DEIJ Action Plan

2024 – 2029
SUMMARY

The following plan represents more than one year of engagement, reflection, and significant contributions from the Institute on the Environment (IonE) community, including affiliates, staff, students, partners, and other stakeholders. We’re delighted to be sharing the outcome of this work: an ambitious five-year plan to foster a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just (DEIJ) IonE workplace, community, and world.

In developing this plan IonE worked with Strategic Diversity Initiatives (SDI), an external consultant and resource, initially approaching them to become more anti-racist and inclusive. SDI took a foundation approach, first partnering with IonE staff to deploy a community-wide DEIJ climate assessment survey, after which they facilitated focus groups and two half-day retreats, open to all staff, affiliates, students, and other members of the IonE community. These sessions took up key questions including: What has IonE already accomplished; what buy-in for DEIJ work exists? What might get in the way of IonE's DEIJ efforts? How can we address these as we plan? And: How can IonE emerge from this process as a leader on DEI?

Drawing on this community input, SDI provided IonE with a summary and analysis of themes, which were organized into four goal areas:

1. Reimagining the norms of knowledge and community in education and research
2. Operationalizing IonE’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) work
3. Developing an integrated DEIJ communications approach
4. Creating a more welcoming, inclusive, and diverse culture at IonE

Using an expression of interest survey, staff and affiliates then joined four writing teams charged with organizing, prioritizing, and refining the many possible sub-strategies, tactics, resources, and timelines within each goal area. The writing teams spent a significant amount of time over 2023 researching and developing their goals, strategies, and tactics. In early 2024, their drafts were shared with the IonE community for final rounds of feedback, through another survey, small-group meetings, and virtual open houses for each goal area.

On the next pages, you’ll find the sum of the teams’ work, with feedback incorporated from the broader IonE community, whose input is the foundation of this draft and the vision for this work. This is a living document, intended to guide IonE over the next five years, as it strives to create a more welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environment for all community members – and to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice both in and through its environmental, sustainability, and climate work. At a tactical level, this plan is a key companion to the IonE strategic plan, which covers the same term (2024–29), and we will take an integrated approach to implementation planning, measures of success, and reporting on progress.
Goal 1

Reimagining the norms of knowledge and community in education and research

With its interdisciplinary and outcome-oriented mandate, IonE was created to be different and operate differently than the academy-as-usual. We learn and grow as a community that – through words and actions – models how to practice education and research that accelerates just transformations for a sustainable future.

Yet, in doing this work, we do not operate in a vacuum. IonE, along with many of our partners and relationships, is deeply embedded in social contexts governed by norms that carry the legacy of colonialism and varied forms of oppression (“isms”) – a legacy that has no place in the future IonE strives to create. Still, these norms set shared expectations and prescriptions of acceptable ways of thinking, embodying, and acting in a particular community and time.

Some of the epistemologies (ways of knowing that ground worldviews), methodologies (ways of doing things), and pedagogies (ways of educating) that lie in the foundation of IonE are informed and defined by a relatively narrow set of cultures and histories. Cultures and histories that – as a result of marginalization and exclusion of people along lines of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion, class, and other identities – are not representative of many of the persons and communities served by IonE, nor those most affected by the issues IonE exists to address.

Norms of knowledge and community in education and research are historically and culturally constituted, which makes them resistant to change and largely inconspicuous in the everyday lives of those who conform to and benefit from them. They also persist when uncritically routinely performed. However, shining light on these norms can create space for change.

The institute and the university hold considerable power over norms in education and research. To support greater sustainability and resilience across the full range of global and Minnesotan communities with whom we partner or for whom our work matters, the IonE’s activities and approaches must be increasingly informed by and representative of all those communities.

IonE must have a clear-eyed and critical understanding of the biases that influence the structure, activities, and relationships of the Institute. In those instances when we recognize that our biases result in the marginalization or exclusion of persons and perspectives, we must
vigorously take steps to mitigate the impacts of those biases. In other words, we must collectively make our praxis a critique against systemic inequities and injustices but also for equity and justice (Diab et al., 2017, Performing Antiracist Pedagogy in Rhetoric, Writing, and Communication. Louisville: University Press of Colorado).

