



Inspired to create positive change

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION
AND RACIAL JUSTICE



Diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice

Creating positive change is at the heart of RDW – as an organization, and within each of our employees. For many years, we have worked within our communities and collaborated with our clients to create positive change – including that which is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, we realize this has not been enough. There is more work to be done. We are committed to investing and working further to realize change.

This report is RDW Group's first formal public statement about diversity, equity, inclusion, and racial justice. We believe these are fundamental human rights. Our work puts this belief at the forefront, as we often collaborate with community leaders, organizations, nonprofits, and government agencies that serve marginalized populations of all backgrounds. We also believe that we need to come forward and engage in a more demonstrative way. We must confront these issues directly.

In preparing this statement, we started with ourselves. We canvassed our own organization, listened to one another, and assimilated the perspectives, experiences, and relevant activities of our entire team. We also began the process of reaching out to members of the external community to further inform us and provide us with their own perspective. Frankly, it was intimidating and uncomfortable at times – we're a group of professionals who take pride in truly understanding our audiences, yet we learned much that surprised us and made us look deeper inside ourselves.

At the same time, our conversations and learning were empowering and inspiring; they showed us that we have the opportunity to make a tangible difference – a sentiment our team has always embraced. Our collective processing of this experience led directly to the creation of this document.

Through this report and the actions described within it, we hope to create a space for learning. We seek to establish a shared language and understanding of these issues within our own organization, and in turn within the organizations and institutions with which we engage. We invite you to share with us your thoughts and feelings about this statement, and to help us build upon our actions for the future.

This work is only possible due to the sponsorship and guidance of our many mission-driven clients who do effective, vital work in the community. We are truly grateful for the opportunities they provide. They include Access Health Connecticut, Ageless Innovation, Boston Children's Hospital, Connecticut Office of Health Strategy, Cornell University, Day One, Epilepsy Foundation of New England, Friends of Boston Homeless, Hadley Institute for the Blind, HealthSource RI, Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults, Mass Senior Care, National Grid, Partners Healthcare, Reliant Foundation, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, United Way, University of New Mexico Health System, as well as dozens of Community Colleges and institutions of higher education that are creating opportunities to enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.

Our Beliefs

As an organization, we oppose all forms of discrimination, inequality, inequity, and oppression based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, and physical or mental ability. We support the aims of achieving racial justice.

We acknowledge that implicit bias is everywhere. It is all around us. It is not enough to be neutral. We must work against it. Structural, institutional racism is also everywhere. We must support the individuals harmed by these systems. We must also help to change these systems so they are truly equitable and support all people.

In our professional roles as communicators and cultural influencers, we have the opportunity to combat ignorance and bias. Our work must support representation, advance equitable policies and access to resources, and create a culture of inclusion and acceptance of all people.

We believe in the transformative nature of our work, to effect change and have an impact. We value and invest in our work for organizations and institutions that fight injustice, inequality, and disparities in employment, income, education, and health. We must choose and invest in work that prevents and undoes the harm of inequality and injustice.

That said, we have the opportunity to make our own organization more diverse. We are aware of this and know we have much to learn and to do in this regard. We pledge to enhance our intern and employee recruitment efforts to attract, teach, and learn from a more diverse pool of talent. We pledge to make ourselves teachable in matters of diversity, equality, inclusion, and anti-racism. We pledge to hold ourselves as an organization, and each other as colleagues, accountable in our efforts to better our understanding, to take action, to speak out, and to effect change.

Our Current and Past Actions

Our work has helped improve the lives of others who are at-risk and vulnerable to oppression, discrimination, and all forms of inequality. We made the business decision years ago to prioritize this work and it remains a core value and focus of our organization. The following describes some of what we have accomplished through our work.

Conducted a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment to better understand and make recommendations on how to support the health and safety of our state's diverse populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Developed and executed COVID-19 communications efforts that are highly targeted to our most vulnerable populations and communities at risk.

Enrolled uninsured individuals, families, and small businesses in Affordable Care Act health coverage in both Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Increased awareness of type 2 diabetes prevention programs, mostly among African American and Latinx populations.

Conducted strategic planning efforts for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and community health programs, with a focus on communities of color and communities experiencing health disparities.

Increased HIV testing among vulnerable, hard-to-reach populations.

Created Zika virus surveillance tools for pediatricians and other clinicians, and conducted Zika community outreach and education among Latinas of child-bearing age.

Addressed misinformation around influenza and HPV vaccination, increased vaccination rates, and developed programs to increase awareness of and participation in school-based clinics in the urban core of Rhode Island.

