



# Overcoming Economic Challenges & Looking Forward: The ROI of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

## The Challenge

Access to appropriately skilled talent is a leading barrier to growth for local primary employers. Our communal ability to overcome this challenge will determine our economic destiny on the lakeshore.

## DEFINING DEI

**Diversity:** The presence of differences in the workplace which can include race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic background, religion, etc.

**Equity:** The act of ensuring diverse employees all have access to the same opportunities.

**Inclusion:** The creation of an environment where all people feel welcome, respected, supported and valued.

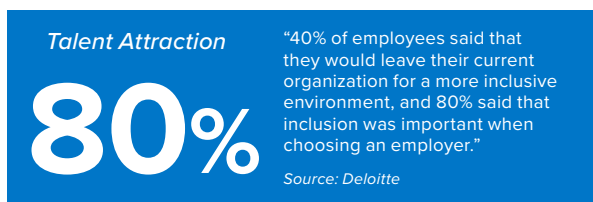
## The Opportunity

Employers who are able to attract, retain, and grow today's talent while preparing to meet the unique needs of the young, emerging and increasingly diverse workforce of tomorrow will be better positioned for success.

*"Diversity is a fact. Equity is a choice. Inclusion is an action. Belonging is an outcome."*

Arthur Chan, DEI Strategist

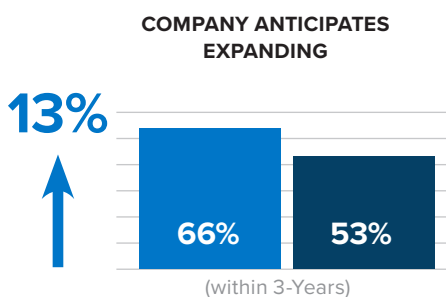
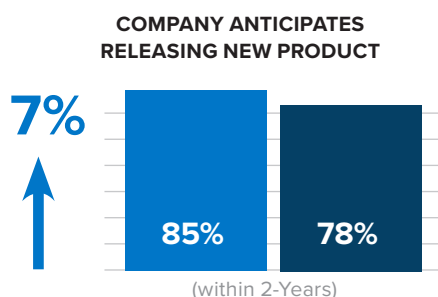
## DEI IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



2-D Diversity: Teams include those with both inherent diversity (race, gender, etc.) and acquired diversity (education, skills, etc.)

Preliminary local data seems to confirm national trends showing that companies that invest in DEI achieve better outcomes. In 2022, Lakeshore Advantage interviewed 100+ leaders of local primary employers. 51% of companies surveyed reported adoption of at least one DEI best practice. Those companies who reported investing in DEI were more likely to be bringing new products to market and more likely to be expanding than those who were not.

## Lakeshore Regional Data



■ DEI Proactive Efforts  
■ No DEI Efforts

Data Source: Lakeshore Advantage 2022 Business Intelligence Report



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## A DEI ROADMAP FOR EMPLOYERS

Surveys of lakeshore business leaders reveal widespread support for diversity, equity and inclusion principles. However, many organizations still struggle with knowing how to start implementing and systematizing DEI best practices into their existing operations and corporate strategies. We recommend three key steps to getting started:

### 1. Start at the Top

The local organizations leading the way in DEI best practices are led by CEOs and top-level leaders committed to diversity, equity and inclusion work because they have identified it as a business imperative. JR Automation CEO Craig Ulrich made this point recently after attending a local DEI workshop. "I need to spend my time in areas of greatest impact. The return on investment in this space is tremendous."

### 2. Assess where your organization is today.

Tracking the impact of DEI investment begins with a clear understanding of what tools your organization is already utilizing and what opportunities remain available. To that end, we are excited to provide our employers with access to an in-depth assessment via our partners at TalentFirst.

The TalentFirst D&I Benchmarking Survey will be available for Lakeshore Advantage investors beginning in early 2023. Please email [amanda.cooper@lakeshoreadvantage.com](mailto:amanda.cooper@lakeshoreadvantage.com) if you are interested in participating. Responding employers will receive confidential individualized reports on their DEI efforts.

### 3. Take advantage of the robust local resources available.

- [TalentFirst PIVOT Toolkit](http://www.talentfirst.net/resources/pivot) - A robust online collection of diversity, equity and inclusion information, West Michigan employer best practices, research, data and resources. <http://www.talentfirst.net/resources/pivot>
- ["Five Essential Competencies of Effective Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Leaders"](https://www.amazon.com/Essential-Competencies-Effective-Diversity-Inclusion/dp/B09NYY2KD9) - An actionable guide written by Whitney White for leaders looking to put DEI into practice and based on insights and best practices from thought leaders here in West Michigan. <https://www.amazon.com/Essential-Competencies-Effective-Diversity-Inclusion/dp/B09NYY2KD9>
- [Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance \(LEDA\)](https://ethnicdiversity.org/) - A nonprofit organization that works to ensure people of all ethnic backgrounds have equal access and opportunity to participate fully in our community. LEDA puts on the annual Summit on Racism and also offers customized training for corporate partners. <https://ethnicdiversity.org/>

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Craig Ulrich, CEO, JR Automation