IonE should serve as a conduit through which the expertise, values, and – most importantly – voices of marginalized and affected communities can shape solutions, strategies, and policy related to the environment and sustainability. IonE should also be conscious when engaging with community partners, and others when appropriate, in pursuit of these strategies and tactics to ensure those efforts are met with reciprocity and are mutually beneficial.

Our strategies to begin this work are to:

- **Expand the voices within IonE** - engage local and global communities in ways that clarify blind spots, enrich epistemological perspectives, and deepen community engagement and reciprocity
- **Examine our own ways of knowing and doing** - ways that we do indeed acknowledge and integrate diverse ways of knowing and doing, and where we might have blindspots
- **Build the skills of the IonE community** - enhance and increase our ability to work across diverse ways of knowing and doing

**Strategies**

**Strategy 1: Expand the voices within the IonE community**

IonE engages diverse sectors and communities in a number of ways; however, there is an opportunity to both expand and deepen our efforts to engage local and global communities in ways that clarify blind spots, enrich epistemological perspectives, deepen community engagement, and adopt additional decolonizing approaches.

1. **Tactic: Develop a process to audit non-HR policies, strategies, and activities**
   - **What**: A comprehensive process of reviewing IonE internal and non-HR policies, strategies, and activities that would benefit from community co-creation, input, or feedback about how diverse perspectives and ways of doing things can be acknowledged or integrated.
○ **Key Results:** Audit is designed and process/procedure determined. Individuals and groups with diverse perspectives were consulted in the development of that process.

2. **Tactic: Audit implementation**

○ **What:** Implement the process to audit the internal and non-HR policies, strategies, and activities that would benefit from community co-creation, input, or feedback about how diverse perspectives and ways of doing things can be acknowledged or integrated.

○ **Key Results:** Audit is completed according to designed plan. Individuals and groups with diverse perspectives were consulted in the development of that process. Audit results in a set of recommendations that feed into the next tactic.

3. **Tactic: Develop & implement co-creation approaches**

○ **What:** Based on audit results, develop and implement approaches to solicit co-creation, input, or feedback from people or groups with diverse perspectives and ways of doing things in an ongoing manner.

○ **Key Results:** Documentation from L&E program managers and KI PIs on the changes they made in response to the audit. IonE annual metrics include documentation of ways that diverse voices, ways of knowing and ways of doing were integrated into activities.

**Strategy 2: Examine ourselves**

IonE is good at examining issues, and we take pride in our ability to do that across disciplines and sectors. We can leverage that capacity to turn the spotlight on ourselves to examine our own ways of knowing and doing, ways that we do indeed acknowledge and integrate diverse ways of knowing and doing, and where we might have blindspots.

1. **Tactic: Dialogues Series**

○ **What:** Develop a series of dialogues involving IonE staff, IonE affiliates, university colleagues, and community members from diverse ways of knowing and doing research and education. Examine case studies of IonE work that embody inclusion of diverse ways of knowing and doing. Examine how some of our academic approaches (even if nontraditional for academia) may exclude or overlook sources of knowledge or approaches to knowledge generation and education that might be beneficial and how we can create greater intellectual
accessibility to our work for nonacademics, while also learning to incorporate or acknowledge diverse ways of knowing and doing.

- **Key Results:** Initial plan for a dialogue series is complete. Individuals and groups with diverse perspectives, including academics with expertise in epistemology, culture, ethnic studies, etc. were compensated accordingly and consulted in the development of the plan.

2. **Tactic: Implement and evaluate the series of dialogues**

   - **What:** Develop an evaluation plan to understand the impact of the series; conduct the series and implement the evaluation plan.

   - **Key Results:** Initial series is complete. Evaluation results are examined for continuous improvement in the series. A plan for integrating insights into IonE activities is developed.

**Strategy 3: Build the skills of the IonE community to think and work across diverse ways of knowing and doing**

The success of integrating insights from the above strategies, such as the audit and the dialogue series, will be dependent on the skills of the IonE community to understand the issues and apply their understanding to their work. We must understand what our community’s needs are for skill development and offer, or refer for, appropriate training.

1. **Tactic: Community-needs assessment**

   - **What:** Conduct an affiliate, staff, and student needs assessment to identify the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and capacities that would be most useful for members of the IonE community in order to be able to integrate diverse epistemological, methodological, and pedagogical approaches into their work.

