria	Clinically significant distress that a person may have because of a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity.
Gender expression	External appearance of one’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.
Gender fluid	A gender identity where one does not identify a solely as a man, woman, or non-binary person. These individuals often move between genders and change their gender expression.
Gender identity	One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither — how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One’s gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
LGBTQ+	An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community.
Misogynoir	The specific hatred, dislike, distrust, and prejudice directed toward Black women. The term encompasses the intersectionality of sexism and racism. This termed was coined by Moya Bailey.
Non-binary	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary also can be used as an umbrella term encompassing such identities as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY *CONTINUED*

Outing Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity to others without their permission. Outing can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, religious, or family situations.

Pansexual A sexual orientation characterized by romantic or sexual attraction of people all genders. Pansexual individuals are attracted to individuals based on emotional, intellectual, and physical connection rather than the gender identity of a person.

Pronouns Pronouns are the words we use to refer to ourselves and others and are an important part of our daily lives. In English, the most common personal pronouns are he/him/his and she/her/hers, which are typically used to refer to people who identify their gender (identity) as masculine or feminine, respectively. They/them/theirs is another common set of pronouns that is used by many non-binary people.

Queer A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, such as those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but also has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Same-gender loving A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love for people of the same gender identity.

Sex A biological concept that relies on biological characteristics primarily based upon the presence of x and y chromosomes. Individuals can be male, female, or intersex. It is important to remember that sex and gender are not synonymous.

Sexism Prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, based on sex.

Sexual orientation Who you are attracted to and want to have relationships with. Sexual orientations include gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, and asexual. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

Transitioning A term used to describe the processes where and trans person changes their gender presentation to match the gender identity.

Transgender An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

HEALTH EQUITY

Definitions

Access to care Ability to obtain healthcare services to prevent, diagnose, treat, or manage health-impacting conditions and illnesses. Some factors to think about is proximity to healthcare facilities, health insurance coverage and affordability of services as well as an individual's ability to seek preventive care.

Culturally competent care Healthcare services that are delivered with respect, sensitivity, and understanding of cultural beliefs, values, and practices of diverse populations. It involves healthcare providers actively recognizing and addressing unique needs and perspectives of individuals from various cultural backgrounds to eliminate disparities and ensure equitable healthcare experiences for all. An example of culturally competent care is tailoring healthcare approaches to develop effective treatment plans to align with cultural context and preference for all patients. This practice ensure that healthcare services are sensitive, inclusive, and respectful to foster trust and improve patient-provider communication.

Food desert An area, typically, an urban or rural community, where there is limited or no access to affordable, nutritious, and fresh foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains due to the absence of grocery stores or farmers markets within a reasonable distance. The primary food options may consist of convenience store or fast-food restaurants that primarily offer unhealthy and highly processed food choices.

Food insecurity The lack of consistent and reliable access to nutritious foods for an active and healthy life. It encompasses both the physical availability of the food and individuals' ability to acquire it in socially acceptable ways.

Food security A state in which all individuals have physical, social, and economic access to nutritious foods that meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security is obtained when individuals have affordable access to nutritious foods and a stable food supply. Achieving food security is essential for promoting human development, reducing poverty, and ensuring the well-being of individuals and communities.

Health disparity Unequal distribution of health outcomes among different populations, resulting from systemic and avoidable factors such as social, economic, and environmental disadvantages. Some examples of health disparities include certain racial and ethnic groups experiencing higher rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

HEALTH EQUITY CONTINUED

Health equity The principle of ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to achieve optimal health outcomes regardless of their social, economic, or demographic characteristics. Health equity recognizes that everyone deserves the same level of care and support to attain their highest well-being. Some examples of health equity in action include access to healthcare services, resource allocation, and health disparities reduction.

Health inequity Unjust systematic differences in health status or the distribution of health resources between different populations often rooted in structural inequalities, discrimination, and social determinant of health. It highlights the unjust nature of health disparities and emphasizes the need to address underlying social and structural factors to achieve equitable health outcomes for all.

High-risk population A specific group of the population that is more susceptible to experiencing negative health outcomes compared to the general population. For example, adults ages 65 and above are considered a high-risk population due to age-related physiological changes and increased susceptibility to chronic diseases.

Social determinants of health The various social, economic, and environmental factors that significantly influence individuals' overall health and well-being. Some examples of social determinants of health are quality and access to education, quality and access to health care, economic stability, neighborhood, social and community context. Addressing social determinants of health is essential for promoting health equity and creating supportive environments that enable individuals and communities to thrive.

