

PRSSA Powered by Submittable

## Title **PRSA Orlando**

Chapter Size 201–300

How does your Chapter define diversity, equity and inclusion?

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral elements of a vibrant community and essential pieces to our organization’s mission. PRSA Orlando is committed to fostering a public relations and communications network where all of our members are valued, respected, and supported. We champion diversity and inclusion at all levels of our organization by involving chapter members who represent a broad spectrum of differences in our programming, leadership, as well as providing opportunities for all voices to be heard and represented.

This is not about checking a box. It is transparent and intentional. Our inclusive approach to what we do and who we are is a priority that ensures the success of our chapter, our profession, and the communities in which we live and work.”

DEI is intentional and essential to our work. In recent years, the PRSA Orlando board has continued to fully integrate DEI into our monthly programming, content development, and in the ways we engage members. We focus on creating inclusive spaces for our community, where they might feel most comfortable, ensuring every voice is heard and represented.

Does your Chapter include diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in your strategic plan?

Yes

Using the RPIE model, describe your Chapter's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and achievements during the past year. -- RESEARCH: What research did you conduct to identify opportunities to address or promote DEI by and within the Chapter?

To help identify opportunities to promote DEI within our Chapter, the DEI Committee Chair conducted an informal listening tour with chapter and committee members, past committee chairs, and the Chapter board. The goal was to identify goals and gaps based on past priorities and gather feedback on initiatives.

Through one-on-one meetings, informal conversations, and board meetings, we identified common themes: members wanted more relaxed

networking opportunities, consistent DEI integration in monthly programming, and content related to disability awareness. These insights shaped our 2024–25 DEI goals.

### PLANNING -- Goals: What did your Chapter seek to accomplish with your 2024–2025 DEI initiatives?

For 2024–25, the Board focused its DEI initiatives on fostering a more inclusive and welcoming chapter experience. Goals included:

- Delivering DEI-focused programming that reflects diverse perspectives and experiences.
- Creating relaxed experiences through small-group, free, or virtual formats.
- Re-establishing a DEI-focused book club that fosters ongoing learning and dialogue, amplifying underrepresented voices and stories.
- Publishing educational and informational content on topics such as disability awareness, neurodiversity, and Deaf audiences.
- Rebrand the PRSA Orlando Scholarship to the PRosperity Grant, offering financial assistance to PRSA Orlando members in good standing, and helping cover membership dues or fees related to the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) process. The Chapter also has grants for two members to attend SunCon 2025 in Jacksonville and one grant for a member to attend ICON 2025 in Washington, D.C.

### PLANNING – Who was/were the target audience(s)?

Chapter members

Prospective members in the industry

College and university students

Prospective members in related fields, or new to the PR/MARCOMM

Community stakeholders and local businesses

### PLANNING – What were your measurable objectives?

After developing our goals and initiatives, the Board and DEI Committee established the following measurable objectives:

- Ensure that each monthly breakfast program incorporated a DEI perspective, regardless of the topic.
- Publish at least 10 DEI-focused blogs that highlight best practices, inclusive communication strategies, and underrepresented communities.
- Re-establish the PRSA Orlando DEI Book Club with at least three diverse reading selections. Selections include resources and information for communications and working professionals in our region, and books that prioritize dialogue and learning about our diverse populations.

- Achieve a minimum 25% engagement rate (clicks, shares, or comments) on DEI blog and book club content, tracked annually.
- Host at least one free, accessible event by December 2025, that fosters new connections and supports a small business owned by an underrepresented community.
- Support chapter members through the PRosperity Grant.

#### PLANNING -- Budget: What were the monetary, time and human capital investments?

- The Chapter allocated approximately \$19,000 to the Programs Committee for the year, primarily to cover venue costs at the Citrus Club, where we are contracted to host programs from January through May and August through October. The committee dedicated an estimated 15-30 hours each month to:
  - » Participating in board and committee meetings (1–3 hours)
  - » Planning and organizing programming, including coordinating with speakers, developing graphics, and drafting promotional content (about 5-10 hours)
  - » Managing event logistics, from setup through breakdown (around 4 hours)
- The Chapter allocates \$500 annually for the DEI Committee’s use. During the application’s timeframe, the only investment spent was time and human capital.
- The DEI committee spent anywhere between 5-20 hours per month focusing on the following areas:
  - » Attending board and committee meetings (approximately 1-3 hours per month)
  - » Planning and organizing event programming (approximately 3-5 hours per month)
  - » Researching and creating content to share on Chapter platforms and channels (5-10 hours per month)

#### IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the strategies and tactics used.

DEI-centered monthly programming

PRSA Orlando continued delivering DEI-centered programming, aligned through cultural heritage months, well-being, or family-focused engagement.