   - **Key Results:** Survey designed, implement results analyzed

2. **Tactic: Mentorship & training**

   - **What:** Provide IonE staff, Impact Goal grant applicants and grantees, Associates, and other cohorts with mentorship or access to training regarding the identified knowledge, skills, dispositions, and capacities

   - **Key Results:** Documentation of trainings, workshops, and/or technical assistance offered. Evaluations of trainings, workshops and technical assistance offered
3. Tactic: Cultivating Community Grants

○ **What:** Offer grants to the U community, as part of the mini-grant mechanism, focused on building relationships and cultivating community across diverse sectors and communities, and building capacity for the integration of diverse epistemologies.

○ **Key Results:** Funds identified for community cultivation grants. Establishment of the soil grant mechanism and RFP language. Documentation of number and amounts of grant awards. Stories submitted from grant awardees about outcomes of the award.
Goal 2
Operationalize IonE’s DEIJ Work

In pursuit of becoming more inclusive and antiracist, IonE is committed to integrating the values of DEIJ into our organizational practices, policies, and administrative functions. This plan provides 4 key strategies to further integrate DEIJ tactics into IonE’s operations over the next 3-5 years. These strategies include:

- **Increase organizational DEIJ capacity** - study different ways that UMN and other similar organizations have implemented both DEIJ leadership roles & distributed DEIJ leadership models
- **Holding ourselves accountable to doing DEIJ work** - integrate DEIJ goals in performance evaluations, position descriptions, and work plans
- **Attract & retain a diverse workforce** - one tactical way of doing this is by incorporating DEIJ in onboarding and hiring processes
- **Improve facilities and space accessibility** - researching and developing an accessibility guide for events both inside and outside of IonE

Each strategy contains tactics which are intended to focus and prioritize action. If successfully implemented, Goal 2 strategies will build DEIJ capacity and leadership, increase accessibility of IonE programming, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and diversify IonE’s growing community.

**Strategies**

**Strategy 1: DEIJ Organizational Leadership Capacity at IonE**

Further context: When considering ways to increase DEIJ capacity at IonE in addition to furthering our progress on becoming antiracist, two key components are important to assess and study: 1) The potential hire of a DEIJ director/coordinator; and 2) DEIJ distributed leadership models. The recommendation is to assess both of these components together. The goal is to determine the best course of action for IonE’s goals and priorities regarding DEIJ leadership capacity and moving the organization towards becoming antiracist.
1. Tactic: Research/assess DEIJ leadership models

- **What:** Conduct research and assessment of potential hire(s) of a (1) DEIJ director or coordinator, and (2) a shared/distributed leadership model.

- **Key Results:** Final memo of recommendation(s) that contains researched reports, draft structure, and draft PDs. IonE successfully secures resources for increased time, capacity, and resources to lead DEIJ work sustainably. IonE follows successful best practices laid out by UMN leaders in DEIJ.

### Strategy 2: DEIJ integrated into each position

DEIJ goals in position descriptions, annual work plans, and performance evaluations ensure that IonE is both 1) distributing DEIJ work across the organization, and 2) holding our teams accountable to make progress on the goals we set in our individual work plans and annual professional goals. Including DEIJ goals in the work plans and annual goals of all employees also demonstrates a visible commitment, as an organization, to DEIJ and antiracism as fundamental to how we do our work.

1. Tactic: Alignment of position descriptions and work plans with DEIJ initiatives

- **What:** All employees, with their supervisors, shall maintain annual work plans which include DEIJ goals and objectives that align with their work and, to the degree possible, this DEIJ Action Plan. All employees position descriptions (existing and new) shall also meaningfully integrate DEIJ.

- **Key results:** Staff meeting to discuss and share examples of PDs and the directive. Develop a recommended template for the conversations between supervisors and employees. Goal for pilot year: Encourage each employee to think of a DEIJ goal they have within their current position and a DEIJ goal for the greater IonE. Supervisors and leadership should assist employees to structure what this means and how they can guide those conversations and work prioritizations. Thereafter: All IonE staff have 2025 work plans and goals that meaningfully integrate DEIJ goals with appropriate metrics for measurement (i.e., progress made, completion, etc.).

