



Factsheet: Building inclusive teams and boards

October 2022

This factsheet outlines some key concepts and provides some clear first steps to building inclusive boards and teams. It provides a brief overview of trust-based philanthropy and unconscious bias, elaborates on actions that community foundations can take to promote inclusion in their current teams and efforts to build inclusive teams through recruitment. There is an emphasis on the value of measurement and goal setting and prioritizing impact over the intention to embed equity practices.

Inclusivity as part of trust-based philanthropy

Embedding equity practices in recruitment is part of a broader commitment to trust-based philanthropy. Trust-based philanthropy is about rebalancing the power dynamics in funding relationships to be more transparent, equitable and fair. It is a practice that includes fundholder relationships and granting practices (i.e., the in and out of philanthropy and foundation model).

Here are some common trust-based philanthropy practices:

- Offering multi-year and unrestricted funding;
- Providing open and transparent communication with fundholders and grantees;
- Accepting responsibility and risk in your role as a funder;
- Providing access to Indigenous and other equity-seeking groups learning opportunities;
- Emphasizing the importance of the collective community over individual missions;
- Simplifying applications and reporting;
- Soliciting and acting on feedback from fundholders and grantees;
- Offering support beyond funding for grantees and donors, and;
- Committing to unlearning power dynamics in philanthropy.

Here are some benefits and transformative opportunities of trust-based philanthropy:

- Creating more effective granting and fundraising programs because of improved relationships with stakeholders;
- Developing a longer-term and deeper understanding of the work you are funding because of increased connections with communities and;
- Adapting more quickly to changing social issues and trends because of improved stakeholder communication.



Here are resources with more information on using trust-based philanthropy in your community foundation:

- [Community Centric Fundraising](#)
- [Trust-Based Philanthropy Project](#)
- [The Right Relations Collaborative](#)
- [Institute For Voluntary Action Research \(IVAR\)](#)

Building inclusive boards, committees and teams

Building inclusive boards, committees and teams start with building an inclusive culture that permeates strategies, policies, and ways of working throughout your community foundation that is consistent, intentional, and adequately prioritized and resourced. It starts well before recruitment and is complex and long-term transformational work.

Understanding unconscious bias in yourself and your foundation

Here are some key points about unconscious bias that we need to acknowledge:

- We all have unconscious bias.
- Unconscious bias is normalized, so it becomes invisible.
- We have a responsibility to disrupt unconscious bias.
- Our personal unconscious bias ripples outward and impacts broader social structures.
- Unconscious bias shows up in our policies and practices.
- It's not a question of **if** unconscious bias shows up, but rather **how**.

[This webinar](#) entitled *Institutional change and understanding unconscious bias* provides more information on unconscious bias.

Actions to build inclusion in our current teams

Here are steps you can take to promote inclusion in your current teams:

- Build equity into your community foundation's strategic plan and community impact reporting, such as Vital Signs, and set measurable key performance indicators (KPIs).
 - Ensure that KPIs address the representation of equity-seeking groups and operational changes.
 - Conduct outreach and consultation with your community, including equity-seeking groups, to build these strategic plans and set KPIs.
- Ensure that you have the appropriate policies and accessible processes for volunteers, Board Directors, and staff to raise issues of equity and inclusion without fear of retaliation. These policies are especially important when your community foundation has only one or a few paid staff members.



- Provide unconscious bias training for Board Directors, committee volunteers and staff as part of regular learning and development.
- Emphasize the need to prioritize impact (what is the effect of current grantmaking) over intention (what was the intention behind the grantmaking).

Actions to build inclusive teams through recruitment

Here are some actions that your community foundation can take to embed equity in your recruitment:

- Inclusive teams will require consistent commitment and a willingness to accept feedback and make changes. Be open to and seek feedback on your recruitment processes and adjust accordingly.
- Avoid the urgency trap of hiring quickly and focus on long-term change.
- When preparing job descriptions, consider what you genuinely require for the role and question any assumptions about education and experience requirements.
- During recruitment processes, hide personal identifiers while screening for staff, committee and Board roles.
- When evaluating candidates, value their lived experiences and other non-traditional professional experiences, including volunteer work.
- Ensure interviews and meetings meet the accessibility requirements of everyone and ask interviewees if they have any accessibility needs.
- Set clear and transparent expectations of the interviewer and interviewee. Where possible, provide questions ahead of time and let them know how many people and with whom they will be meeting.
- When assembling a hiring panel, have a conversation with them about unconscious bias and ask them to consider this ahead of any interviews or application reviews.
- Expand the recruitment search beyond the usual places - build intentional partnerships with community-based organizations that serve folks with particular intersectional identities that include more than one equity-seeking group identity, e.g. local LGBTQ2 Centre, Afro-Caribbean Community Agencies and others.
- Hire a specialized recruiter to help you craft role descriptions and pay them fairly to support your recruitment efforts.

Implementation Tip – Setting Targets

Defining targets and benchmarks creates a shared understanding of equity work within your community foundation. Using existing equity frameworks to set these targets can also provide a broader context to better understand how your organization is measuring up. For example, the [50-30 Challenge](#) offers a clear goal in recruitment composition targets for senior management and boards.



The 50-30 Challenge asks organizations to aspire to two goals:

1. **Gender parity** on boards and in senior management roles – Gender parity means at least 50% of board and senior management members are female-identifying or non-binary.
2. **Significant representation from equity-seeking groups** on boards and in senior management roles – Significant representation means at least 30% of board and senior management members are from equity-seeking groups. Equity-seeking groups include:
 - racialized, Black, and people of colour ("Visible Minorities");
 - people with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities);
 - 2SLGBTQ+ and gender and sexually diverse individuals, and;
 - Indigenous Peoples, including those that identify as First Nation Peoples, Métis Nation, and Inuit.

Going Beyond Composition

Composition targets are important to equity and inclusion but not the whole story. Broader strategic and structural changes must accompany the targets and benchmarks. Without building an inclusive environment through strategic and structural changes, you risk harming and tokenizing staff and volunteers. Equity work must be comprehensive and consistent to reshape and rebuild an environment that fosters belonging.

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For more information and resources, please visit: www.recastphilanthropy.ca

