

Equity Diversity Inclusion

Action Toolkit for Organizations

DEVELOPED BY

Tolulope Oyetunde, MS, MPH
Adrianna Boulton, MPH
Jeanie Holt, MS, MPH



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many of the societal problems nonprofit organizations focus on — health disparities, poverty, housing and quality education — have a deep-rooted origin in systemic and structural racism. Nonprofits have a responsibility, and often a passionate commitment, to fight racism and be exemplary models of racial equity and justice. Yet, a significant diversity and inclusion gap persists in the nonprofit sector. Over the last 20 years, studies have shown that people of color hold only 20% of nonprofit leadership positions (CEP, 2020; Thomas-Breitfeld & Kunreuther, 2017; Winston, 2015). Studies have also found diversity among leadership and staff fosters creativity, innovation and high-quality decision-making (Phillips & Neale, 2001; Buse et al. 2016; Gauthier et al, 2019). Therefore, organizations that prioritize equity, diversity and inclusion, or E-D-I, are better equipped to effectively serve their communities.

Assessing and taking steps toward organizational E-D-I can be an uncomfortable and challenging commitment for any nonprofit. Doing so can be even more overwhelming for smaller nonprofit organizations due to limited staff and board capacity. However, no matter the size, institutionalizing E-D-I is vital to every nonprofit organization's structure.

This toolkit serves as an encouraging first step for any organization ready to implement E-D-I practices. Using this toolkit, board and staff members can assess their current practices and find resources to ensure continued growth in diversity and equity. Lastly, E-D-I work is an ongoing journey, which a committed organization must regularly and frequently revisit.

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this interactive toolkit is to stimulate and guide smaller nonprofit organizations as they integrate E-D-I best practices into their governance and organizational structure.

The toolkit will:

- Guide board and staff members in exploring their current racial diversity, equity and inclusion practices;
- Assess E-D-I imbalance in five key organizational areas of focus; and
- Connect board and staff members to resources and tools on how to make improvements within those five organizational areas.

E-D-I ACTION GOALS

- 1 Authenticity:** Establishing the intention behind the governance board's decision to implement an organizational action plan toward racial equity and inclusivity.
- 2 Assessment:** Assessing an organization's existing norms, practices and values that either promote or hinder racial equity and inclusivity.
- 3 Empowerment:** Empowering the governance board to adopt, promote and operationalize equity through tools and resources within the E-D-I toolkit.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This toolkit will be useful for nonprofit organizations with a volunteer board of directors and fewer than three full-time staff. These organizations are generally community-based with limited resources and minimal staff support. Yet, such organizations provide essential services in vulnerable communities and have the potential to be the vanguard of social justice work. To be change agents, nonprofits must be equipped with E-D-I tools and resources to ensure that equity and justice is a reality within their own organization.

WHY FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY?

Racism is a fundamental challenge to public health, and structural racism is a foundational cause of health inequities. We acknowledge many populations and communities experience injustice and inequity — such as LGBTQIA communities, people with disabilities, elders, etc. In this toolkit, we particularly focus on racial equity because racism overlays other factors of discrimination; whatever discriminations a community experiences, racism adds another burden of inequity. In addition, history has shown that where we have managed to dismantle one piece of the structure, another gets built to perpetuate the systems of racial privilege and oppression. Therefore, in this public health crisis, we must become actively and aggressively anti-racist. We hope this toolkit helps your organization achieve that.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

- 1 IF** a small nonprofit governance board implements the E-D-I toolkit that operationalizes racial equity and inclusivity within their organizational structure **THEN** the organization will be better equipped to promote racial equity and justice within the communities they serve.

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY UTILIZE THIS TOOLKIT

Before diving into the toolkit, your organization must understand the historical context and importance of organizational E-D-I work. We encourage you to watch the video *How to Address Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Issues in a Contemporary Workplace* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ECHLI0hkec>).

Secondly, when facilitating authentic discussions about racism and equity, it is important to use proper terminology to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings. We encourage you to review the *YWCA Social Justice Glossary* (https://www.ywboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/MISS_VIT_BLD-SUPP-FOR-MISS_TRN-AND-DEVEL_SJ-GLOSSARY_MARCH_2016.pdf) and *Racial Equity Resource Guide Glossary* (<http://www.racialequityresourceguide.org/about/glossary>) and keep both as references throughout your E-D-I work.

This toolkit includes five assessments that focus on governance, mission-driven programs, partnerships, communication and advocacy. Each assessment allows you to reflect on your organizational practices and identify areas for improvement. A list of tools and resources to use when making such amendments follows each assessment.

COMMUNITY

Before beginning your assessment we invite you to reflect on what community means for your organization and who makes up the community that your organization serves. Naming these at the start will help your organization to accurately assess E-D-I using definitions specific to your organization and the community that your organization serves. Once identified, please reference your organization's definition of community and identification of who the community is as you progress through this toolkit.

