



# Leadership and Governance Toolkit

## *Tool 19: How can Boards Prioritize a DEI Agenda?*

***To effectively prioritize an organization's DEI agenda, DEI needs to become an integral consideration in how Boards govern; Boards need to agree on a set of DEI values that underpin their governance approach.***

Ideally, the DEI values a Board espouses to underpin governance would dovetail with the organization's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy and/or its DEI

Strategy. When leaders develop these documents, they usually identify values that will drive DEI-related change in the organization. However, the values that drive managerial decision-making will not be the same that underpin DEI-focused governance, although some overlap is expected. To identify the values that will demonstrate how DEI considerations will be key to Board governance, Boards should discuss the following questions:

- How deeply aligned are the values of the organization to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. For community-based service organizations, this alignment is usually very high. Boards need to identify this alignment and use it to ground their prioritization of DEI.
- What does it mean for a Board to prioritize DEI? What are the expectations of the Leadership Team from the Board? Who is leading? Who is lagging? Is it the Board or the Leadership Team?
- The Board should work with the leadership team to prioritize the values it identified as key to improving its DEI context.
- Boards must understand the DEI themes the leadership team is prioritizing; these include but are not limited to: (1) representation, (2) willingness to confront discrimination, (3) balancing traditional definitions of merit vs. the value of lived experience, (5) leaders' role in fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion, (6) measuring DEI progress, (7) listening to marginalized voices, (8) transparency, (9) systemic discrimination, and (10) reflecting voices. Based on these discussions, what working definitions are the board comfortable with for diversity, equity, and inclusion?



- How much transparency is there in the Board's governance of the organization? Would more transparency foster more cross-organizational equity?
- How does the Board achieve integrity in governance mean? How pivotal is integrity in shaping the guidance that fosters more inclusion across the organization?
- How open and encouraging is the board to hear and support the implementation of frame-breaking policies to counteract the effects of systemic discrimination?
- How committed is the Board to instituting structures that may exist within the organization or cross organizational boundaries to help prioritize DEI?

## HOLDING ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABLE TO DEI PROGRESS & PROVIDING GUIDANCE

FIGURE 22: THE ROLES BOARDS PLAY IN CREATING POSITIVE DEI  
CONTEXTS - ACCOUNTABILITY