### Strategy 3: Onboarding and Hiring Processes

DEIJ goals in onboarding and hiring are intended to attract and retain a diverse workforce from marginalized communities through a comprehensive DEIJ lens. It is important to embed DEIJ and antiracist practices from the start and bring implicit biases to the forefront because implicit biases, exclusive hiring practices, and narrow recruitment can create barriers to entry for people
from marginalized communities. Of note, some of the below tactics are already in place but are not being done consistently across the organization. The intent of this goal is to ensure these tactics become standard practices.

1. Tactic: Implicit bias training

   ○ What: Require completion of an OED-, SDI-, or internally-developed workshop on implicit bias in search and selection for everyone involved in search/hiring committees

   ○ Key results: Track and maintain a list of staff members who have completed the required trainings and are “certified” to be part of hiring committees. Establish a timeline for periodic refresher trainings (e.g., every 1 or 2 years) to ensure ongoing awareness and commitment to DEIJ goals. Include this tactic in an annual assessment to determine the effectiveness of the training, diversity of hiring teams, and whether DEIJ goals are being met in the hiring process.

2. Tactic: Job postings and new positions

   ○ What: Ensure that job postings (and position descriptions) are inclusive and specific about the skills and requirements necessary and are distributed to a diverse network to attract a wider and more diverse range of candidates, especially those with experience working with environmental justice, decolonial initiatives, and frontline communities.

   ● Key Results: Track the diversity of applicant pools and analyze the impact of inclusive job postings on attracting diverse candidates. Evaluate and adjust job requirements to ensure that they do not unnecessarily exclude candidates from marginalized communities. Monitor the success of cross-posting job openings across various platforms to reach a broader range of potential applicants. Consider implementing a feedback mechanism to gather anonymous feedback from applicants to improve the hiring process. Hiring managers should always consider the value of "cultural add" rather than "cultural fit"

Strategy 4: Facilities & Space Accessibility

The full incorporation of DEIJ into IonE’s protocols and processes necessitates both 1) physical and virtual working environments that enable employee health, success, and wellbeing and 2) individual and communal gathering spaces that foster a welcoming atmosphere supportive of our diversity of needs and practices. To be successful, inclusive facilities, accessible spaces, and individual accommodations must be considered within Goal 2 and across other Goals (e.g., Communication and Culture).
1. Tactic: Reference guide

  ○ **What:** Develop a reference guide for accessible and inclusive in-person working and gathering spaces for IonE on campus and getting to/from those spaces. *(Note: This guide would focus more on the everyday aspects of accessibility and inclusion of our spaces, and not on the University's adherence to required ADA measures for space.)*

  ○ **Key Results:** Using the guide, conduct an audit of IonE spaces every 5 years to align with Strategic Plan updates, at minimum a walkthrough with Facilities Management to “grade” IonE spaces. This feedback will inform updates to the guide and any updates needed to physical spaces. Update quarterly discussions questions between supervisors-direct reports for feedback about inclusivity, accessibility, support, and accommodation in IonE spaces. *(The annual survey referenced above complements this 1-1 exchange.)* Repeat survey annually to normalize conversations about inclusivity, accessibility, and accommodations and track sentiment longitudinally.

2. Tactic: Off-campus reference guide

  ○ **What:** Create a complementary reference guide for selecting and using welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces off-campus to engage with the IonE community. Tactic #1 and Tactic #2 share similar action steps.

  ○ **Key results:** Incorporate questions relating to inclusivity and accessibility into meeting satisfaction surveys, track results longitudinally and use suggestions for improving the event guidelines.

3. Tactic: Accessible Virtual Design

  ○ **What:** Using best practices that proactively incorporate accessibility into the design and implementation of virtual environments, develop a reference guide for creating inclusive and accessible virtual working and gathering spaces and online platforms for IonE.

  ○ **Key results:** Identify internal IonE experts (such as the to-be-hired Digital Manager) to serve as a resource for questions about implementation of inclusive and accessible spaces. Ensure that the RFP to develop the next IonE website specifies vendor experience and expertise relating to virtual best practices for welcoming and inclusive content, accessibility, etc. Repeat the audit process at least every 5 years to incorporate new research and technology and track results longitudinally.
Goal 3

Develop an integrated diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) communications approach

Communication is inextricably connected to what we call DEIJ work. As a social phenomenon, communication enables exchange of ideas, connection among people, and expression of needs and values. As a professional practice, communications is a commitment to conscious and continuous decision-making, an active process of considering each choice – from language and tone to visual format and channel – in light of what it signals and how it might shape changes in attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors (and to what end). Communication – and all the choices it entails – simultaneously reflects culture(s) and systems and shapes them. In this way, consciously communicating is a form of DEIJ work itself.