After you use the Toolkit to plan your next steps, we ask that you complete the brief evaluation survey included in the Toolkit. Your input will help us improve the Toolkit and find ways to offer resources focused on the areas most needed by small nonprofit organizations.

As your organization begins E-D-I work, please remember:

- 1** This toolkit can be adjusted to fit your organizational needs. Each section can be worked on independently, simultaneously or sequentially depending on your organizational capacity to implement these practices.
- 2** E-D-I work requires time, dedication and intention. This work should not be a one-time commitment for your organization but rather an ever-evolving, long-term journey.

A note about the tools and resources: Hundreds of resources can be accessed online. We have tried to winnow these down to a manageable number to guide you. If you find others particularly helpful, we welcome hearing about those; please include them when you fill out the evaluation survey at <http://bit.ly/e-d-i-toolkit-eval>.

We wish you the best as your organization takes this first step toward racial equity!

GOVERNANCE

The governance assessment evaluates current governance practices and policies such as board recruitment, training, bylaws and decision-making. Complete this assessment by checking the box most relevant to each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our board reflects the diversity of the community we serve.				
We have an intentional and deliberate strategy/process for recruiting board members from communities of color.				
The qualifications for potential board members encourage a diverse pool of candidates.				
Our board and staff members participate in periodic training about reducing racial disparities and promoting racial equity both internally and externally.				
We provide our board and staff members with ongoing training to ensure a deep level of understanding about racial inequities in communities we serve.				
Our bylaws include explicit language that demonstrates the organization's commitment to inclusive practices; including but not limited to statement of values, required ratio of diverse board members and mission statement.				
Our board members intentionally and deliberately bring the perspectives, feedback, needs and priorities of diverse communities into strategic boardroom discussions.				

TOOLS FOR E-D-I-BALANCED GOVERNANCE

- 1** Why Are We Still Struggling with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Nonprofit Governance? (<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-are-we-still-struggling-with-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-nonprofit-governance/>)
- 2** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work: Eight Questions for Building Readiness and Steering Clear of Pitfalls (<http://www.mayenoconsulting.com/wordpress/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-work-eight-questions-for-building-readiness-and-steering-clear-of-pitfalls/>)
- 3** Race Matters Organizational Self-Assessment (<https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-matters-organizational-self-assessment/>)
- 4** Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-to Manual (specifically the Preparation section) (<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-action-plans-manual/>)
- 5** Role of Boards in realizing organizational performance from inclusive diversity (video) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owaLO6Da4mQ>)
- 6** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Nonprofit Bylaws (<https://nonprofitlawblog.com/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-nonprofit-bylaws/>)

MISSION-DRIVEN PROGRAMS

The mission-driven program assessment evaluates current programs to ensure equitable community involvement and participation. Complete this assessment by checking the box most relevant to each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our mission, vision or goals intentionally and explicitly address racial equity.				
Our programs reflect the organization's mission and contribute to our organizational goals of promoting racial equity.				
Our programming is accessible to all community members. When planning programs, we consider accessibility and possible barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, scheduling, childcare, etc.).				
We develop ongoing bi-directional relationships with the community to ensure their active involvement in the work of our organization and our organization's active involvement in the work of the community (e.g., intentional and consistent communication channels, bidirectional training, shared resources and decision-making). We actively engage community members in developing, planning and implementing programs.				
We evaluate how our programs contribute to our organizational equity goals.				

TOOLS FOR E-D-I-BALANCED MISSION AND PROGRAMS

- 1** GARE Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity (<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunity-operationalize-equity/>)
- 2** Beyond Diversity: A Roadmap to Building an Inclusive Organization — Best Practices for Diversity and Inclusion (pages 18 - 23) (https://www.diversegreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/BeyondDiversity_Report.05.24.2017.pdf)
- 3** Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (<http://barhii.org/framework/>)
- 4** Advancing the Mission: Tools for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (<https://www.aecf.org/resources/advancing-the-mission-tools-for-equity-diversity-and-inclusion/>)
- 5** Nonprofit Association of Oregon Equity Statement (sample equity statement) (<https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/uploads/file/NAO-Equity-Statement.pdf>)
- 6** Steps We Took to Create the Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity (<https://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/cultural-equity/steps-we-took-to-create-the-americans-for-the-arts-statement-on-cultural-equity>)

PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership assessment evaluates current partnerships with other organizations and funders. Complete this assessment by checking the box most relevant to each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Funding requirements from external funders align with our organization's mission of racial equity.				
We form partnerships with other community organizations that align with our organization's mission to promote racial equity.				
We form meaningful bi-directional partnerships in the community to mobilize, amplify and make connections that work to promote racial equity.				
Our external partnerships and funders provide us with funding/ resources that promote racial equity.				

