What key elements should an employer consider when creating a diversity, equity and inclusion program?

Below are some of the key elements an employer needs to include in a diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) program.

- The program needs to focus not only on attracting and retaining a diverse group of employees but also on being equitable and inclusive. That means the employer commits to providing *all* employees with challenging work, equal pay and benefits, career development support and authority within their specific jobs.
- The CEO and management team must wholeheartedly support the DE&I program. They must take the lead and make all employees aware of the importance of this initiative to the success of the business.
- Start with a needs assessment. Taking the time to identify and address specific needs helps a DE&I program succeed. Employers must avoid merely "going through the motions" of a general diversity program. The needs assessment should include an evaluation of internal and external demographics to assess the need for and feasibility of adopting diversity goals. It should also include an evaluation of organizational policies, benefits and employee relations programs. Employee surveys and focus groups will help to determine employee opinions and to give employees a means to express their thoughts and concerns.
- The CEO and management team must set specific goals for the program and periodically assess progress. They may use data routinely collected on productivity, morale and retention to measure the success of the organization's DE&I program. This step is an important part of any diversity program as it allows the employer to reinforce what is working and revise what is not proving effective.
- The company must include diversity, equity and inclusion in training programs for all employees and hold managers accountable for hiring, developing and retaining a diverse staff. It may also want to offer a mentoring program to help its diverse staff members with their career goals.

Networking with other HR professionals may also provide valuable information in terms of proven methods and potential pitfalls encountered in creating a DE&I program. For more resources, see SHRM's Global & Cultural Effectiveness webpage.