



## **RCA HOTEL DEI STRATEGY TOOLKIT: A BASIC GUIDE**

The RCA DEI Strategy Toolkit is a globally recognized guide drafted by Red Clay Advisory for hotel and resort accessibility and inclusion in designs and operations. The toolkit offers pointers for hospitality stakeholders, particularly those embarking on their hotel development journey and implementing DEI strategies for their existing and/or proposed hotels.

As an open-source resource, the toolkit is free and available to potential and existing hotel owners, investors and stakeholders.

### **Developing your hotel's DEI strategy - what you need to know**

Developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategy for your hotel is an important step towards creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all guests and employees.

So you may be wondering, why do I need a DEI plan for my existing or proposed hospitality establishment, and how can I develop one?

Globally, conversations around diversity, equality and inclusion in workplace culture and business operations have become critical for hotels and stakeholders in the hospitality sector to consider. When applying for a grant or bidding for a proposed project, many potential clients carefully assess the DEI goals by bidders, and inclusive organisations are given priority. In hospitality, guests are becoming increasingly aware of inclusiveness, and are interested in seeing how you make the designs and operations of your hotel and resort inclusive to guests and workers.

This piece provides a step-by-step guide on how to build a DEI strategy for your hotel and resort. We hope you find this useful.

Here are some steps you can take to develop a DEI strategy for your hotel:

**Step 1:** Conduct a DEI assessment

**Step 2:** Define your goals and identify areas for improvement

**Step 3:** Develop an action and engagement plan

**Step 4:** Develop a communication plan for your DEI strategy

**Step 5:** Create a monitoring and evaluation plan to report your progress



### **Step 1: Conduct a DEI assessment**

Start by assessing your hotel's current level of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This can involve reviewing your hiring and promotion practices, analyzing your guest demographics, and examining your hotel's culture and policies.

You will require the services of a qualified DEI strategy specialist to work with throughout this process, from the assessment stage to the planning, training and implementation phases.

**Tip:** Create policies that prioritise diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, how diverse are your hiring requirements? How are you making employee compensation more equitable? How motivated are your workers to stay and grow with your business, rather than actively searching for a better career opportunity?

Therefore, a better approach to DEI might help you retain employees and improve the stability of your workplace.



## **Step 2: Define your goals and identify areas for improvement**

Once you have a clear understanding of your hotel's DEI strengths and weaknesses, you can set specific goals for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion. Your goals should be measurable and aligned with your hotel's overall mission and values.

Just think, as a business owner, when was the last time you considered hiring someone who was qualified for a position, but had a physical disability which ruled him/her out?

**Tip:** Provide DEI training to all your employees, and help them understand the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Help them see how they can contribute to creating an inclusive environment for guests and fellow employees in your hotel, irrespective of colour, age, tribe, gender or sexuality.

If possible, your hotel DEI specialist will train and upskill one of your top-ranking employees to become your hotel's Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) whose role would involve developing plans to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, enhancing the organisation's culture, assisting employee resource groups, and establishing a workplace that is more welcoming and accepting for all employees.



### **Step 3: Develop an action and engagement plan**

Create a detailed plan for achieving your DEI goals. This may involve changes to your hiring and promotion practices, training programs for employees, and initiatives to attract a more diverse guest base.

Employee resource groups are a way for your hotel employees to connect and support each other based on shared experiences, identities, and interests. These groups can help create a sense of community and foster a more inclusive workplace. ERGs are also credited with accomplishing goals such as: improving work conditions for marginalised groups, bringing employees together in a safe space and tackling company-wide challenges.

A successful DEI strategy requires buy-in from your employees. Engage them in the process by creating a DEI committee or task force, providing training on diversity and inclusion, and soliciting their input and feedback.

**Tip:** Two key areas to consider in attracting diversity to your hotel is (i) the conscious design of your hotels, resorts, restaurants, bars and lounges to make them accessible and inclusive to guests and workers, irrespective of age, gender, or physical abilities, and (ii) the celebration of diversity and cultural differences by commemorating cultural events, displaying diverse artwork, and serving diverse cuisine.

Studies show that 15 per cent of people around the globe are living with disabilities and in Nigeria, that number is as high as 1 in 4. A smart business person would not want to miss out on this market. However, not only is this smart, but it also represents inclusion. Hotels should endeavour to train their employees to be sensitive to the needs of guests with disabilities.



#### **Step 4: Develop a communication plan for your DEI strategy**

Make sure to communicate your DEI efforts to your guests and the wider community. This can include updating your website and marketing materials to reflect your commitment to diversity and inclusion, and highlighting your progress towards your DEI goals.

Your DEI commitment must be transparent and visible to all stakeholders, and your enforcement policies must. For instance, your hotel must be seen to have policies and protocols in place to address incidents of bias and discrimination, and to create a safe and inclusive environment for guests and employees alike.

When this communication plan is clear to your guests, staff and suppliers, this makes it easier for people to understand your goal better and help you achieve it.

**Tip:** Your commitment to diversity and inclusion has to be visible at all levels and in all operations in your hotel. Any sniff of a bias in judgment when considering appointments and promotions already undermines your DEI vision.



### **Step 5: Create a monitoring and evaluation plan to report your progress**

Regularly monitor and evaluate your progress towards your DEI goals. Use data and feedback to make adjustments to your strategy as needed, and celebrate your successes along the way.

Engage your primary stakeholder - your board, employees and guests - regularly through surveys, team meetings and oneonone discussions, and ask for their honest opinions on how you can improve in your DEI plans.

By promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, hotels and the hospitality sector can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for guests and employees, which can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as a more productive and engaged workforce.

**Tip:** Remember that developing a DEI strategy is an ongoing process, and it requires commitment and dedication from your entire hotel team. By prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, you can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.



### **How can Red Clay help?**

As tourism and hospitality consultants, we have vast experience in handling hotel and resort investments in West and East Africa for our clients from inception; we help you navigate the legal and business environment and advise you through the process of getting your hotel's licensing and registration.

We will also work with you through the following phases of the project:

1. We will conduct the feasibility studies to ensure that your proposed hotel project is and guide you to make the best decisions.
2. We work with your hotel architect (or provide a specialist hotel architect on recommendation) to conceptualize and design a sustainable and eco-friendly hotel for you, based on your budget.
3. We also help you create a business plan and strategy to shore up your investments and minimize your financial risks.
4. We will develop your hotel's ESG strategy to minimize environmental, social and governance risks and ensure that your business is ESG-friendly.
5. We will also help you build a DEI strategy to ensure that your facilities are accessible and inclusive to all for use, work, stay and play, including persons with disabilities.

In essence, we are there for you all the way through till you launch your hotel or resort and open up to customers.

### **About Us**

Red Clay is a specialist advisory practice focused on harnessing the socio-economic potential of sustainable tourism development for cities, states, regions and countries in Africa. We specialize in strategy advisory for destination development and management, ESG advisory, feasibility studies, market research and intelligence, policy advisory, and capacity development for tourism and hospitality-focused businesses, agencies, organizations, and governments in Africa.

Our team members have worked in the tourism industry in the UK, West and East Africa, and are experienced and passionate about sustainable tourism as an instrument for societal change, with its promotion of heritage, the celebration of culture, and contribution to identity.

See our company profile [here](#)