TOOLS FOR E-D-I-BALANCED PARTNERSHIPS

- 1 Leading by Example: Diversity Equity and Inclusion in Community Foundations: Changing Practice and Policy (pages 30-50) (<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/californiatomorrow.pdf>)
- 2 Making Community Partnerships Work: A Toolkit (especially Stage 3) (<http://www.aapcho.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Giachello-MakingCommunityPartnershipsWorkToolkit.pdf>)
- 3 Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships (<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-coalitions-and-partnerships>)
- 4 How to Partner with Local Community Organizations (<https://www.issuelab.org/resources/9757/9757.pdf>)
- 5 Partnering with Community Based Organizations (<https://www.ca-ilg.org/partnering-community-based-organizations>)

COMMUNICATIONS

The communication assessment evaluates current communication policies and practices to ensure inclusive internal and external communication materials. Complete this assessment by checking the box most relevant to each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We have an organizational policy for board transparency and communication with stakeholders (e.g., all board documents are transparent and accessible to the community we serve).				
We publicize our commitment to promoting racial equity through various communication platforms (e.g., website, social media, newsletters).				
We ensure the accessibility of all communication materials on all platforms including but not limited to print, social media and websites.				
We review the literacy level of all written materials to ensure accessibility by our community.				
We provide materials in the languages most accessible to those in our community.				
We screen all internal and external communication materials for racist, insensitive and biased language.				

TOOLS FOR E-D-I-BALANCED COMMUNICATION

- 1 Equity Screen Tool: Reference for when developing a blog post, book, podcast or video (<https://nonprofitaf.com/2019/08/content-creators-heres-an-equity-screen-to-use-as-you-work-on-your-next-blog-post-book-podcast-or-video/>)
- 2 Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide (page 18) (<https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/NAO-Equity-Lens-Guide-2019.pdf>)

ADVOCACY

The advocacy assessment evaluates the organizational capacity for community advocacy and local organizing efforts. Complete this assessment by checking the box most relevant to each statement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Our staff and board members identify policies and practices within their communities that perpetuate inequities and health disparities.				
We become strategically involved in initiatives that reduce inequities and disparities within their community (e.g., coalition-building, campaigning, educational initiative, etc.).				
We engage community members in prioritizing, developing and implementing advocacy initiatives that address inequities.				
We publicly support local/national initiatives and movements that fight for racial equity.				
We continuously identify innovative ways to contribute to local justice organizing efforts.				

TOOLS FOR E-D-I-BALANCED ADVOCACY

- 1 Embracing Equity: Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide (https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF_EmbracingEquity7Steps-2014.pdf)
- 2 Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide (pages 15 and 19) (<https://nonprofitoregon.org/sites/default/files/NAO-Equity-Lens-Guide-2019.pdf>)

CONCLUSION:

Congratulations on starting (or continuing) your organizational journal toward racial equity. You play a critical role in advancing equity and justice in your community by prioritizing racial equity within your organization. As nonprofit leaders, we all have to play a part in dismantling systems of oppression. Then we can begin the reconciliation and healing process to build an equitable society. We hope this tool continues to support and guide you throughout your organization's racial equity journey.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

— Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

— James Baldwin

References

- 1 Battalia Winston. (2015). The State of Diversity in Nonprofit and Foundation Leadership. [White paper]. https://www.battaliawinston.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/nonprofit_white_paper.pdf
- 2 Buse, K., Bernstein, R. S., & Bilimoria, D. (2016). The influence of board diversity, board diversity policies and practices, and board inclusion behaviors on nonprofit governance practices. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133(1), 179-191.
- 3 Castillo, E. A. (2018, November 20). Why Are We Still Struggling with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Nonprofit Governance? Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-are-we-still-struggling-with-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-nonprofit-governance/>
- 4 Gauthier, J., Cohen, D., & Meyer, C. R. (2019). Top Management Team Characteristics and Social Value Creation. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 10(2), 252-263.
- 5 National Council of Nonprofits. (2020, May 8). Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter for nonprofits. Retrieved from <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter-nonprofits>
- 6 Phillips, K. A., & Neale, M. A. (2010, October 1). Better Decisions Through Diversity. Retrieved from https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/better_decisions_through_diversity
- 7 The Center for Effective Philanthropy. (2019, September 5). Reflecting on Leadership Diversity in Today's Nonprofit Sector. Retrieved from <https://cep.org/reflecting-on-leadership-diversity-in-todays-nonprofit-sector/>
- 8 Thomas-Breitfeld, S., & Kunreuther, F. (2017). Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap. Building Movement Project. <https://racetolead.org/race-to-lead/>



The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We are the only organization that combines a nearly 150-year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public's health. Learn more at www.apha.org.

APHA | 800 I Street, NW | Washington, DC 20001 | 202-777-2742