Drove support for the University of New Mexico Health System's efforts directly aimed at better serving at-risk populations, especially within the Native American community.

Helped adults seek treatment for substance use disorder, particularly alcohol, opioids, and other drugs.

Designed outreach communications to help mothers seek treatment for prenatal opioid use and care for substance-exposed newborns.

Created and implemented campaigns to raise awareness of and prevent impaired driving.

Increased awareness of services to women and families who have suffered sexual assault.

Rebranded and marketed the Family Visiting program to raise awareness and increase use of services by at-risk mothers and families with infants and toddlers.

Increased local awareness and use of Supplemental Nutrition Programs for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Created a campaign to reduce lead poisoning among at-risk children who live in rental properties in urban areas.

Provided resources to families in need of housing, childcare, and other supportive services.

Supported the Epilepsy Foundation New England to provide a greater expansion of service to children, adults, and families living with epilepsy.

Developed programs to increase awareness of and enrollment in long term services and supports (LTSS) for older adults and adults with disabilities.

Increased awareness of robotic companion cat and pup pets to address loneliness, depression, isolation, and cognitive decline in older adults, especially those with Alzheimer's and dementia.

Increased opportunities at and enrollment in community colleges, particularly for first-generation college students.

Increased the enrollment of women and students of color in STEM higher education programs at Cornell University's College of Engineering.

Supported fundraising efforts for more than 360 Rhode Island non-profits (more than \$1.3 million raised in 2020).

These are just some of the initiatives we've had the privilege of working on. Many of these efforts have earned local, regional, and national awards. That's rewarding. But it's not nearly as rewarding – or as critically important – as the connections made, support given, and lives changed through this work.

As an organization, RDW also sponsors and coordinates an annual scholarship program for people of color. The scholarship includes the opportunity to intern with our team for hands-on, real-world experience. We also recently launched our company-wide volunteer day program, starting with packing food items for school children and older adults at the Rhode Island Community Food Bank.

Beyond our work for RDW Group

The need for equity doesn't stop when our office doors close for the day. Neither do we. Many of our team members also advance the cause of equity in their personal time as well. Our people serve on boards and committees, volunteer for campaigns and events, fundraise and host donation drives, and even lead their own volunteer projects. Our company also lends its resources to these personal efforts. Organizations and causes we work with include:

- Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence
- Children's Friend
- Day One
- FRIENDS WAY
- Leadership Rhode Island
- Neighborhood Health
- Nonviolence Institute
- Nursing Home Annual Giving Tree program
- Project Undercover
- Providence Community Health Centers
- Public Relations Society of America
- Reliant Foundation
- Rhode Island Community Food Bank
- Rhode Island Free Clinic
- Saint Patrick Academy
- Special Olympics Rhode Island
- Youth Pride

Our Future Commitments

We're proud of the work we've done to foster equity and opportunity within our communities, but we also know there's much more to do. We are committed to further investing our time, resources, and financial contributions in the actions and activities that will continue to drive change.

We are actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with individuals and communities of diverse backgrounds; to have frank, sometimes uncomfortable, discussions; and, most importantly, to listen to and learn from one another with open minds and open hearts.

We believe that actions speak louder than words. Since our mission as an organization is to be a force of positive change, we commit to the following actions:

1. Promise to speak out on social injustice.
2. Continually assess our business relationships through an equity lens.
3. Increase our partnering with local non-profit agencies that are facilitating work in diversity, social justice, and equity.
4. Develop a formal Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion management role within our organization. Develop an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee of internal and external stakeholders. Adopt an Internal Review Board, formalizing processes to ensure our work is culturally attuned to our audience.
5. Nurture education and career pipelines. Collaborate with education institutions (K-12 and post-secondary) on industry-related curriculum and student learning opportunities. Expand our existing scholarship program. Increase internship and job shadow opportunities with students, graduates, and adult learners.
6. Encourage our team to participate in or lead volunteer opportunities through flextime and paid volunteer hours. Award "Change Agent" grants to employees working to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. Expand our company-wide volunteer day program.
7. Partner with women- and minority-owned vendors and businesses as possible.
8. Enhance internal education efforts, and make ourselves teachable in matters of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Invite speakers and groups to our workplace to help us learn and gain perspectives.
9. Formalize a "floating holiday" policy to support, encourage, and better enable our employees of different religious backgrounds to participate in holiday observances.
10. Continue to enhance our intern and employee recruitment efforts to attract, teach, and learn from a more diverse pool of talent, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and all facets of diversity. Continue to foster diversity also at partnership and leadership levels.