



Session Five: Engaging a Diverse Community/Civic Engagement



Diversity and Inclusion and Community Engagement

UNITED WAY EQUITY DEFINITION

Equity is the intentional inclusion of everyone in society. Equity is achieved when systemic, institutional, and historical barriers based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities are dismantled and no longer predict socioeconomic, education and health outcomes.

UNITED WAY VISION FOR EQUITY

We recognize structural racism and other forms of oppression have contributed to persistent disparities which United Way seeks to dismantle. Our United Way network strives to engage community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized. We work with residents and public and private partners to co-create solutions that ensure everyone has the resources, supports, opportunities and networks they need to thrive. We commit to leveraging all of our assets (convening, strategic investments, awareness building, advocacy) to create more equitable communities.

Why is having a diverse board important?

1. **Diversity and the wide range of perspectives that accompany it are critical to good governance.** Diversity reflects the real world. Organizations have a diverse set of stakeholders. Bringing in diverse perspectives means tackling the same idea from various angles.
2. **Successfully meeting the continual challenges and complexities of organizations requires having a diverse set of competencies as a primary resource.** Boards need members with a range of experiences to help them anticipate change, assess risks, and discover opportunities.

Many different variables come to mind when attempting to describe and define diversity, such as:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Skills
- Experience
- Competencies
- Philosophies
- Life experiences
- Race
- Religion
- Socioeconomic background

Building a Diverse Board

Three Strategies from "Beyond Political Correctness: Building a Diverse Board"

1. Communicate

Your board should have an open, thoughtful discussion to consider how it and your organization, community, and constituents might benefit from diversity with the board.

2. Act-Develop a case and plan for change

To help your board develop, articulate, and embrace a shared vision for inclusiveness, it is important to write a compelling case statement. Consider incorporating your board's definition of inclusiveness (one organization's definition may not be another's definition), data about your community, a description of what your board will look and feel like when inclusive, an indication of how inclusiveness relates to or will impact the board's ability to fulfill your organization's mission, and information about how you plan to put your commitment to inclusiveness into action. To put your commitment into action, develop a plan that includes strategies, concrete goals, objectives, tasks, and a timeline. Boards are more likely to focus on an issue if an official goal or policy exists to remind them of what they want to achieve.

3. Monitor and measure results

To stay focused on your objectives and goals, monitor your progress on a quarterly or semiannual basis. Track your retention rates of diverse members. Conduct exit interviews to further assess your progress and identify areas where you could improve. Administer board self-assessments that include questions related to diversity strategies and goals. Survey staff, constituents, and stakeholders about their perceptions of the organization's culture of inclusiveness.



Let's hear from an expert

Colleen Frein

