

Effective Black Allies

Thank you for choosing to be an ally for the Blacks United in Leadership and Diversity (BUILD) Business Resource Group. Below, you'll find information about common questions and discussion points.

What does it mean to be an ally?

We use the most widely accepted, up-to-date [definition of an ally](#). This is someone from “one social identity group who advocates with and supports members of another group; typically a member of the dominant identity advocating with and supporting a marginalized group.” (*See link above for source*).

Being an ally of and with BUILD does not mean that you have to 100% understand the Black experience. Instead, it means we want you to strive for cultural humility.

This means you're open to learning about the day-to-day struggles the Black community faces. It means you understand that regardless of where you lack privilege, your non-black skin provides you with a privilege that those of the Black Community do not have. In addition, it means you to commit to use your privilege to advocate for our mission, which is to improve the experiences of current and future Black employees, increase the representation of Black people in leadership positions, give voice to Black perspectives in policy decisions about Washington communities, and build each other up as we move forward.

Being an ally is not easy

It means doing personal work to address your own bias while gaining and strengthening your cultural humility. It means using your power and privilege to make process and systems changes that increase equity and inclusion. As a member of BUILD, we know some people who strive to be allies feel burdened with the fear of saying something wrong. We want you to participate fully as an ally and so we know there will be mistakes as you learn and grow – we all do that. No one is perfect. We are given grace to learn and grow individually and together. When we get it wrong, we apologize and work to be better in the future, not relying on the person we offended to fix it or make it better, but to do our own work to change the impact of our misguided words or actions.

Being an ally also means you commit to gain a better understanding of how the system of oppression directly impacts the Black community. But most importantly, the work of an ally requires an open mind, a willingness to learn and unlearn, and an understanding that [making mistakes](#) and learning from them is a significant part of growth and change.

Source: [So you want to talk about Race](#)

Allies with intersectional marginalized identities

For members of BUILD who identify as a non-Black LGBTQI+, person of color, person with a disability, or another group that has been historically marginalized in our country we have some additional notes.

As members of a marginalized group, you can empathize with the experiences of discrimination and “isms” that you've been subjected to. And, it's important to accept that your experiences are different than those of the Black community. It's a balance between knowing we are a stronger voice when we

collectively speak up about institutional “isms,” and also acknowledging that the experience of the Black community differs. Being an ally to the Black Community and BUILD means centering around their experience, their history of impact based on marginalization, oppression, and the racist foundation that our country built and embedded into our country’s systems and structures.

In other words, if we focus our collective voice on breaking down the systems of oppression for the Black community, other marginalized communities will benefit.

Here are a few tips to be a better ally:

- **Do not** demand that those you support produce proof of the inequality they work to resist.
- **Do not** offer up your relationship with a marginalized group as evidence of your understanding.
- **Do not** see yourself as the savior riding to the rescue on a white horse.
- **Do not** expect to be taught or shown. Take the initiative and use the tools around you to learn and answer your questions.
- **Do not** behave as though you know best.
- **Do not** take credit for the labor of those who are marginalized and did the work before you stepped into the picture.
- **Do not** assume every member of the marginalized group feels oppressed.
- **Do** the inner work to figure out a way to acknowledge how your actions directly influence these oppressive systems.
- **Do** amplify the voices of those without your privilege.
- **Do** recognize how your privilege might mean you’re unaware of the injustice that others experience.
- **Do** learn and expand your consciousness by listening more and talking less.
- **Do** notice that you join a group of people who are already working to save themselves.
- **Do** realize the only requirement you need to enter allyship is a commitment to justice and human equality.
- **Do** be aware of implicit biases and the impacts of stereotyping.
- **Do** your research to learn more about the history of the struggle you are participating in.

Source: [Guide to Allyship](#)

Questions?

For membership or general questions, please reach out to BUILD at BUILD@ofm.wa.gov. We look forward to collaborating with you on this crucial diversity, equity, and inclusion effort.