

Integrating Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity into Your Board Culture and Performance

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Today's Conversation

- *2020 Leading with Intent* data on Board Performance
- BoardSource's Board Self-Assessment (BSA) tool
- Overview of BoardSource and Its Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity in the Nonprofit Sector
- National Data on Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity on Nonprofit Boards
- Strategic Steps in Board Recruitment and Retention
- My Experiences and Conversations in the Field
- Some Recommendations for Board Members
- Contact Information and Additional Resources

Leading with Intent: Lack of Board Diversity Is Among the Sector's Greatest Challenges

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Strengths

1. Understanding the Organization's Mission
2. Projecting a Positive Image of the Organization
3. Legal and Ethical Oversight
4. Financial Oversight
5. (tie)
 - ✓ Knowledge of Organization's Programs
 - ✓ Providing Guidance to the Chief Executive

Weaknesses

1. Fundraising
2. Leveraging Board Connections and Networks to Influence Public Policy Decisions
3. Monitoring Legislative and Regulatory Issues
4. ***Building a Diverse and Inclusive Board***
5. Building Relationships in the Community

The Board Self-Assessment (BSA)

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- Purpose of the BSA
 - Helps boards set board development priorities
 - Motivates board members – individually and collectively – to strengthen governance performance and practices

- BSA focus areas
 - The People (board composition; structure; meetings)
 - The Culture (leadership culture and dynamics)
 - The Work (mission, vision, and strategy; funding; public image; oversight of programs, finances, and the chief executive)
 - The Impact (perceptions of board's impact on org performance)

- For more information on our BSA: assessments@boardsource.org

Overview of BoardSource's Vision

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- Vision: A world where every social sector organization has the leadership it needs to fulfill its mission and advance the public good.

- Core Belief: It is *impossible* for the social sector to achieve this vision without a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity.
 - Diversity in board composition (skills, expertise, lived experiences, cultural/ethnic background)
 - Inclusivity in building a board culture of trust, candor, and respect for everyone
 - Equity-focused in understanding and developing strategies in the societal context in which the organization operates

The Data: We've Got a Long Way To Go . . .

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- The nonprofit sector isn't as diverse as it should be, as indicated by our national survey data:
 - 87% of nonprofit chief executives are white
 - 78% of nonprofit board members are white
 - 19% of nonprofit boards are *entirely* white
 - 65% of board chairs said that the board's composition did not represent the demographics of the population served by the organization
 - 76% of boards do not place a high priority on demographic diversity when they recruit board members

5 Questions to Get Boards Started

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- Is our organization's reputation being negatively (or positively) impacted by our board's current composition regarding diversity?
- If someone were to make assumptions about our organizational values based on our board composition, what would they be likely to think?
- How well are we cultivating a deeper understanding of the community or communities that we serve and bringing their perspectives, needs, feedback, and priorities into our strategic boardroom discussions?
- Are we ever at risk of making decisions without fully understanding how these decisions may affect those we serve?
- If we were to make a deeper commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity, what would that mean for our mission, our work, and the people we serve?

Board Recruitment Strategies

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- Develop an action plan, policies, and procedures to address self-identified weaknesses
 - Use a board recruitment matrix to identify areas you want to address
 - Set expectations up front with board candidates, especially related to fundraising
 - Assess candidates' level of comfort and experience on prioritized topics
 - Move beyond regular channels for board recruitment
 - ✓ Post board searches
 - ✓ Connect with local chapters of ethnic professional and civic associations
 - ✓ Engage staff
 - ✓ Engage *every* board member

Board Retention Strategies

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- To support greater retention:
 - Establish written diversity policies
 - Implement a detailed orientation process
 - Provide equal access to board leadership opportunities (for example, add new diverse board members to board committees soon after they join the board)
 - Pay careful attention to board social inclusion practices
 - Ask board members of color for feedback on the recruitment process they experienced
 - ✓ Identify parts of the process that helped them make the decision to join the board
 - ✓ Identify parts of the process that were barriers to joining the board, and determine how to remove those barriers

My Experiences and Conversations in the Field

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- This work often leads to “uncomfortable” moments for white nonprofit leaders (and for me) -- here are four quotes that I’ve heard within the last year on this topic:
 - *“I was so angered by the first 30 minutes of the racial equity training session that I shut down for the next two days of training.”*
 - *“Could we use softer terms than “white privilege”? I just don’t want white leaders to be “put off” by the terminology.”*
 - *“Do we have to focus on diversity for our board? We’re a nonprofit that focuses on beautifying the environment, not affordable housing, economic development, education, or health.”*
 - *“I feel like you’re asking me to apologize for my whiteness.”*

Some Recommendations for Board Members

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- “Lean in” to the “discomfort” in discussing these issues; it’s part of the work, and you can’t get around it if you want to make progress
- Keep learning (read, watch, listen, notice, connect, engage, act, reflect, stay inspired)
- Acknowledge that making statements and declaring intentions aren’t enough; assess what you’ve done and decide what you will commit to doing

Contact Information and Additional Resources

Contact Information

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Additional Resources

- BoardSource [DEI website](#)
- BoardSource [COVID-19 website](#)
- BoardSource publication: [The Board Building Cycle](#)