



# DEVELOPING A NONPROFIT BOARD FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

## A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVELY MEASURING BOARD READINESS, VULNERABILITIES, AND INTEGRITY

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### SUMMARY

Nonprofit Boards, even those with well-meaning members and leaders, often fall short in terms of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, practices, and procedures. This is partially because Boards lack adequate tools to effectively asses themselves for DEI. This research culminates in the development of a survey-based DEI self-assessment tool that measures Board readiness, vulnerabilities, integrity, and personal biases. The creation of the assessment tool was informed by an examination of the literature and expert interviews with those in the field. A comprehensive list of indicators in the categories of readiness, vulnerabilities, and integrity were compiled and offer Boards a new frame for understanding DEI within their organizations. A case-study was conducted whereby Board and staff members of a small community-based nonprofit organization (CBO) completed the survey and their results were tabulated and compared. The developed tool offers valid information about an organizations DEI readiness, vulnerabilities, and integrity and serves as an initial step for organization's who aim to improve their DEI policies, practices, procedures, and culture.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to develop a set of DEI indicators in three categories – readiness, vulnerabilities, and integrity. These indicators will inform the creation of a more comprehensive assessment tool for measuring Board DEI. This research will have an impact cross-sector and creates a starting place for organizational Boards to assess their current practices, reevaluate their policies and procedures, and take a more active and intentional approach to DEI.

### RESEARCH

- ❖ What are the indicators DEI readiness, vulnerability, and integrity?
- ❖ How can boards effectively identify and assess their vulnerability, integrity, and readiness to implement diversity and inclusion practices?
- ❖ What are the benefits to identifying gaps between diversity and inclusion?

### METHODS



### DATA AND ANALYSIS

#### Defining Diversity

S	• Socioeconomic status and education
C	• Culture, race, ethnicity, national origin
A	• Age, developmental stage
G	• Gender, sexual orientation
S	• Spirituality, religion
O	• Other - disability, occupation, housing

#### DEI Indicators (Literature Review and Expert Interviews)

Readiness	Vulnerabilities	Integrity
Champion(s) for DEI	Division between Board and Staff	Frequent opportunities for Board/Staff shared contexts
Ability to embrace ambiguity and discomfort	Fear of “messaging with a good thing”	Willingness to adapt when needs of the Board change
Understanding and agreement of shared values	Worry that DEI measures will decrease existing Board’s privilege	Creating personalized plans for DEI with each person
A learning and growth mindset	Thinking that DEI solutions are one-size-fits-all	Defined Board term limits
An understanding of variance in privilege	When checklists, matrices, etc. are used in isolation	Regular generative thinking/conversations around DEI
A shared understanding of DEI and an agreed upon framework for discussing and evaluating	Using lack of resources as an excuse for not implementing inclusion practices	Treating DEI as a living, breathing, and evolving practice
An ability to uncover and discuss personal biases	A lack of Board involvement or understanding of community served.	Implementation of DEI policies for the Board and Organization.
Empathy, respect, and curiosity for other cultures	Having a strict fundraising requirement to serve on the Board	Defined categories of Board membership.

### RESULTS

A self-assessment survey for the Board and staff was developed using the indicators gathered through the expert interviews and literature review.

#### Sample Questions within Indicator Categories

Category	Indicator	Question
Readiness	Champion(s) for DEI	I am willing to be a voice of diversity for the organization/community, even if it is contrary to the majority opinion.
Vulnerabilities	Using lack of resources as an excuse for not implementing inclusion practices.	I am open to expanding positions, placements, programs, and decision-making power to those of lower socioeconomic status, A...even if my organization has to provide transportation.
Integrity	Making DEI personal	I am willing to consider opportunities that may not benefit us equally.
Staff (Vulnerabilities)	Division between Board and Staff	The Board of Directors understands my experience as a staff member.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Readiness - Identify your champion(s).** Having a voice in the organization for DEI is a huge first step. By creating a DEI sub-committee of the Board, a small group can set organizational priorities. Including staff and community stakeholders on the committee is another way to bring diversity and representation into the Boardroom and addresses the DEI vulnerability of having a divided Board and staff.

**Vulnerabilities - Rewrite Board fundraising requirements to offer alternative ways to “give” to a Board.** Boards should remove financial contribution requirements to allow for more socioeconomically diverse membership. Financial contributions should be relative to each person. The value of having a member who is representative of the community must outweigh the prospect of a potential donation.

**Integrity - Create personalized DEI plans for each member.** Contrary to some literature, DEI is not accomplished by applying the same inclusive practices to any organization. Rather, DEI must be based on an individual and how they feel included. While one person may want translation services, another may feel othered and ostracized by this. Inclusion must start by asking an individual how they best feel included and then taking actions to support their needs.

### REFERENCES

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