The strategies below reflect this range of functions, describing how IonE can strengthen and leverage individual, programmatic, and organizational communications in service of our DEIJ objectives. This integrated approach is essential, because all members of an organization inescapably and powerfully share in shaping its voice – and thus influence communications-driven outcomes and impacts. Focusing on only one sphere of communication – or operating without alignment – is at best incoherent, at worst counterproductive. Our interdependent strategies include:

- **Strengthening organizational foundations** – through tactics such as enhancing access to communications resources and integrating assessment of communication strengths and individualized skills-building into onboarding plans
- **Assisting IonE leadership with an internal communications plan** – including evaluating sentiment and understanding, and identifying opportunities to leverage channels
- **Leveraging content creation programming in service of broader DEIJ goals** – in recognition that IonE contributes to shaping narratives and advancing public-interest goals at the intersection of DEIJ and sustainability, environment, and climate
- **Supporting our DEIJ work with an external plan** – beginning with an assessment of organizational and staff communications, prioritizing external needs and perspectives
- **Strengthening cross-functional accountability** – establishing structures that support the adoption of new practices and patterns, as well as external input and evaluation
**Strategies**

**Strategy 1: Strengthen our organizational foundations**

1. **Tactic: Audit DEIJ communications resources and tools**
   - **What:** A review of existing/known resources and tools at three scales: IonE, UMN, and external organizations. Lenses include what is the resource or tool; what purpose does it serve; how is it accessed; who owns it and how is it updated (if known). *Document gaps and needs.* Consider an internal staff survey, re: needs assessment.
   - **Key results:** IonE-accessible catalog document; list of gaps/needs

2. **Tactic: Enhance access to DEIJ communications resources and tools**
   - **What:** Building on the audit, brainstorm near-term (spring/summer 2024) actions for enhancing IonE staff and community access to resources and tools – and implement up to three tactics, prioritizing via the impact/effort matrix. Examples: Building out a shared google drive; creating guides or tip lists; etc. Consider onboarding integration (see below, #3) and relationship with workshops / trainings tactic (#4). For each action, identify expected outcome – and, if recommended, how to measure (metric, intervals).
   - **Key results:** Three tactics completed; measurement plan in place

3. **Tactic: Integrate resources, tools, and skills-evaluating/building into onboarding**
   - **What:** Building on the above, collaborate with the IonE admin & operations team to identify opportunities to integrate resources, tools, and skills-building into onboarding. (Examples of onboarding-specific tactics: self-evaluation of development opportunities; integration of resources and IonE DEIJ communications approach into handbooks.) Support implementation of up to three tactics, prioritizing via impact/effort.
   - **Key results:** Three tactics completed

4. **Tactic: Develop a plan for accessible, skills-building trainings or workshops**
   - **What:** Based on audit-identified needs, propose a line-up of skills-building opportunities for AY24-25 and beyond. Be specific about audiences; in connecting needs to resources; and in prioritizing needs. Be sure to leverage existing resources (e.g., opportunities to host vs. opportunities to connect with and amplify). Collaborate with other action plan tactical leads to understand
proposed activities in context with other convening-based DEIJ strategies, as well as opportunities for synergy with broader IonE programming. Partner with colleagues to finalize and approve the plan, based on resources available and capacity to participate (demand).

○ **Key results:** Proposed line-up, specifying who/what, timing, and resources.

5. **Tactic:** Develop a common, shared language for DEIJ communications

○ **What:** Words are multidimensional artifacts, embedded with layers of cultural meaning, and communication is an active process of individual interpretation and sense-making. Develop and facilitate an internal process to identify, investigate, and surface meaning(s) of our most frequently used words, phrases, and concepts. Note this process may align well with other culture-building and norm-investigating activities. Build out a common glossary over time (e.g., working in waves), capturing our shared understanding, preferred and required language, and considerations for use. This evaluation will be done every year as words fall in and out of favor.

○ **Key results:** Living glossary/style guide document.