Structural inequality The systematic and institutionalized disparities in opportunities, resources, and power that contribute to unfair distribution of negative health outcomes within marginalized communities.

ABILITY Definitions

Accommodation	Modifications or adjustments made for an individual with a disability to provide equal access to and participation to things such as education, employment, public facilities, and social activities.
Adaptive behavior	The collection of skills and behaviors that individuals use to effectively navigate and function in their daily lives. Some of these skills include conceptual, social, and motor skills.
Functional needs	The most necessary requirements which often include mobility, communication, vision, cognitive, and sensory accommodations that are necessary to create equitable spaces
Intellectual disability	A developmental disorder characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Individuals with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty reasoning, problem-solving, learning, and general cognitive abilities.
Invisible disability	Disabilities that are not immediately apparent. They are typically chronic illnesses or cognitive conditions that significantly impair normal activities of daily living.
Mental Disorder	Characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior that is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning.
Neurodivergent	The concept that there are a variety of ways that people's brains process information, function, and present behaviorally.
Neurotypical	Refers to someone who has the brain functions, behaviors, and processing considered standard or typical.
Person with disability/ disabled person	A person who has a physical or mental condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
Reasonable accommodation	Any modification or adjustment to the work environment that will enable an applicant or employee with a disability to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions.
Temporarily Able-Bodied (TAB)	Refers to the idea that most of us will face disability at some point in our lives; whether it comes sooner or later varies depending upon one's circumstances. This term came out of the Disability Justice Movement.
Visible Disability	A condition or impairment that is immediately apparent or noticeable to others.
Universal design	The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Definitions

Classism Prejudicial thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in socioeconomic status and income, usually referred to as class. Most particularly refers to the hierarchical striation of people by class.

Elitism The belief or notion that individuals who form an elite—a select group of people perceived as having an intrinsic quality, high intellect, wealth, power, notability, special skills, or experience—are more likely to be constructive to society, and therefore deserve influence or authority greater than that of others.

Low income A term used to describe individuals, families, and communities whose income is at or below a certain percentage of the poverty line—the parameters for the poverty line change depending on federal and state guidelines.

Socioeconomic status A term used to describe the combination of a person's economic and social standing in relationship to others. The economic and social factors that make up socioeconomic status include things such as education, income, occupation, access to resources, etc.

Unhoused A term used to describe an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Definitions

Amnesty The granting of formal legal status to those who live in a country undocumented and are therefore subject to deportation

Asylum The protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee.

Asylum Seeker/Asylee a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) An administrative relief that protects eligible immigrants who came to the United States when they were children from deportation. DACA gives undocumented immigrants protection from deportation, and a work permit.

Deportation The forced removal of an immigrant from the country they immigrated to typically because of a "crime." However, immigrants are more harshly criminalized thus deportation is weaponized. Deportation is a threat to human rights including the right to family unity, the right to seek asylum from persecution, the right to humane treatment in detention, the right to due process, and the rights of children.

Immigrant A person living in a country other than that of their birth.

Nationality as an ethnic group, the status of belonging to a particular nation whether by birth or naturalization. Some nationalities include American, Indian, British, Canadian, and South African.

Naturalization The process in which someone obtains citizenship in a country other than their original county of birth or nationality

Refugee A person who has been forced to flee their home to seek safety and protection in another country due to persecution, violence, war, or other forms of serious harm. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

Sanctuary City A city or municipality that adopts a policy to limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement authorities whereas local law enforcement agencies may not actively seek out or detain undocumented immigrants.

MESSAGING GUIDE

This is a guide that outlines messaging dos and don'ts to encourage inclusive, respectful, and effective communication. Be mindful that this messaging guide is a set of recommendations for how we should communicate with each other. While this guide provides valuable insights on how to communicate respectfully, it is crucial to refer to individuals based on each person's chosen way of being referred to.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

DO capitalize races because they are proper nouns. Example: Black, NOT black.

DON'T use lowercase when referencing races. Additionally, do not use hyphens when referring to race. Examples: Use African Americans, NOT African-Americans. Black, NOT black. White, NOT white.

DON'T use racial slurs in any context.

DON'T use race as a noun. Race should always be used as an adjective to describe someone. Example: . Black people NOT Blacks.

