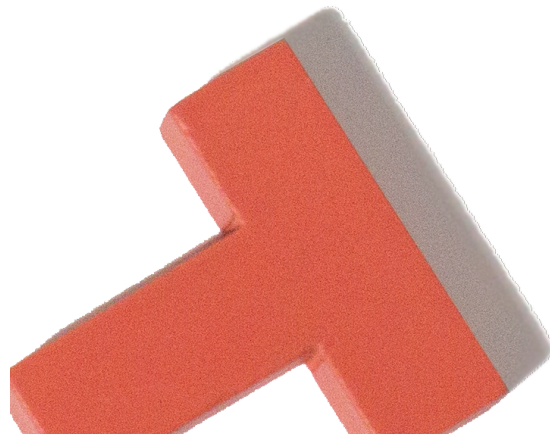
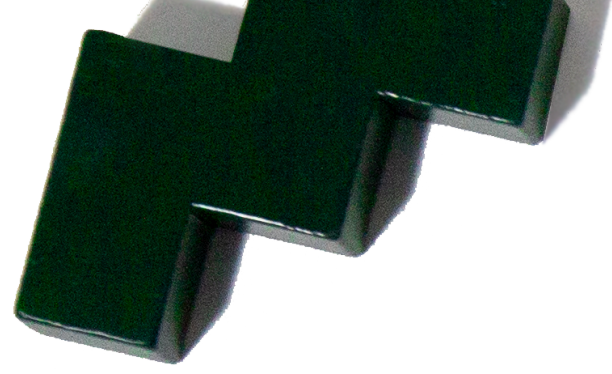


Black History Month

Programming Guide

By Jackie Ferguson

Updated 2024



— Black History Month *Programming Guide*

“Black History Month should not be the only time that you recognize the contributions of Black Americans to our society.”

February marks Black History Month, an annual observance established by noted historian Carter G. Woodson, which began as a way to recognize the important people and events in the history of the African diaspora. As President Gerald Ford said, in 1976 when the U.S. first officially recognized Black History Month, we need to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” Including in the workplace.

Recognizing and celebrating employees’ racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds can be effective in building psychological safety and employee engagement. Thus, celebrating Black History Month in the workplace is an excellent way to achieve that goal. However, Black History Month should not be the only time that you recognize the contributions of Black Americans to our society. Don’t limit your interest in absorbing this information only to February. Cultural curiosity and historical awareness should be explored all year long.

Race in the workplace has only recently become a conversation that employers are willing to broach as, historically, many organizations proclaimed to be “colorblind” in a misguided attempt at establishing equality. However, we have come to realize that when companies downplay demographic differences, they actually increase underrepresented employees’ perception of bias from White colleagues and reduce engagement at work.

In the spirit of inclusion, everyone in your organization should be encouraged to participate with enthusiasm. It shouldn’t be the sole responsibility of Black employees to organize their own recognition, and you’ll find that it’s transformative to have employees of every background participating and learning during Black History Month. In that same vein, don’t assume that someone wants to be involved simply because of their ethnic background.

The guide below will provide you with some tips and ideas for creating your Black History Month Programming.



communicate



internal

While your employees, no doubt, read your organization's social media posts and peruse the newsletter, having special internal programming is equally important. Note that, if you are not prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at your organization, Black History Month programs may appear hollow or performative.

Consider adding Black history makers that relate to your industry to your weekly team meetings, morning stand-ups, or monthly company events. Add quick reading to a general Slack channel or other internal communication platform.

external

Make a plan to share your organization's recognition of Black History Month on social media and in your newsletter. Highlight your supplier diversity, partnerships with diverse organizations, and employees who are making a difference in multicultural communities.

Don't use negative messaging in your communications. While our society has systemic issues to address, Black History Month is about celebration and empowerment. Shine a light on historical contributions, changemakers, and significant events in your community, share inspiring stories, and push for positive change.

Keep your messages relevant. Some social media campaigns intend to honor Black individuals, but they have nothing to do with the business or the community they serve. Find ways to make connections that make sense for your brand -- don't force a narrative for the sake of checking a box.



educate



teach outside the box

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth are recognizable names in American history and are often highlighted during Black History Month. However, there are many other notable figures to highlight in Black history as well. For example, if you are a tech company, you might spotlight Black inventors like Garrett Morgan, creator of the traffic signal and the gas mask. If you are a healthcare organization, what strides have Black Americans made in medicine? Who are the Black Americans making history today?



bring in a speaker or plan a workshop

Engage an external speaker or organize a panel of experts to speak to employees about race relations, civil rights, and other critical topics surrounding the Black experience and allyship. Alternatively, workshops are unique in that participants are encouraged to be hands-on and to think critically about what they're learning. These are good opportunities for connectivity exercises. You could also plan a group tour of a museum such as the [International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, NC](#), which offers both in-person and online tours.



read, watch, listen, learn

There are often a plethora of Black History Month events that you can find in your local community. Virtual events and online tours of museums like the [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) can also offer interesting ways to engage and learn without leaving home. Here is a short list of resources that may be helpful in challenging yourself to broaden your own perspective on Black history and experience.