6. **Tactic:** Audit accessibility of core IonE communications platforms and cross-functional practices

○ **What:** Leveraging UMN resources and our website redesign process (to begin in 2024) conduct an accessibility audit of organizational communications platforms and practices. Include digital accessibility and universal design principles in this evaluation, meeting or exceeding accessibility standards, as well as questions of access and inclusion with respect to language, publication/dissemination practices, and other factors and choices in how we present and share our work.

○ **Key results:** Completed audit with prioritized action steps.

**Strategy 2: Support an internal communications plan**

1. **Tactic:** Research understanding of IonE’s DEIJ values, goals, and work to date

○ **What:** Assess awareness of, sentiment about, and engagement with IonE DEIJ values, goals, and actions to date. Collaborate with DEIJ action plan tactical leads and IonE leadership to determine relevant segmentation, as well as opportunities to collect data or feedback relevant to other goals. Evaluate data and propose evidence-based opportunities for adaptation and improvement.

○ **Key results:** Completed data collection, synthesized recommendations.
2. Tactic: Based on this research, establish our internal communications goal
   ○ **What:** Comms pros partner with IonE leadership and DEIJ governance structure (TBD) to prioritize communications opportunities and select a primary goal for the calendar year, along with its proposed metric(s).
   ○ **Key result:** Multi-stakeholder agreement on our primary goal.

3. Tactic: Support IonE leadership in developing an internal plan
   ○ **What:** With the agreed-upon goal in hand, support IonE and DEIJ leadership in developing an internal communications plan designed to measurably advance the objective. Advise on strategies (including what communications can and cannot advance); help select tactics, identify resources, and clarify roles and responsibilities. Emphasize approaches that support feedback and reciprocal communication, and look for opportunities to create synergy with other internal activities. *This tactic will likely include expanding what we do and how we use our existing internal channels, such as staff meetings, IonE Connection, etc.* Establish metrics and timeline for evaluation.
   ○ **Key result:** A fully drafted, resourced, and co-created internal plan

**Strategy 3: Create an external comms plan supporting our DEIJ work**

1. Tactic: Assess perceptions of IonE communications related to DEIJ
   ○ **What:** Assess perceptions of organizational and staff-led communications related to DEIJ, prioritizing perspectives and voices of those historically underrepresented in UMN and IonE leadership. Identify needs and opportunities. (Example: Does IonE have a safe grievance process?) Assess communications materials and processes to identify what’s been effective and opportunities for improvement.
   ○ **Key result:** Completed survey and summary of findings

2. Tactic: Based on this research, establish external communications goals
   ○ **What:** Partner with IonE leadership and DEIJ governance structure (TBD) to prioritize communications opportunities and select a primary goal (or goals) for the calendar year, along with its proposed metric(s).
   ○ **Key result:** Multi-stakeholder agreement on our primary goal(s).
3. Tactic: Collaborate cross-functionally to fully draft the external strategy
   ○ What: With the agreed-upon goal(s) in hand, develop a core set of shared strategies, encompassing both organizational voice and staff-led tactics. Collaborate with cross-functional stakeholders to clarify roles and responsibilities. Establish evaluation process and timelines.
   ○ Key result: A fully drafted, resourced, and co-created external plan

Strategy 4: Leverage our existing channels and content creation program to advance DEIJ goals

A. Tactic: Evaluate opportunities to advance new narratives, build engagement, and drive progress in service of our broader DEIJ values and objectives
   ○ What: Assess opportunities – and map them against the external landscape of activity, potential partners, and resources. Identify clear and compelling opportunities to leverage content creation/experiential programming, including storytelling, convenings, and/or campaign work, centering actors (e.g., non-passive audiences) in a goal-driven format. Emphasize partnerships – and co-prioritization of possibilities.
   ○ Key results: A prioritized menu of opportunities to leverage content creation programming (storytelling, etc.) as methodology

B. Leverage our content creation program to advance narrative change and DEIJ objectives
   ○ What: Using the above research and a co-prioritization process, identify a primary goal – and expected measurement – for academic or calendar years. Develop and implement an integrated storytelling/content creation strategy. Evaluate, repeat.
   ○ Key results: Academic-annual year outlook; implemented and evaluated plan.

Strategy 5: Strengthen cross-functional accountability

A. Tactic: Strengthen internal accountability around consistent practices and standards
   ○ What: Almost all of the above strategies require shared commitment to consistent practices across IonE, which will require a transition into greater collaboration and the investment of additional time or other resources. This
tactic is about co-creating an internal accountability structure to support that transition. Map key internal actors (individuals with consistent communications responsibilities). Based on metrics that have been developed (in above tactics) as well as core expectations, identify cross-functional accountability leads and a governance structure and evaluation pulse.

