









- ➔ **Partner with career transition programs** – The group recommended that organizations research grants and tax incentives which can help offset the costs of hiring and training some non-traditional candidates. For example, eligible organizations can partner with the U.S. Department of Labor’s VETS program to hire and train former U.S. military service members. The U.S. Internal Revenue Service also offers a Work Opportunity Tax Credit to employers who hire certain individuals that face barriers to employment, such as formerly-incarcerated people.
- ➔ **Offer part-time options** – Some experienced workers with AEC degrees have personal commitments that prevent them from working full-time. Part-time opportunities may appeal to these individuals who would otherwise leave the workforce. The symposium pointed out that part-time workers are still billable to clients and have competencies that fill critical gaps.
- ➔ **Reconsider if on-site work is necessary** – Participants noted that some jobs do not necessarily need to be on the jobsite regularly (or in some cases at all). Technology also makes it easier for remote work in certain roles on some projects/programs, e.g., cost controls. Firms that allow remote work can search nationwide from a much broader pool of candidates who have the required competencies to do the job.

“There are certain departments that do not necessarily need to be on a jobsite. You could reach out across the country to find potential new hires.”

Bill Johal, CCM  
Kitchell

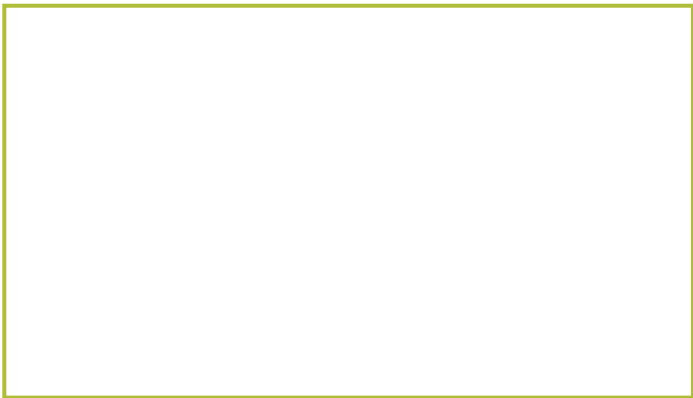
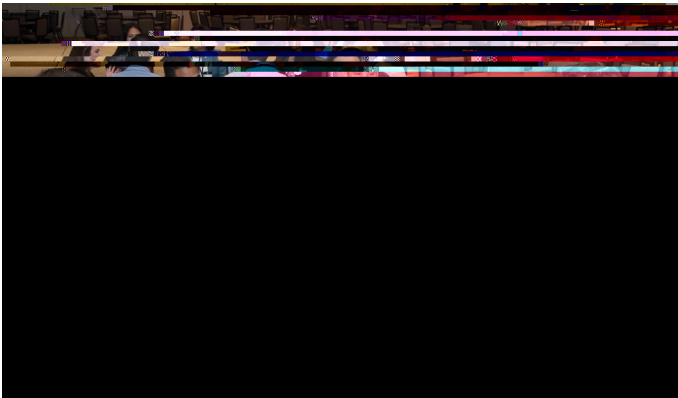
“There are other sources of experienced talent, but we push them out of the industry. We need to be flexible and provide work-life balance.”

Coretta Sweet, CCM  
Anser Advisory

# Create an Inclusive Workplace Culture

The symposium on "Inclusive Work Environments" also

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Participants offered many ideas to build a more inclusive workplace culture for all employees, including:

- ➔ **Add regular fee increases to contracts** – To offer more competitive pay on long-term contracts, the group recommended that owners and service providers add more conditions to the contract language to help offset potential future market changes. For example, a multi-year program contract could allow the program management fee to increase each year at the same rate as inflation. In this example, the firm could then more easily increase compensation each year for all program staff.
- ➔ **Help staff volunteer, particularly with students** – To tell engaging stories about the profession, the symposium urged the industry to allow all staff to volunteer in local communities. The group added that one way to maximize volunteer time to attract more students to the profession is to help staff teach courses in local colleges and trade schools. Participants suggested that owners and service providers could partner to help teach these courses, exposing students to more parts of the industry.
- ➔ **Encourage junior employees to lead organization-wide events** – Participants believed that interactions among employees at all organizational levels are key to building an inclusive environment. Some firms hold regular events for all their employees, such as staff meetings and celebrations. The group recommended asking junior employees to lead the agenda during these events. This practice promotes DEIB because each employee approaches this responsibility differently.
- ➔ **Check-in with staff** – The group urged leaders to find the balance between micromanaging and ignoring their employees. Many firms lose good people because they were afraid to talk to an executive, i.e., instead of

➔ **Create mentor opportunities** – Sometimes there are conflicts between the owner’s and service provider’s cultures which are difficult for workers to navigate. The symposium participants advised organizations to create mentor programs to support their employees when conflicts arise. Employees at all levels (including the C-suite, Vice Presidents, Regional Directors, etc.) should participate. For example, some firms schedule informal meetings that are completely off the record to allow workers to discuss issues and find a mentor or ally.

➔ **Use technology more collaboratively** – Participants noted that virtual meetings and emails are formal communications. This technology helps teams work efficiently but teams lose the relaxed “water cooler” culture where coworkers can talk informally. Attendees recommended striking a balance and rethinking how companies use virtual meetings and email. Ideas included setting limits for all employees on virtual meetings (e.g., meetings must be no longer than a certain length, must not occur at certain times, etc.) and requiring some alternatives (e.g., some conversations must be on the phone, some meetings must be in-person, etc.).

## Barriers to Improvement

**In 2023, both symposia noted that barriers to more inclusive hiring and workforce development remain.**

Participants shared that many owners rely on specific education and experience requirements to evaluate a potential hire, which prevents non-traditional candidates. Furthermore, firms need billable workers and staff frequently need to be on jobsites that are separate from the organization’s offices, which presents challenges for company cultures.