Books

1619 Project: A New Origin Story, by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Stamped From the Beginning, by Ibram X. Kendi

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents, by Isabel Wilkerson

Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement, by Angela Y. Davis

Remaking Black Power, by Ashley D. Farmer

[Scholastic](#) also suggests dozens of books for children.

Documentaries/Movies

African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross

Summer of Soul

Sidney

Harriet

Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker

One Night in Miami

Judas and the Black Messiah

My Name is Pauli Murray

Podcasts

Everyday Black History

Dreams of Black Wall Street

Black History for White People

Black History Buff Podcast

Into America





serve/donate

Here is where acknowledging Black History Month can become more than just a quick annual blurb on your organization's social media platforms.

volunteer your time

Consider a day of service. Volunteering with local nonprofits and charities is an excellent way to help the community, bond with your team members, and inspire engagement and motivation in the workplace. Lending your support as an organization goes beyond simply checking a box.

Feel free to research or even poll your team about where they would like to contribute time. If you are still unsure, explore [Charity Navigator's Black History Month list](#), which identifies and details worthy organizations for you to consider.

If employees aren't comfortable gathering in larger groups or if you have remote team members, consider allowing them to schedule a day or a half day to volunteer on their own. [Volunteer Match](#) and [Activate Good](#) offer virtual volunteer ideas.

donate your funds

Consider making a donation to a worthy organization. Sometimes, the gift of money is the most impactful thing you can give to a charity, especially when it comes to education or legal funds. Again, [Charity Navigator](#) or [Volunteer Match](#) can give you good options, or you can look to your local community to make a real difference in your own backyard.



invest



□ — increase supplier diversity

Commit to increasing supplier diversity in your organization. This is a way to provide ongoing support to underrepresented communities all year long. A supplier diversity commitment also benefits your company because it promotes innovation through the introduction of new products, services, and solutions while driving competition (on price and service levels) between existing and potential vendors. Partnerships with diverse suppliers give your business a competitive advantage when facing changing customer demographics.

□ — support black-owned businesses

Take this month to be intentional about supporting Black-owned businesses in your community. From restaurants to goods to vendors for home projects, seek out ways to support the goals of others. By diverting your purchasing power to more Black-owned businesses, you're helping to strengthen local Black economies, contributing to shrinking the racial wealth gap, and fostering job creation for Black people.

□ — partner with HBCUs

You may also want to investigate potential partnerships with Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs). Consider establishing a scholarship fund or providing internships and mentorship opportunities. Investing your time and expertise into the next generation can provide long lasting benefits to the individual and to the community.



collaborate



practice intentional inclusion

One of the best ways to foster inclusion is by seeking out and listening to the perspectives and opinions of those you're trying to include. Reach out to Black leaders in your organization and get their input on how they would like to be recognized during Black History Month and beyond.

establish groups to encourage belonging

Take it a step further by establishing a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee or employee resource groups (ERGs) at your organization. This act shows that your company is dedicated to making your team environment a better place, and encourages free-flowing ideas and feedback between employees and leadership. Employee recognition is crucial to building inclusive workplaces. Furthermore, studies show the correlation between belonging and engagement is stronger for underrepresented groups.





Leveraging Black History Month to build understanding and awareness about Black history, accomplishments, and culture is an invaluable opportunity for companies. Organizations that invest the time in celebrating Black History Month send a clear message to their employees and customers that they care about cultural competency.

One of the best ways to honor the spirit of Black History Month is by strengthening your allyship. While you're reading up on Black history, find ways you can use your privilege to benefit others and find intentional ways you can promote inclusion and equity while counteracting bias.

Focus on sustainable impact. The relationships built and actions taken during Black History Month can create long lasting benefits beyond the four weeks in February.

Want to work with an expert team on your diversity programming?

Contact [The Diversity Movement](#) to get started.



notes

communicate

educate



notes

serve/donate

invest



notes

collaborate

additional ideas



ABOUT THE DIVERSITY MOVEMENT

The Diversity Movement (TDM) partners with organizations to build and strengthen culture by connecting real-world business outcomes to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Our integrated approach enables leaders to create inclusive culture through the application of data-informed insight, award-winning content, technology, and DEI expertise. The result? Your organization benefits from better business outcomes delivered by more productive, innovative teams.

ABOUT JACKIE FERGUSON

Jackie Ferguson is co-founder and vice president of content and programming at The Diversity Movement. A member of the 2023 Inc. Female Founders 200 list, she wrote the bestselling *The Inclusive Language Handbook: A Guide to Better Communication and Transformational Leadership*. Ferguson hosts “Diversity: Beyond the Checkbox” a podcast cited among the top 5% downloaded globally.