○ **Key results:** Key indicators, along with cross-functional roles, responsibilities, and timelines for evaluation.

**B. Tactic:** Research and propose structures for external evaluation and assessment

○ **What:** In partnership with other goal-area or DEIJ plan leads, identify potential pathways, partners, and resources to support ongoing *external* evaluation, feedback, and input, specific to IonE DEIJ communications objectives. Communications work by definition has external impact; we therefore must seek feedback and input from outside of our own organization. Leveraging other feedback and input structures, propose a process for ongoing evaluation, specifying partners, resources, purpose (e.g., how we will use/respond to feedback) and frequency/pulse.

○ **Key results:** External evaluation and input plan
Goal 4
Create a more welcoming, inclusive, and diverse culture at IonE

IonE seeks to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment that supports a diverse IonE community. That “environment” is physical, procedural, and cultural. Intentionally creating this culture requires contributions across the entire IonE organization and actions that demonstrate inclusivity.

The strategies were gleaned from the DEIJ action plan conversations to identify priorities and tactics that the community believes are actionable and would advance a more welcoming, inclusive, and diverse community and culture within IonE. These tactics are intended to be evaluated regularly to assess the effectiveness of the portfolio of tactics towards this goal; adaptive management should be deployed given what is learned through evaluation to continue to refine the use and implementation of tactics towards the goal outcomes.

We identified three interdependent strategies:

- **Creating an IonE DEIJ Community of Practice** – transitioning our current DEIJ committee into an IonE DEIJ community of practice, a learning community focused on self-education of DEIJ and integration of best practices with one’s own work.

- **Continuing an IonE culture of welcoming and community** – which proposes tactics that create the structure to allow IonE members to welcome, meet, and engage with others in our community

- **Next generation of IonE’s shared values** – building on the research conducted as part of Goal 3 Strategy 4, revisit (and update as useful) the IonE Way and integrate values into IonE’s culture through our work

Each strategy includes up to four tactics. Each tactic includes key results, for the monitoring of activity (process) metrics. Resources, people, and roles are addressed at the end and specified for specific strategies, as relevant.
Strategies

Strategy 1: Create an IonE DEIJ Community of Practice

1. Tactic: Develop, define a new structure for, and launch the IonE DEIJ Community of Practice (CoP)
   - What: Two co-leaders are funded to develop the new DEIJ Community of Practice, with counsel from members of the IonE community and authority to make community based decisions. Include sufficient cake-layer funding for co-leads.
   - Key results: Co-leads are in place; DEIJ CoP goals and meeting structure developed, IonE management approves and resources a CoP structure, and IonE DEIJ CoP launched.

2. Tactic: Develop and share DEIJ resources and trainings
   - What: A shared resource page, including trainings, events, articles, etc, developed by the CoP co-leads that supports people's individual DEIJ journey, IonE cultural norms and expectations, and that is a living resource. Also include and provide regular communication/awareness about university resources and formal reporting mechanisms within and outside of IonE.
   - Key results: Resource page is developed, managed, and routinely communicated. There is a clear mechanism for additional resources to be asked for and added.

3. Tactic: Support engagement of IonE staff and student employees in the IonE DEIJ community of practice
   - What: All staff and student employees who wish are supported in actively participating in the IonE DEIJ CoP or other DEIJ professional development activities, with clarity of how this fits into each person's job responsibilities.
   - Key results: Ideally, robust attendance will lead to representation from different groups on the CoP (e.g., staff and students from across IonE organizational units).
4. **Tactic:** Encourage and welcome IonE Affiliates and others who are connected to IonE to be part of the IonE DEIJ CoP and engage in the ways that are most meaningful to them

- **What:** The DEIJ CoP welcomes all within IonE. Develop a communication strategy to share opportunities to engage with the community, a listserv open to everyone, and actively reach out to IonE Affiliates and others who are connected to IonE to ensure that they feel welcome to join the DEIJ CoP or a meeting or event hosted by the DEIJ CoP.

