Integrating Equity to Advance Your Organization

2021 Harvard Nonprofit Board Summit

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Terminology: DIVERSITY

Diversity includes **all the ways in which people differ**, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

It is all-inclusive and **recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued**. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values.

Terminology: INCLUSION

Inclusion is the **act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.** An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

It's important to note that while **an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive.** Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or 'implicit bias' helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.

Terminology: EQUITY

Equity is the state where **predictability of success or failure is not correlated with identity or cultural markers** such as race, gender and sexual orientation.

Equity strives to **identify and eliminate barriers** that have prevented the full participation of some groups, **increase justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources.**

Tackling equity issues **requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities** within our society.

Terminology: RACISM

Racism = race prejudice + social and institutional power
Racism = a system of oppression based on race and the idea of racial superiority
Racism = a white supremacy system

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination.

Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.

Terminology: Anti-Racist

One who is **supporting** an antiracist policy (written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people) **through their actions or expressing an anti-racist idea**, which **produces or sustains racial equity** between racial groups.   ~Ibram X. Kendi

- More than "not racist"
- Intentional
- Understand cultural and social context
- Requires a state of mind/consciousness
- Requires action and counter-cultural moves

EDI Insights in Social Impact

- There's a shift in the sector **from DEI to EDI** for focus and intention.

- EDI is a **practice and expertise** which means we can define and develop competencies (which is especially critical when engaging around DEI in the workplace). Anti-racism is one aspect of EDI.

- There are differing **altitudes for EDI learning** & competency development (Board, org, managers, teams, individual) => organizations are rarely at one stage (because people are in different stages)

- **Strategic integration & plans** are must haves for organizations seeking sustained change related to EDI. It is critical to manage the need to 'get it right' with appreciation for incremental progress.

- **Integration of EDI with other critical capabilities** is critical (i.e., decision-making, measurement and evaluation, communications, change management, management training and coaching).

- The focus of organizations seeking to advance their work is to move from intellectualizing EDI to **operationalizing EDI.** (Practice & Pacesetters)

  Some Areas for Operationalizing: Policy, Fundraising, Talent/Culture/HR, Decision-Making/Power Sharing, Measurement and Evaluation, Field Leadership, Impact Model/Program

Emerging EDI Board Related Insights

1. Boards are primarily tackling DEI in one of two ways: integration throughout their efforts or distinct committees. It is clear that staff responsible for Board management must determine how to balance personal DEI development amidst operationalizing mission-related DEI efforts. We are seeing a growing number of anti-racism efforts through committees or tasks forces as Boards look to strategically connect this work to outcomes.

2. Boards are often the last to engage in deep DEI work with an organization due to meeting cadence and a lack of internal expertise. Boards also have less direct impact on internal staff experiences in comparison to mission/strategic impact.

3. Boards are the primary place where DEI accountability for CEOs could be managed, but with the gap in expertise on many Boards, CEOs end up leading the progress.

4. BHLI-led organizations are more likely to have Board members with an understanding of DEI opportunities amidst their core professional expertise. They may not may not prioritize explicit DEI leaders on their Board due to their own personal expertise, and opt to prioritize recruiting those with expertise they do not already possess.

5. BHLI leaders acknowledge the impact of racial identity on fundraising, but use a number of interventions to mitigate impact: incl. Board recruitment and the engagement of surrogates to fundraise on their behalf.

6. A Board Chair who can partner publicly with a CEO on comms & other public declarations of DEI priorities and progress is highly valuable in solidifying an organization's public persona and expertise in the field, as well as in recruiting more effective Board members.

7. Boards are one place to critically **engage constituent voice** to ensure equitable outcomes and greater alignment to a desired community's solutions.

What is anti-racism work?

"It is the exercise of hope, the practice of undoing and dismantling systems of oppression, the practice of freedom and of truth-telling. Anti-racist work is the practice of healing and of restoring; it is a practice of love.

~Jamilah Pitts

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Thank You!

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