Highlights included:

- PR and HR’s Role in Creating a Culture of Well-Being on February 19,

2025

» PRSA Orlando and GOSHRM joined together for an inspiring two-part event designed for communication, human resources and C-Suite leaders, lead by award-winning PR professional-turned-corporate well-being expert Mark Mohammadpour, APR, Fellow PRSA.

• Central Florida's PR Power Players on March 27, 2025

» During Women's History Month, PRSA featured five prominent female PR business owners for a candid conversation on being a PR Power Player in Central Florida. Whether you are working for someone or yourself, this stellar panel will discuss how to keep yourself motivated in your role and the importance of being a self-starter in the ever-changing landscape of PR, crisis communications and marketing in Central Florida.

• PR Paid Forward:

» On April 11, the third annual PR Paid Forward brought together more than

30 communications professionals from PRSA Orlando and FPRA Orlando to provide pro bono public relations support to 19 Central Florida nonprofits. Held at the Rice Family Pavilion at Rollins College, the half-day event focused on helping nonprofit organizations strengthen their messaging, visibility, and outreach efforts through personalized coaching and collaboration.

• The Value of Cultural Communications on May 16, 2025

» PRSA Orlando hosted an inspiring panel conversation featuring AANHPI leaders on how strategic public relations and community engagement can elevate the visibility, success, and cultural presence of AANHPI businesses and initiatives throughout Central Florida.

DEI-focused monthly book club

As PRSA Orlando continues to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programming and resources, we re-launched the PRSA Orlando Book of the Month initiative, originally introduced in 2023. Designed to be lowcommitment

and accessible, the book club amplified underrepresented voices, directly addressing our objective to provide diverse selections with measurable engagement. Selections aligned with our cultural calendar, and explored topics such as autism, Deaf audiences, and disability awareness. In addition to curating a thoughtful collection of titles, we connected each selection to our audience, highlighting why these stories matter to PR and communications professionals, and how it can inform their work in creating inclusive practices in the field.

All book information and reviews were found on the PRSA Orlando website,

and shared on our social media channels.

- February | Black History Month: “The Message” by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Written by Jen Atwell - DEI committee chair)
  - April | National Autism Awareness Month: “The Framed Woman of Ardmore House” by Brandy Schillace (Written by Sofia Macias - DEI committee member)
  - May | Asian American & Pacific Islander Month: “Daughter of the Moon Goddess” by Sue Lynn Tan (Written by Sofia Macias - DEI committee member)
  - June | Pride Month: “Tomorrow Will Be Different” by Sarah McBride (Written by Jen Atwell - DEI committee chair)
  - July | Disability Pride Month: “Demystifying Disability” by Emily Ladau (Written by Jen Atwell - DEI committee chair | top ranked BOTM post)
- DEI committee-hosted “Coffee & Connection” event

Based on member feedback requesting relaxed, small-group networking opportunities, the DEI committee hosted ‘Coffee & Connection’ at Light on the Sugar, an Asian-owned café. This directly supported our objective of hosting at least one free, accessible event by 2025.

Light on the Sugar is an Asian-owned, Asian-inspired small business that was founded by husband and wife team, Yixi Qiu and Wen Pan, in fall 2019. From program development to execution, this event was intentionally small to allow for candid conversation. We had attendance of 10 chapter members, and two attendees from the PR/communications community.

DEI-focused blog articles

In alignment with our measurable objective to publish 10 DEI blogs with 25% engagement, we created DEI-focused content that provided relevant, actionable resources for the PR and communications community. Our goal through the end of 2025 is to publish at least 10 blog posts throughout the year, including both original articles and Book of the Month features.

Blog highlights include:

- Inclusive Communications for Neurodivergent Audiences by Heather Wilson, DEI Committee (top ranked blog)
- Why DEI is Leverage for PR Success by Sade Teel, DEI Committee
- Reaching Deaf Audiences by Heather Wilson, DEI Committee
- Supporting Veterans Through Strategic PR: Mental Health Awareness Meets Professional Purpose by Heather Wilson, DEI Committee

These articles serve as educational tools, reinforcing the Chapter’s commitment to inclusive storytelling and professional development. While

engagement times varied, the content aligned with our mission to elevate DEI within the communications field.

#### IMPLEMENTATION -

- Summary: Explain your Chapter's DEI initiatives for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.\*

Key initiatives:

- Expanded DEI-centered programming each month
- Support Chapter members through the PRosperity Grant, SunCon 2025 Grant, and ICON 2025 Grant
- Re-established PRSA Orlando Book of the Month initiative, featuring five titles tied to observances such as Black History Month, Pride Month, and Disability Pride Month. The top-performing post (Demystifying Disability) highlighted strong member interest and engagement.
- Created community-focused programming: Hosted a successful “Coffee & Connection” event at a local Asian-owned business, fostering inclusive networking in a relaxed/small group setting.
- Produced DEI-focused content and resources: Published DEI-focused blog articles with a combined total of over 200 pageviews. Topics included neurodiversity, Deaf audiences, supporting veterans, and the value of DEI in PR.