- **Key results:** DEIJ CoP includes people who are not IonE staff as part of its community (i.e., listserv, event participation, multi-meeting engagement)

**Strategy 2: Continuing a culture of welcoming and community**

1. **Tactic:** Fostering IonE staff relationship building across IonE through “Welcome Buddies”

- **What:** Creating a culture of welcoming and inclusivity starts with creating professional relationships. To facilitate organizational learning and relationship building between new and current staff, we will pilot Welcome Buddies as part of onboarding new staff. New staff will be partnered with a mentor who is outside of their unit and will meet with them 2x in their first week, 1 per week in their first month, and once a month for their first 6 months. The current employee will help to answer questions and connect them with other IonE community members to facilitate relationship building. The program will be piloted for 1 year to identify best practices and determine if it is effective in achieving its goal.

- **Key results:** Established Welcome Buddies program, assessment of pilot with new staff and mentors to evaluate effectiveness (6-8 weeks, 4-6 mo, 1 year)

2. **Tactic:** Assessment of the effectiveness of current IonE relationship-building activities, including if any IonE community members that are not being reached

- **What:** Identify the activities and coordination mechanisms that build less formal processes for community engagement and collaboration through existing activities (e.g., People & Planet, staff all-hands meeting socials or sheet cake get-togethers, 1:1 lunches) or through re-envisioned low-effort activities such as networking events (e.g., IonE community breakfasts, happy hours), grant ideation and match-making sessions, student/summer intern/REU picnic, small group engagements during the Annual meeting, and asynchronous, easy, fun
entry options such as staff powerpoint slides. For each activity, identify the ways
they foster cross team relationships and which IonE community members are,
and are not, being connected.

○ **Key results:** All IonE relationship building activities are assessed and reported to
the IonE Management Team to determine alignment in who is served within
IonE’s communities and its effectiveness; annual affiliate survey; employee
engagement survey, student/casual employee engagement survey.

3. **Tactic:** Integrate relationship-building into IonE programming

○ **What:** Given the assessment that is developed as part of Goal 4 Strategy 2.2,
develop and implement improved IonE programming that fosters cross team
relationship building and collaboration, across teams within IonE and outside
IonE and the University to other participants and partners.

○ **Key results:** Collaborative process in place to address the previously unmet
connections within the IonE community and continue successful activities.

4. **Tactic:** Provide funding and staff support to establish IonE affinity groups

○ **What:** Within our IonE community we have groups of people who have been
excluded from academia or sustainability work. For people who identify as being
part of one of these groups, having a formal or informal space for people to
engage can support a welcoming and inclusive environment and can connect
them with others across colleges and campuses who can support them. To
facilitate this and reduce the additional coordination labor that can be placed on
those already marginalized, this tactic will identify and fund staff coordination
support to support groups within IonE who wish to explore or create an IonE
affinity group.

○ **Key results:** Funding and support mechanisms established. Pilot affinity groups
established are evaluated to assess interest.

**Strategy 3: Next generation of IonE’s shared values**

1. **Tactic:** Revisit the “IonE Way” – a public facing declaration of our shared values

○ **What:** Given the research that is developed as part of Goal 3 Strategy 4,
develop and implement a collaborative process that includes community
conversations to create the next generation of shared, public-facing values for
the IonE community (similar to or building on the IonE Way).
○ **Key results:** Collaborative process leading to agreement on next generation of the shared organizational values. A first generation of those updated values are expressed in the 2024-2029 IonE strategic plan.

2. **Tactic:** Given next generation IonE Way, integrate values into our staff work

○ **What:** Build aspects of stated, shared values (i.e., the IonE Way) (i.e., the IonE Way) into goals and performance measures, consistent with an individual's work and role/responsibilities within IonE. Support supervisors in mentoring goal setting and performance evaluations that reinforce these values. Identify other opportunities for acknowledging staff work that uplifts IonE's shared values.

○ **Key results:** Staff goals and performance evaluations that integrate and reinforce IonE values.

3. **Tactic:** Integrate updated, shared values into IonE programming

○ **What:** Identify opportunities and support the integration of an updated IonE Way into IonE programming that reinforces those values with the broader IonE community of staff and affiliates. This type of IonE programming includes, but is not limited to, DEIJ CoP, IonE granting requests for proposals and reporting, student and affiliate programming, externally funded research, and communications (see Goal 2 Strategy 2 and 4).

○ **Key results:** Identified opportunities and exemplars of integration across IonE programming