

DE&I COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS

OVERVIEW



Purpose

Effective leadership grounded in inclusion is only possible in learning and work environments that incorporate equity in order to achieve more equal outcomes. Our Community Commitments are designed to enable our community to create a school culture where we all feel we belong.

We believe that...

- Inclusive and equitable teams are core to how NOLS practices and teaches leadership.
- All people deserve access to equitable and inclusive spaces at our school.
- All students deserve equitable access to learning objectives and realizing their potential, and this often requires that we actively address inequity in systems and processes.
- Our ability to each recognize our power and biases enables us to build a stronger community because only then can we value and welcome difference for its contributions to the whole of NOLS.
- We must acknowledge that equity and inclusion work is necessary because inequality exists in our broader cultures, and, therefore, at NOLS.
- The ability to create and embrace functional relationships across differences is a key to allowing all members of our community (students, staff/faculty, partners, Trustees, and broader community) to thrive at NOLS and into their future.
- NOLS is the leading source and teacher of wilderness skills and leadership that serves people and the environment.
- Incorporating DE&I priorities strengthens our ability to serve our mission, but is not our mission.

In order to bring this purpose to life, NOLS will engage all members of our employee community in Cultural Humility Training and then foster spaces where the work required to create and maintain equitable and inclusive work and learning environments may occur.

If you need support in understanding and/or living into this document or have concern that these commitments are not being upheld in our community, please reach out directly to Andi Summers (andi_summers@nols.edu) and/or your Executive Team leader.

To report discrimination or harassment that you have experienced or witnessed, please [reach out to Speak Up](https://www.nols.edu/reach-out-to-speak-up) (1-720-409-0685).

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Boundaries

It is important to understand what is considered in and out of bounds when entering conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion. The list below is missing context that can be better gleaned from the Community Commitments that follow this page.

IN	OUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Exploring identity in order to recognize and value the contributions of difference, rather than assuming or seeking sameness● Acknowledging that intent and impact are both necessary for understanding and growth● Recognizing conscious and unconscious bias, know that there are social and/or cultural patterns that might be normal in your frame of reference that are not acceptable within our community● Referencing both dominant/non-dominant identity and social hierarchy (in- and out-groups) to understand and explain cultural patterns● Elevating underrepresented voices without diminishing anyone based on their identity● Exploring which norms are truly inclusive vs. which have been unexamined● We all have accountability to interrupt problematic behavior, and it is expected that individuals in positions of organizational leadership will do so	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assuming or assigning anyone's identity; assuming that you understand someone else's perspective or experience based on observable or shared identities● Prizing intent or impact over one another; intent is relevant for context but not an excuse to persist in behaviors that are negatively impacting someone● Calling someone out in a way that is accusatory, shaming, or labeling instead of inviting someone in with empathy and self-awareness● Weaponizing words by using them to label or attack someone's identity rather than language that invites conversation whose goal is shared understanding and an examination of behavior that supports inclusion● Stereotyping in a way that is damaging● Prioritizing authenticity over behaviors that support inclusion

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DE&I COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS

HOW WE ENGAGE



Community Commitments

We know that the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion requires deep, sometimes difficult engagement with one another and sensitive topics. It's critical that we are able to have these conversations, and equally as important that we maintain spaces where they can happen. These commitments should iterate as necessary in order to bring our purpose to life.

It is expected that you will do your best to wield your power to help and heal by embodying these commitments, and you can expect to be held accountable to them, so we may collectively fulfill the purpose of our equity and inclusion work and create the NOLS we all want.

Commitments in Action

We will consider best intent from others and be accountable for the impact of our words and actions regardless of intent.

- We will not permit behavior that harms a member of our community to go unchecked or without corrective feedback.
- We will focus feedback on behaviors that impact a group or person and not aim it at beliefs or worldviews.

We recognize and honor all identities - and our community will make it safe to be who you are by hearing your voice and valuing your input.

- We will not shy away from recognizing, acknowledging, and empathizing with all experiences from all identities, and we will expect behavior that is respectful to all community members.
- We will not tolerate discrimination based on identity; this applies to both dominant and non-dominant identity.

We practice humility because we have something to learn from everyone, no matter our level of expertise.

- We are open to learning and growing through conversations, and we each have a responsibility to share what we know and to ask questions, so others may learn from us.
- We work to let go of any assumptions we may hold in order to make room for the possibility that we do not know the full picture, or people's lived experience.

We recognize that some necessary conversations can be taxing. We recognize that sometimes space is needed for continued engagement over time.

- We each have the right to take breaks from conversations and to hold boundaries for ourselves in order to engage productively.
- We each have the right to not answer a question or to refer you to other resources for the issue at hand.

We use language that is accessible and descriptive, and recognize it might sometimes be imperfect.

- We seek to understand when we hear new terminology in this work, rather than rejecting new concepts as labeling.
- We do not use terminology as weapons.
- It's okay to "mess up" or stumble over words - we each need to be willing to explain our meaning and context for others while acknowledging any unintended impacts.

DE&I COMMUNITY COMMITMENTS

HOW WE ENGAGE



Commitments in Action

We believe that confidentiality provides safety in a learning environment.

We value each individual's contribution to dialogue, and seek to provide a space where all can be heard.

We prioritize learning over comfort and recognize that closure isn't the objective.

We prioritize self-awareness and empathy, acknowledging our own biases and exploring our growth edges as individuals.

We reject stereotypes and celebrate the value that difference brings to our community.

We are committed to and have the responsibility to continually examine and change our practices and norms to promote equity and true inclusion within our teams.

- We can learn from stories and examples; to protect people/groups, we share only the plot (what you learned) but not the characters (names/dates).
- NOLS leadership at all levels are accountable for responding to actions that are illegal or infractions of NOLS' policies.
- If you're someone who tends to not actively engage, please "lean in;" if you tend to contribute a lot, please listen more.
- We create space for others to speak and are watchful for "silenced dialogue," where people may not speak up because they feel their experiences are undervalued, underappreciated, invalidated, will be met with defensiveness, etc.
- We make an effort to sit with discomfort and to seek understanding. We will note discomfort as an opportunity to examine its actual cause.
- We will not seek to evoke shame or judge or blame others when discussing identities/experiences.
- We recognize that each of us may sometimes need to take space from conversations that feel harmful.
- We recognize the importance of discussing power as it relates to dominant and non-dominant identity and social hierarchy (i.e., in- and out-groups).
- We meet others where they are in their learning journey and choose inquiry over advocacy, not labeling one another or describing another's experience to them.
- We will interrupt actions that reinforce assumptions about competency or perspective based on identity.
- We give ourselves opportunities to learn and appreciate the entirety of another's individual experiences by rejecting stereotypes.
- We will acknowledge another person's lived experience and seek to understand how that context informs their experience of a particular interaction.
- We will learn.
- We will evolve.
- We will hold one another accountable to our commitments.