DO use the terms such as marginalized people, underrepresented people, people of color or BIPOC. When possible, be specific, refrain from using the POC or BIPOC acronyms in business professional settings.

DON'T use the term minorities.

DO use the terms Latinx (lah-tee-neks) or Latine (luh-tee-ney) to describe people from Latin America. These are preferred over the gendered alternatives, Latino and Latina. Always prioritize how someone of this group prefers to be called.

DON'T use the term Brown when referring to Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi, and Latinx people unless they prefer to be referenced as such.

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

DO use gender neutral language.

Example: The student can tour their top three college choices, NOT The student can tour his/her top three college choices. Example: Folks, NOT ladies and gentlemen

DON'T use gendered language and innuendoes. Example: Artificial, NOT man made. Workforce, NOT manpower

DON'T use masculine pronouns as a generic default when referring to everyone.

Example: Every employee should have their badge with them at all times, NOT Every employee should have his badge with him at all time

DO use the gender-neutral form of job titles and positions.

Examples: Firefighter, NOT fireman. Server, NOT waitress. Police officer, NOT policemen. Councilmember, NOT councilman

DO use politically correct terms when referring to the LGBTQ+ community. Although many terms have been reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community, unless you are a part of that community, refrain from using them.

DON'T use phrases such as hermaphrodite, tranny, travesties, transexual, homosexual, down-low, closeted, etc. These phrases are queerphobic.

DO use the phrase "sex assigned at birth" when referring to someone's sex. This phrase acknowledges that one's assignment of a biological sex may or may not align with what's going on with a person's body, how they feel, or how they identify.

DON'T use the phrases biologically male, biologically female, genetically male, genetically female, born a man, born a woman.

ABILITY

DO use person first language when making statements about aspects of individuals' identities. This is particularly relevant when trying to refrain from using ableist language.

Example: Person living with a disability NOT disabled person. Person with an amputation NOT amputee

DON'T use ambiguous language about individuals' identities. Be as specific as possible when referring to individuals' identities. For example, when speaking about someone's disability, refer to the specific disability.

DON'T use ableist innuendos when describing something or someone.

Examples: Phrases such as lame, retarded, fall on deaf ears, turn a blind eye, etc.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

DO use the term low-income when describing people whose household income falls below federal or state poverty thresholds.

DON'T use the term poor to describe people whose household income falls below federal or state poverty thresholds.

DO use the term unhoused when referring to someone who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

DON'T use the term homeless when referring to someone who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

DO focus on the person not their immigration status.

DO use the term immigrant when referring to someone who resides in a country separate from their birth country. If you are trying to speak specifically to the citizenship status of an individual in a purposeful way, Undocumented is acceptable.

DON'T use the term expat, expatriate, alien, illegal immigrant, illegal to describe immigrants. These terms are offensive and xenophobic.

DO use illegal only to describe an action, not a person.

DO use the term Undocumented immigrant.

DON'T use terms like illegal immigrant, alien, illegals, or illegal worker.

DO familiarize yourself with the range of categories describing a person's citizenship and immigration status.

DON'T specify a person's immigration status unless it is relevant to the story AND approved by the source.

DO use terms that are legally accurate and avoid racially and politically charged labels.

REFERENCES

Information from these organizations and entities was foundational in our development of this guide.

AARP.org	National Center for Biotechnology Information
ADATA.org	National Center on Disability and Journalism
Access Living	National Conference for Community and Justice
American Heart Association	National Disability Authority
Amnesty International	National Museum of The American Indian
Bias-Free Language	Native Governance Center
Center for Immigration Studies	Northwestern University
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	RacialEquityTools.org
Citizenship and Naturalization USCIS	Reading Level Checker
Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture by Tema Okun	Sierra Club Equity Language Guide
Cultural Humility	Smithsonian Magazine
Department of Health & Human Services	The Root Cause Coalition
Diversity Style Guide	UN Refugees
Equality and Human Rights Commission	U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division
Equity in the Center	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Grammarly.org	Very Well Mind
Hogg Foundation	Vox.com
Human Rights Campaign	Washington Environmental Council
Human Rights Watch	Washington Post
Kirwan Institute	WHO - World Health Organization
Merriam-Webster.com	
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies	

[illegible]

Inclusive Language Guide

SEPTEMBER 2023



Mayor's Office of
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

City Hall
55 Trinity Ave.
Atlanta, GA 30303

MOEDI@atlantaga.gov

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) ATLEquity