Maintained a member-centered approach: All initiatives were shaped by feedback from chapter members, past DEI chairs and board leadership, ensuring alignment with member needs and chapter priorities.

IMPLEMENTATION -- Describe the elements or components, the techniques used, and the strategies and tactics undertaken, how objectives were met, and how you addressed the audience(s) you targeted.

PRSA Orlando’s initiatives were thoughtfully developed to foster inclusivity, amplify underrepresented voices, and create meaningful engagement opportunities for members and the broader communications community.

The Chapter implemented a multi-pronged approach, through not only the DEI committee, but also through the Programming Committee.

Elements and components:

- Monthly DEI-centered programming
- Support members who were going through financial hardships with PRosperity Grant, SunCon Grant and ICON Grant
- Re-established DEI-focused Book of the Month initiative

- Community-focused networking event at a local underrepresented-owned business
- Educational blog content spotlighting inclusive communication practices and underrepresented communities.

Techniques used:

- Intentional content curation: book selections and blog topics were chosen by PR professionals, reflecting diverse experiences and actionable insights.
- Small-group engagement, prioritizing relaxed and intimate settings to foster authentic dialogue and networking.
- Member-driven strategy: Initiatives and objectives were shaped from member listening sessions, past DEI-chairs, and board leadership.

Strategies and tactics:

- Programming at Citrus Club: Events addressed DEI through professional lenses, and through inclusive, family-friendly experiences.
- Book club: Titles selected sparked learning, with reviews connecting books to the communications field, or by reinforcing DEI's relevance.
- Blog articles: Topics included neurodiversity, deaf audiences, and veteran support. These served as educational tools and were authored by DEI committee members to ensure authenticity and expertise.
- Community engagement: Through intentional programming, the Chapter supported small or minority-owned businesses

Objectives met:

PRSA Orlando met its DEI objectives through the work of the Programs and DEI committees.

EVALUATION -- What were your results? Explain how the program met or exceeded its original measurement methods when available or appropriate. What worked? What was accomplished? What would you do differently?

PRSA Orlando's DEI initiatives achieved impactful results aligned with our objectives, thanks to the work of the Programs and DEI Committees.

This work led to:

- Inclusive monthly programming January through May 2025.
- The creation of a free networking event ("Coffee & Connection") that supported a local Asian-owned business, all which aligned with member feedback and committee goals.
- Relaunch of the DEI book of the month initiative
- Published informational blog content on PRSAOrlando.org. We published DEI-focused blog content on PRSAOrlando.org, including top-performing

articles such as ‘Inclusive Communications for Neurodivergent Audiences,’ which received the highest readership among DEI blogs.

- Through the PRosperity Grant, the Chapter supported three members in reinstating their memberships and advancing their APR journey. The SunCon Grant enabled two members with financial constraints to attend the conference, ensuring access to professional development opportunities.

### EVALUATION – Next Steps: What are your future plans for DEI initiatives?

In August 2025, the DEI committee will host a formal program at the Citrus Club, Communicating with Purpose: Building Inclusive & Accessible Connections. The program will feature panelists Zac Alfson, Senior Director of Marketing at Orlando Family Stage; Nisha Brice, Senior Corporate Social Responsibility Integrator at Florida Blue; Kimberly McCarten, CEO of Jonathan’s Landing; and Denise Spiegel, Vice President of Communications at Visit Orlando. The event will also include a powerful poetry reading by Orlando’s Poet Laureate, Shawn Welcome, who will share Shades of Grey, a piece that emphasizes the importance of perspective in communication, along with an interactive recap activity. Building on member feedback favoring community-centered events, the committee will continue this momentum in Spring 2026 with a relaxed program in partnership with another small or minority-owned business. As we look ahead, we recognize the importance of continuing to measure against our objectives. While Coffee & Connection created meaningful dialogue, we hope to encourage more attendance at future events. Similarly, while our DEI blogs and Book of the Month posts generated pageviews, we will continue to refine content and track analytics more closely to benchmark against our 25% engagement objective. We will also revisit some of the content we have published to ensure it aligns with our chapter objectives and determine if new approaches are needed. These lessons will guide the development of future initiatives, ensuring that programming not only reflects member feedback but also demonstrates measurable progress toward our DEI goals.

Moving forward, the Board will also remain intentional about weaving DEI into our ongoing initiatives. This includes continuing programs such as PR Paid Forward, advancing opportunities through our PRosperity Grant, and fostering connections by volunteering in the community. Most importantly, we will uphold a commitment to ensuring that DEI is present in everything we do as a chapter — serving as both a foundation and a guiding principle for our work.

