

Governance

Engage leadership and the board in driving an equity focus and ensuring follow-through over time

Introduction

Organizations look to their board to help set, support and lead the strategy of the organization. The board can be a significant champion for equity: setting policies, modeling good equity work, and governing organizational behavior that supports equity.

Tools for equity

Board as equity champions

Board diversity approaches

Promoting equity in governance

Board as equity champions

Board equity work signals a commitment to diversity, supports implementation, and demonstrates good governance. It will engage the executive leadership to champion the cause and act as catalysts for change.

A board that practices inclusive governance is one that

- Seeks information from multiple sources
- Demonstrates an awareness of the community and constituents who benefit and contribute to the organization's services
- Establishes policies and structures to foster stakeholder contributions
- Continues to look deeply at its own equity practices

Sources

Maytree Foundation

Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards

Board diversity approaches

An organization's policy on board diversity needs to be clearly articulated and broadly embraced.

Diversity policies are most useful when they contain

- A values statement about the organization's commitment to issues of diversity and equity
- A brief statement of the added value that implementing this policy will bring to the work of the organization, for example: better reflecting the demographics of the community it serves; design programs and services that better serve the needs of diverse groups
- A set of milestones that the board would like to achieve and
- An accountability framework to ensure achievement of goals/milestones

Steps to diversifying the board can include

- Review of the existing membership strategy for board recruitment to identify systemic barriers to gender equity and participation of underrepresented groups
- Identifying previously disadvantaged groups and inviting individuals from those groups to discuss broader participation in the governance structures
- Developing an annual action plan to guide implementation of the policy and to set out objectives, actions required, accountability, responsibility, timelines, and evaluation of activities

Sources

Maytree Foundation

Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards

Promoting equity in governance

There are several considerations to take into account when seeking to diversify your board and promoting equity in governance.

Steps to promote equity in governance include

- Articulate a board diversity policy
 - Like other policies, a diversity policy needs a concrete statement of objectives, a resource allocation to ensure implementation and an implementation strategy
- Establish an open and transparent board recruitment process
 - Seek to increase the number of qualified applicants, because having more candidates with the experience, knowledge and skills to effectively participate will create an applicant pool that better reflects the diversity of the population served by the organization
- Establish a baseline and track progress
 - Ask questions such as:
 - What is the demographic composition of the community?
 - Is the demographic composition of the community currently reflected in the governance of the organization?
 - What are the board nomination and appointments policies and procedures?
 - Do those policies and procedures create barriers to the participation of diverse communities?
- Provide orientation and ongoing training
 - Training reinforces the commitment to diversity by demonstrating that the board is willing to dedicate time and resources to building the organization's skills to reach that goal
- Support diverse board members
 - Boards must accommodate the needs of all members by, for example, ensuring that venues are accessible, meetings are scheduled to not interfere with major cultural holidays, and child-care needs are addressed
- Embed equity in all board policies and practices

- Consider creating a checklist of criteria for all policies, accompanied by appropriate means of measurement or indicators to track progress

Sources

Maytree Foundation

Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards