# Building Inclusive Governance

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*A toolkit for not-for-profit boards*

onBoard Canada

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# Acknowledgements

# Introduction

"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance."

– Vernā Myers, diversity and inclusion expert

Vernā Myers[1] Myers is the founder and president of Vernā Myers Consulting Group. She presented a TED Talk on Overcoming Bias made the statement above after she told the story about Harvard Law School admitting its first female law students in 1953. The students quickly learned that, although they had been admitted, there were no female bathrooms in the building. They finally had been invited to attend the law school, an incredible achievement, but it appeared their presence was not wholly anticipated, or perhaps appreciated. Eventually, a bathroom for the female students was constructed in the basement of the building in a janitor's closet[2] Myers tells Cleveland Bar. Retrieved from: Cleveland.com.

Myers told this story because she strongly believes that it is not enough to want diversity, but that we also need to be willing to embrace diverse perspectives and identities. She believes that overcoming prejudice starts with identifying our unconscious biases and trying to welcome differences and think more inclusively[3].

While many people who provide leadership to organizations in the not-for-profit sector may agree with this statement and want to build practices that lead to more inclusive governance and organizations, it is not always easy to know where to start and how to assess or implement practices that encourage the development of an inclusive culture.

## Why inclusive governance?

Successful organizations around the world recognize that diversity and inclusion:

- spur innovation
- increase productivity
- create a healthy, respectful workplace

Embracing diversity, equity and inclusion as organizational values can lead to positive outcomes. Studies have shown that a diverse board can foster innovation because of the unique perspectives the members bring that shape, blend,

1. Vernā
2. Cho, Janet, H. (May 25, 2016). "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance," Vernā
3. Cho (2016)

and influence how to advance the organization's mission and solve problems[4]. Diverse boards also are more likely to effectively serve their communities and constituencies because diverse membership more likely reflects their needs and concerns[5].

Creativity and innovation will not automatically emerge because you have people on your governance board who represent diverse identities. This potential will not be realized unless there is a culture of inclusion on your governance board where different experiences, ideas and perspectives are welcomed.

In our 2011 Diversity in Governance Toolkit, we discussed both the importance and value of creating boards that represent our increasingly diverse communities and workplaces. This *Building Inclusive Governance* toolkit takes that conversation one step further. Once you have increased the diversity on your board and in the leadership of your organization, how do you begin to build a culture of inclusion?

There is no simple answer to this question, but this important issue deserves time and creative energy. The purpose of this toolkit is to help you begin the conversation with your board and senior leadership by providing some strategies and resources to support you.

4. National Council of Non-Profits (n.d). Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter for nonprofits. Retrieved from National Council of Non-Profits
5. Russell Reynolds Associates (n.d.). Different Is Better: Why Diversity Matters in the Boardroom. Retrieved from Russell Reynolds Associates

# How to work with this toolkit

*Building Inclusive Governance* is a comprehensive toolkit for use by CEOs, board chairs, heads of board governance committees and independent consultants when they work with boards on building inclusive governance. It is a companion to the onBoard Canada publication *Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Nonprofit Boards,* which focusses on practices and strategies to build more diverse boards.

The goal of this toolkit is to give your board a way to measure your current state and to evaluate whether the actions you have taken to create a more diverse board are actually having a positive impact. In addition to supporting you to figure out your current state, it will provide you with resources to help you plan where you might go next. This practical toolkit is designed to help you understand the change process that organizations go through when they embark on the important, but at times demanding, journey to become more inclusive and respond to the needs of their board members, staff and the communities they serve.

The five sections will guide you through the steps to build inclusion into your organization's governance board.

1.  Start the conversation encourages you to talk about the relationship between diversity and inclusion. It also makes the case for inclusive governance.

2.  Assess inclusivity provides you with assessment criteria once you have had that initial conversation with your board about inclusion. This section is connected to Appendix 2, Levels of inclusion, an assessment tool for use by boards.

3.  Develop inclusive governance policies and practices provides you with a number of considerations to think about as you develop inclusive governance policies. It builds on your board work and understanding of diversity and invites you to take it further.

4.  Adopt strategies to build a culture of learning addresses what an inclusive governance culture looks like and then suggests particular strategies for the inclusion of everyone who is on the board.

5.  Embed a culture of inclusion discusses how to navigate the challenges you may encounter when you disrupt the status quo and upset the balance of power that operates on your board. It outlines ways to take stock of your progress and to plan next steps.

You will find references to the appendices throughout the toolkit. They are meant to support you to assess and develop resources and to engage in a process of developing a culture of inclusion with your board. There is also a Glossary of Key Terms and a List of Further Resources. At the end of the toolkit, we have summarized the steps that you can take with your governance board, drawing on the materials from the toolkit.

# About onBoard Canada

onBoard Canada provides online governance training for everyone and bridges the diversity and inclusion gap by matching qualified candidates to not-for-profit organizations and public boards, elevating their impact across Canada.

# 1. Start the Conversation

Your organization may just have started the conversation about diversity or you may have worked hard to become a more diverse organization for several years. If you are just beginning this conversation, it may be helpful to talk with your governance board about the many benefits that come from building a more diverse board and organization. If you have started this journey, you probably have learned that diversity makes good sense to your organization.

# 1.1 Advantages of a more diverse board

### Diverse perspectives in decision-making lead to better decisions[1]

Different perspectives help to identify a full range of opportunities and risks.

### A diverse organization can be more responsive to the community and clients

The organization can access more resources in the community through connections with potential collaborative partners, policy makers and donors.

### A diverse board can lead to increased governance board sustainability

Boards that are not diverse risk becoming stagnant.

### A diverse board can support fundraising and marketing/outreach more effectively

Each board member represents another potential network, with new resources and connections.

### A diverse board can help build social capital and cohesion among diverse populations

Organizations with diverse boards are better positioned to respond to a range of external influences, and can provide new opportunities and skills for under-represented groups. Once your board and leadership start to become more diverse, your organization needs to think about building a culture of inclusion.

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1. Adapted from DiverseCity onBoard (2011). *Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Nonprofit Boards.* Retrieved from http://diversecityonboard.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Diversity-on-Non-Profit-Boards-Toolkit.pdf and National Council of Non-Profits (n.d). Why diversity, equity, and inclusion matter for nonprofits. Retrieved from https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter-nonprofits

# 1.2 The Relationship Between Diversity and Inclusion

To start the conversation, it is important to look at how the concepts of diversity and inclusion are different.

**Diversity** is the range of visible and invisible qualities, experiences and identities that shape who we are, how we think, and how we engage with and are perceived by the world. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical or mental abilities, religious/spiritual beliefs or political ideologies. They can also include differences such as personality, style, capabilities and thoughts/perspectives.[1]

**Inclusion** is what a community, group or organization does, or how it acts to ensure that individuals feel welcomed, valued and supported as members.[2]

## Dimensions of Diversity
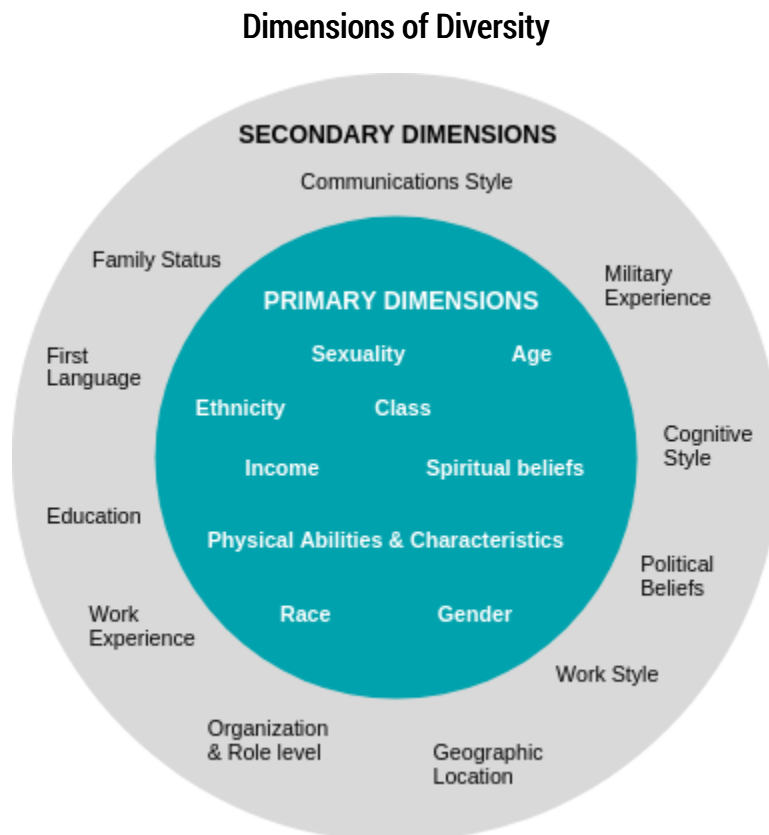
1. Ontario Public Service Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint (2017). Retrieved from Ontario Public Service
2. Morley, T. (2018). "Making the business case for diversity and inclusion: Short case studies and research papers that demonstrate best practice in HR", Strategic HR Review, Vol. 17(1), pp.58-60. Retrieved from Emerald Insight

Throughout this toolkit, we use both these terms because it is impossible to have a conversation about inclusion without also considering its relationship with diversity. The above graphic shows the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity and their intersections. One way of looking at the relationship between diversity and inclusion is to see that increasing the diversity on a board is the first step towards more inclusive governance. As Vernā Myers suggests, inclusion is the difference between being invited to the party and being asked to take a more active and engaged role, like being asked to dance.[3]. The reason to start the conversation about building inclusive governance is not to be critical about your board and its practices. If you have invested time and energy in the conversation about board diversity, the conversation about building inclusion is the next logical step. It is about how to make governance bodies more open and welcoming to difference, to ensure that everyone around the table feels like they have an equal right to be there and that all voices and perspectives are given space.

Although this may sound like a simple task, it takes time and requires the participation of everyone in your organization. This is because not everyone may feel like they have a right to be at the table and once they are there, they don't necessarily feel like their voices hold the same value as others' (and in some cases, our unconscious bias privileges some identities over others).

3. Cho, J.H. (May 25, 2016). "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance," Verna Myers tells Cleveland Bar. Retrieved from Cleveland.com

# 1.3 Recognize Privilege

"Check your privilege". We've all heard that statement at least once. In the previous section, we introduced the concept that our unconscious bias gives more advantage to some identities over others. To have an honest conversation about inclusion, we need to recognize that there are different levels of power and privilege associated with different identities, which can have an impact on whether people feel included or excluded in specific contexts.

One thing that can happen when we start to have conversations about privilege is that people whose identities are associated with power and privilege can feel defensive. Defensive thoughts and conversations sound like this:

> *"I didn't ask for privilege. I was born into it so this isn't my fault."*
>
> *"I may have privilege but I have worked for everything I have."*
>
> *"It's an excuse to say that your identity stops you from achieving what you want to achieve. It's all about hard work."*

The conversation about power and privilege is about helping people with privilege to understand its impacts, and to use their power to support others. It is not about blaming someone for having more privilege than someone else, or about having to give things up. The ultimate goal of conversations about privilege is to achieve equity [1].

Conversations about power and privilege need to start with awareness and build towards understanding and action.

Without recognizing and acknowledging the different levels of power and privilege that exist among members of your governance board (or potential members), it will be difficult to build a culture of inclusion.

> In Appendix 1, we have created a resource on how to develop a framework for inclusive governance. This tool may be helpful for you to use with your board when you are starting this conversation.

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1. Hartzer, Paul (December 26, 2016). Using Privilege as Opportunity, Recognizing Privilege as Default. Retrieved from The Good Men Project.

# 2. Assess Inclusivity

How do you know if your organization has an inclusive board culture?

Once you have had the initial conversation with your board, the next step is to assess its current level of inclusion. The assessment tool linked at the end of this section will help the board complete that process.

## Five levels of inclusion [1]
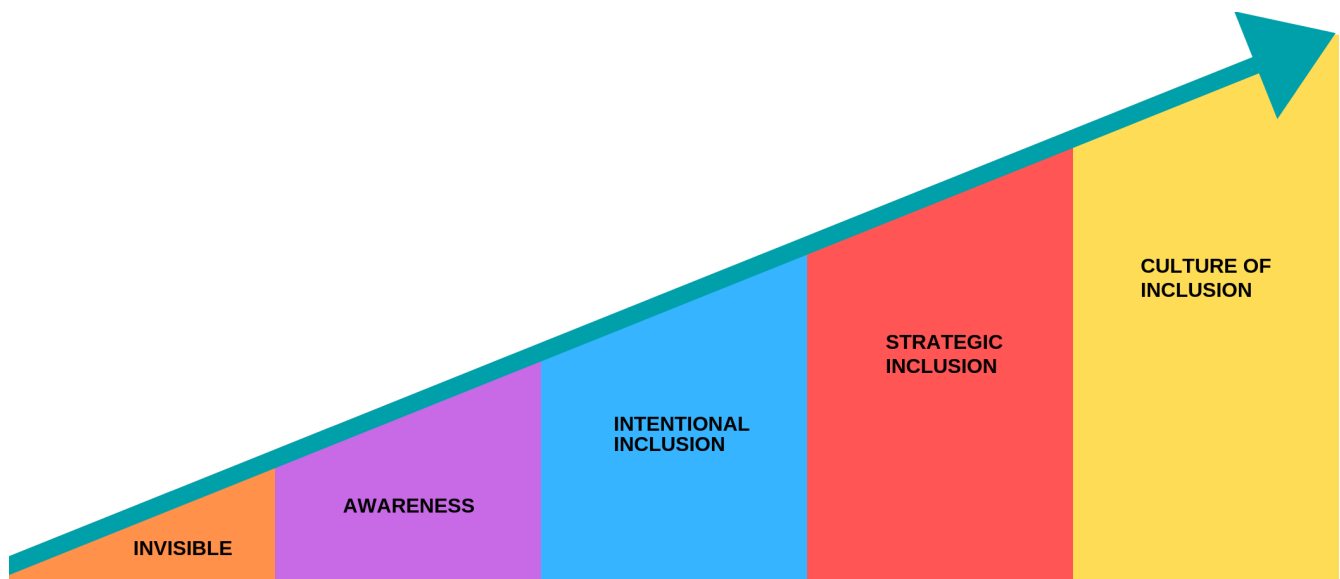


## Invisible

Diversity and difference are barely on the radar, and there is no recognition of the value that inclusion brings to the board or the organization. Overt or subtle discrimination is present. When a discriminatory incident happens, it may be minimized and there is no attempt at redress. Individuals who face discrimination must deal with any of its negative impacts without support. There is also the feeling of not being valued or respected. Individuals can feel that they don't belong, and that their perspectives are not welcomed. There is a very entrenched/simplistic sense of who is seen as "normal" and who is seen as "different".

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1. Adapted from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (2014). Municipal Evaluation Tool: Measuring Inclusion. Retrieved from Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

## Awareness

There is some effort made to welcome under-represented people to the board, based on a belief that all people are equal and so should be given equal opportunities for participation. Discrimination is seen as somewhat important to address, but actions taken to address it lack adequate resources, do not happen consistently and are ad hoc.

## Intentional inclusion

The board has made an official statement about the importance of inclusion and diversity, and a structural understanding of inclusion and inequity is being advanced in the formation of policies and procedures. Interventions are planned with the goal to incorporate more equitable practices and attitudes into the entire organization. People have made verbal commitments to inclusion work.

## Strategic inclusion

Long-term, broad-reaching strategic measures are taken to decrease barriers to participation for people who have long been marginalized, with the understanding that focusing energy on those with the most barriers is important for everyone. Strategies to transform processes that maintain systemic discrimination and provisions for measurement and accountability are in operation. Efforts are made to understand and address the root causes and systemic issues that lead to exclusion and marginalization. When discrimination happens there are policies and procedures in place to address them.

## Culture of inclusion

All layers of identity and difference are considered and supported, and systemic processes for maintaining inclusion are fully woven into the organization. The value of all people is a widely held value, and everyone is comfortable with and sees the benefits of diversity, so exclusionary incidents rarely happen[2]. Continuous improvement of inclusion is embedded within the organization. Inclusion is a way of life and all members are supported to reach their full potential.

> We have created an assessment tool for you to use with your board based on the levels of inclusion, which may be helpful to determine the board's current level of inclusion.
>
> You can find the levels of inclusion assessment tool in [Appendix 2](#).

2. Building a culture in which exclusionary or discriminatory incidents rarely happen is very different than having a governance board culture where the people on the board with power and privilege aren't aware that others are being excluded through language, structures or practices. A culture where exclusionary or discriminatory incidents rarely happen is not often a culture that forms organically. Instead, it requires deliberate discussion and action often over an extended period of time.

# 3. Develop Inclusive Governance Policies and Practices

No matter how much assessment you have done, there is always an opportunity to develop a greater level of inclusion on your board. This section outlines what to consider when you develop inclusive governance policies and practices. It builds on your board work and understanding of diversity and invites you to think about how your policies and practices build inclusion. This is a dynamic and continuous process.

Once your policies are in place, it's essential to review them regularly to ensure that new people are consistently brought into the conversation. You should also review your practices on a regular basis through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens.

# 3.1 The Dynamic Nature of a Board Diversity Policy

Developing a board diversity policy is an important first step toward becoming a board that reflects the communities you serve and incorporates unique perspectives. To create a culture of inclusion, a board diversity policy needs to be dynamic, changing to incorporate new voices and perspectives, and to respond to changes both inside the board and within the organization.

In the first section of this toolkit, we discussed how diversity and inclusion mean different things. We suggested that just inviting people from diverse backgrounds onto your board, does not automatically make them feel included, or that they have an equal voice on the board because of underlying issues of power and privilege. We also learned that when boards are diverse and all voices are recognized, organizations gain many benefits such as better decision-making, more capacity to respond to the communities they serve, increased board sustainability and more sustainable fundraising[1].

> **To create a culture of inclusion, a board diversity policy needs to be dynamic, changing to incorporate new voices and perspectives, and to respond to changes both inside the board and within the organization.**

It is important to review your board diversity policy on a regular basis to incorporate new perspectives as described above, and also to expand it to include the principles of equity and inclusion.

Equity and inclusion often are linked and both are connected to issues of power and privilege. Equity is fairness, making sure everyone has what they need to succeed and removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. This is distinct and may be different from treating people equally.[2] Inclusion is what a community, group or organization does, or how it acts to ensure that individuals feel welcomed, valued and supported as members. [3]

Organizations often establish a small committee or working group to look at board and organizational policies. The most effective committees represent the full board members and not only those members who may belong to under-represented groups.

> **Here are some actions for the board work-group or committee that is looking at diversity policies:**

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1. A list of these benefits can be found in DiverseCity onBoard (2011). *Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Nonprofit Boards.* Retrieved from onBoard Canada
2. Ontario Public Service (2017)
3. Morley, T. (2018). "Making the business case for diversity and inclusion: Short case studies and research papers that demonstrate best practice in HR", *Strategic HR Review*, Vol. 17(1), pp.58-60. Retrieved from Emerald Insight

- Review the current board diversity policy

- Recruit new board members for the committee, ensuring diversity

- Ensure board orientation and ongoing development needs are met

- Ensure the committee has terms of reference (read sample format, Appendix 4, and sample roles and responsibilities in Appendix 5)

- Review and make recommendations to the board concerning any changes to board composition, outreach and recruitment, board size, board structures, board policies and procedures, by-law amendments and board attendance

- Evaluate how the policy has been working, what changes have taken place within the board since its inception? Were these changes positive? Expected?

- Review and make recommendations to the board concerning any changes/additions to the policy (e.g., language about equity and inclusion)

It can be a challenge to revisit board policies and find ways to make their language reflect not just where your organization is now, but where you want to be.

We have included three examples of diversity policies that have been expanded to include language that reflects equity and inclusion approaches:

- Sample board diversity and inclusion policy

- Sample diversity and inclusion statement

- Sample diversity, equity and inclusion statement

# 3.2 Develop an Inclusion Strategy

Your board will develop a culture of inclusion when it can demonstrate that diversity, equity and inclusion are valued, and that people can bring their whole selves to the table in an authentic way[1].

- Is your organization's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity part of the orientation message for new board members and is it incorporated into the onboarding process?
- Is commitment to inclusion reflected in the way that board decisions are made?
- Are there any barriers that prevent full participation of some board members?
- What needs to be done to change the dynamic so that all board members are able to be engaged in decision-making processes

This work will take a deliberate effort, and will lead to more genuine, engaged relationships and better, more responsive decision-making[2].

1. Brescoll, V.L. (January 1, 2011). What do leaders need to understand about diversity? Yale Insights. Retrieved from Yale Insights
2. Hewlett, S.A., Marshall, M., and Sherbin, L. (2013). How Diversity Can Drive Innovation. Retrieved from *Harvard Business Review*.

# 3.3 Allocate and Commit Resources

It is always important to look at financial decisions in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion. Power and privilege are often connected to the allocation and commitment of resources. Decisions are often made based on how they have been made in the past without taking into consideration the present context. One way to build a culture of inclusion that extends to these important decision-making functions is to ask questions about the composition and structure of your governance, finance, human resources and fundraising committees.

- Who are the decision-makers on those committees? How are discussions about allocation and commitment of resources held?

- Does your board invite questions about spending and allocation of resources? Is there transparency?

All these elements contribute to the kind of culture your board has. It may be a culture that is not transparent nor open to questions. If input from new board members is not encouraged, the board creates an environment that is not conducive to generating a culture of inclusion. As we have discussed previously, many studies have shown that there are great benefits to increasing the amount of diversity in the governance structure of an organization, but these benefits are realized only if the diverse voices are heard and only if all the voices around the table have the same value.

# 3.4 Put it into Practice

An inclusive governance culture involves the active inclusion of everyone who is on the board. It celebrates difference and recognizes that issues of power and privilege affect people's ability to participate. To create an inclusive culture, barriers to participation must be identified and strategies developed to ensure more equitable participation.

> An inclusive culture needs to extend beyond a basic or token representation of a particular race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or dis/ability. It informs the core values of the board and influences all of its policies and practices.

# 3.5 Recruitment and Selection Practices

As part of your commitment to include more diversity on your board you need to develop a recruitment and selection process for new board members. If you already have recruitment guidelines for diversity, you will want to review them to ensure they include equity and inclusion.

One way to assess your recruitment and selection process is to talk to newer board members and ask them how they found it. If there were potential board members who didn't end up joining your board, you could also ask them if the process affected their decision to disengage.

The Ontario Public Service (OPS) recently assessed the level of diversity and inclusion within the organization[1]. Recommendations from the report suggest that diversity and inclusion training be a part of all onboarding and a key part of the curricula for leadership development, focusing on a number of areas. The area that was most pertinent to governance board training was mitigating unconscious bias.

1. Government of Canada (2017). Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Retrieved from

# 4. Strategies to Build a Culture Of Learning

# 4.1 Establish a Learning Community

It can be a challenge for boards to know where to start in the process of building a culture of inclusion. As you begin, it is important to establish ways that all board members can learn together. Inherent in our interactions with each other and in our decision-making is our unconscious bias. Unconscious bias is the result of information, attitudes and stereotypes that influence our thinking at a subconscious level of awareness. Unconscious bias helps us to create "mental shortcuts" to process the immense amount of information that we process every day. While such processing is a critical part of human functioning, the shortcuts we take and the biases that inform those shortcuts often introduce errors into our decision-making.[1] Each of us is subject to unconscious bias, and it is an area of shared experience.

> Hosting professional development and training for your board on the topic of unconscious bias is an excellent way to start a conversation about how it can challenge efforts to build a culture of inclusion.

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1. ParadigmIQ (2016). Managing Unconscious Bias: Strategies to Manage Bias and Build More Diverse, Inclusive Organizations. Retrieved from Managing Unconscious Bias

# 4.2 Foster Community and Conversation

Throughout this toolkit, we have referred to the importance of open conversation to create a culture of inclusion. We acknowledge, however, that every governance board may be at a different place on their journey, and may have different levels of inclusion. Starting that conversation may be easier for some boards than for others.

How do you have conversations that will support your governance board to move forward? This process can be challenging, especially as you strategize about where to start, and how to have your initial conversation.

# 4.3 Strategies to Help You Talk About Inclusion

### Hire a consultant

One of your options to begin a conversation is to invite resource people in to support your process. Many consultants support governance boards to build cultures of inclusion. It can be helpful to have an outside perspective to give you feedback on the process, and can also increase your level of accountability.

### Continue to talk about barriers to include different identities

Your governance board has already done a self-assessment to look at barriers to full participation of all board members. You can continue that conversation, ensuring that you do not focus on only one kind of difference, but acknowledge that difference happens in many different spaces and places, such as those represented in this image, which is also found in Appendix 1. Although there are many kinds of differences among people, the diagram below shows differences linked to structural inequalities. [1]

| Language | Sexual Orientation | Gender |
|---|---|---|
| Age | Race | Culture & Ethnicity |
| Ability | Religion | Income |

1. Adapted from Alberta Urban Municipalities Tool (2014).

Your governance board has already done a self-assessment to look at barriers to full participation of all board members. You can continue that conversation, ensuring that you do not focus on only one kind of difference, but acknowledge that difference happens in many different spaces and places, such as those represented in this image above from Appendix 1.

Diversity policies are an important way to address an imbalance of power and privilege in which some identities are over–represented, and others are under-represented. For those who have been under-represented or discriminated against throughout history, it is particularly important that we create a culture and environment that is welcoming to them.

### Keep individuals at the centre of the conversation, not only their identities

When talking about the politics of over-representation and under-representation of different groups of people, finding the right language can be challenging. It is important to focus discussions on the individual and that person's experience. Although an individual's identity is a part of who they are, take the time to get to know the whole person, not the identity they appear to represent.

# 4.4 Incorporate Inclusive Practices

In this section of the toolkit, we suggest ways to move beyond diverse representation on your board and to focus on seven groups of people who often face barriers to inclusion: women, racialized communities, persons with (dis)abilities, Indigenous peoples, the LGBTQ2I+ [1] community, youth, and people with lower incomes. For each of these groups, we outline some practical strategies to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, which will contribute to creating a culture of inclusion within your board.

As a not-for-profit board, it is important to include people who have lived experience related to your organization's specific mandate. Some of the diverse groups listed above may have lived experience that connects directly to your mandate. In other cases, you may decide to seek representation from people with lived experiences that more closely reflect the specific work of your organization.

## Go beyond token representation

We have discussed the issue of tokenism and the role that it can play in well-intentioned diversity efforts. As you think about creating a culture of inclusion on your board, there are a number of actions you can take to go beyond tokenism.

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1. For the purposes of this toolkit, we have chosen to use the term LGBTQ2I+ to represent this group since it is the term used by the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

## Practices to build a stronger and more inclusive community

- **Get to know your board members beyond the meetings.** When people feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves, they are more engaged. If you are the Board Chair, make a deliberate effort to meet with board members to find out what interests them, and connect them to the work and life of the organization. This is a great start to community-building.

- **Assign new board members a "board buddy"** to serve as a mentor for the first few meetings. Mentors can offer new members a ride to the meeting, greet them at the door, and sit next to them. This can make a big difference to create positive "first impressions."[2]

- **Host a special gathering that is purely social**. This will create opportunities for board members to forge personal connections and foster trust and respect.

- **Ensure that all board members are given the information, the access and the encouragement that they need to be actively involved in critical decision-making processes**[3]. Not every board member will come to the governance board with the same level of experience. Some board members may not feel that they have the right to be actively involved in critical decision-making processes. There also may be language barriers or a disability that prevent them from active participation. To ensure a culture of inclusion, it is important to support each board member with whatever they need, whether it is information, accessibility support or encouragement.

- **Use accessible, inclusive language that acknowledges that not everyone has the same background**. Be aware of different English language levels, educational backgrounds, cultural backgrounds and age levels.

- **Do not assume that board members have the same knowledge base**. People's diverse knowledge and experiences are at the heart of diversity. When we assume that everyone on the board grew up in the same neighbourhood, had the same educational background, and understands the same cultural references, this can isolate those who do not share that knowledge base or cultural memory, and can silence some voices around the table.

- **Plan meeting times with religious and cultural holidays in mind.** Ensure that meeting times do not conflict with religious and cultural holidays that are celebrated by the religions and cultures represented on the board.

- **Recognize that there are different cultural and religious seasons when planning meetings.** For example, Ramadan in the Islamic calendar may impact the participation of some members.

- **If food is served at meetings, respect dietary restrictions.** For example, you may have members who eat food that is halal, kosher, vegan or vegetarian.

- **Respect board members' family responsibilities when scheduling board and committee meetings.**

2. Adapted from National Council of Non-Profits (n.d.). Board Engagement. Retrieved from National Council of Non-Profits
3. Cornelius, M. (February 20, 2015). Does Your Board Foster Inclusivity? Retrieved from CompassPoint.

# 4.5 Create an environment for gender inclusion

In a 2017 report[1] commissioned by the Government of Ontario, Catalyst researchers determined that Canada continues to lag behind other developed nations in terms of gender balance on boards. More women than men graduate annually from Canada's universities and colleges, yet Canadian women continue to be underrepresented on boards and in senior management, even though organizations with women on their boards have a greater collective board intelligence than those with a less diverse gender makeup[2]. It is important to design strategies to ensure that women are recruited for governance boards and, once there, are actively engaged in decision-making. It is also important to build a board culture that creates an inclusive environment for women.

Status of Women Canada released a strategy document[3] that suggests a number of ways to support an inclusive board culture for women:

- Consider board renewal policies and board terms to ensure that there are opportunities for new board members.
- Include a gender consideration in board recruitment and nomination policies for different committees and positions.
- Start educating women from a young age (make connections in both high school and on college and university campuses) about opportunities to both serve and lead.
- Provide mentorship and networking opportunities for women in the community and workplace that include connections to the not-for-profit sector and opportunities for service in different capacities.
- Profile strong female leaders, their pathways to leadership and their contributions in a variety of contexts.

**Schedule meetings at convenient times for women**

Women are not the only members of society who have family responsibilities, but they bear the greatest weight of responsibility for child-rearing and child-care. To ensure that women on the board with family responsibilities can participate fully, think about the timing and the length of

1. Hubert, A., Macfarlane, F., Downe, B., Dart, B., Spizzirri, A. (2017). Gender Diversity On Boards in Canada: Recommendations for Accelerating Progress. Catalyst. Retrieved from Catalyst
2. Lisson, L. (March 8, 2018). Enough talk about getting more women on boards. Here's how to do it. Retrieved from CBC News
3. Government of Canada (2014). Good for Business: A Plan to Promote the Participation of More Women on Canadian Boards. Gatineau, QC: Status of Women Canada. Retrieved from Status of Women Canada

board and committee meetings. Be willing to offer flexible ways to connect to board meetings, such as remote connection for members when childcare responsibilities conflict with the meeting time.

# 4.6 Create environments that are more welcoming for racialized communities

When Statistics Canada published the results of the 2016 census, we learned that more than 7.7 million Canadians (one in five) are members of a "visible minority", and 1.7 million people (4.9%), are Indigenous[1]. Although these population groups have grown, racialized communities, including Indigenous Peoples, are still under-represented on governance boards.

Some of the same strategies used to increase the number of women on boards, have been used to increase the representation of racialized communities on governance boards:

- Set recruitment criteria to include targeted groups
- Institute formal mentorship and networking programs
- Support external partnerships to promote change
- Increase awareness of best practices through using resources like the Diversity in Governance Toolkit or the online governance board training provided by onBoard Canada.

Beyond recruitment, there are other important practices to build a culture of inclusion that supports racialized communities:

- **Promote your board's commitment to diversity regularly.** Provide education to existing and new members. Training should include a discussion about what constitutes racism and racial harassment.

- **Ensure that diversity is something that all board members "own"** not only those board members who are visibly diverse or who represent a marginalized identity. When all members embrace diversity, a culture of inclusion will begin to flourish.

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1. MacDougall, A. and Valley, J.M. (2018). The inclusion imperative: In 2018, building a better board means building a board that looks like Canada. Retrieved from Osler.

# 4.7 Persons with disabilities: Incorporate Universal Design

There are many types of disabilities[1], some visible and others invisible. People may have different levels of comfort when it comes to asking for accommodations to support their full participation. It is important to establish a culture that normalizes difference and provides opportunity for potential board members to discuss possible accommodation needs during the recruitment and selection process.

Since you cannot anticipate what all possible accommodation needs might be, your board can adopt an approach called Universal Design to create an inclusive culture for all board members.

Universal Design is one of the most significant developments in disability advocacy and culture to emerge over the last decade[2]. It refers to the construction of structures, spaces, services, communications and resources that are accessible to a range of people with and without disabilities, without further need for modification or accommodation[3]. Although the purpose of Universal Design is to create accessibility for persons with (dis)ability, it also has the potential to benefit everyone by creating better access.

A few ways that Universal Design practices could apply to your governance board:[4]

- Provide manuals, materials and forms to all members in digital formats that can be read by people who use adaptive computer technologies, as well as by anyone else.

- Ensure that the spaces where you meet are accessible to people with mobility issues, including those who use wheelchairs, or other assistive devices.

- Offer board members a range of ways that they can contribute. This allows board members who have limitations to organize their time and strengths.

> Not-for-profit organizations in Ontario must comply with standards outlined in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). For more information about accessibility standards, visit the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario.

1. The term disability is a contested one, particularly by people with lived experience. In the social model of disability, *disability* is framed as a socially created problem in which naturally occurring differences become disabling when society fails to fully integrate individuals into society (Oliver, 1990). Some organizations are using terms such as (dis)ability, DisAbility, and dis/ability to highlight the social dimensions of the experience.
2. Burton Blatt Institute (2011). What is an Inclusive Culture? Retrieved from Syracuse University
3. Myhill, W.N., Cogburn, D.L., Samant, D., Addom, B., & Blanck, P. (2008). Developing Accessible Cyberinfrastructure-enabled Knowledge Communities in the Disability Community: Theory, Practice, and Policy. *Assistive Technology Journal*, *20*(3), 157-174.
4. Adapted from Burton Blatt Institute (2011). What is an Inclusive Culture? Retrieved from Syracuse University.

# 4.8 Indigenous Peoples: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 2012, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada[1] (TRC) released 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of Indian residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation between the federal and provincial governments and Indigenous nations of Canada.

Not-for-profit boards have a responsibility to respond to the Calls to Action, but many have not yet begun this work. By including discussions about Calls to Action in your board governance, you help to remove barriers to potential board membership by Indigenous community members and support existing Indigenous community members in your organization.

If you have not yet started the conversation, here are some ways to begin:

- **Land acknowledgement**

  Learn about the traditional Indigenous territory where your organization is located. Start board meetings by making a statement of acknowledgement of the people of the territory. Organizational events should also begin with this verbal acknowledgement.

- **Relationship-building**

  Learn about Indigenous groups and organizations in your community. Look for opportunities to attend their events to watch, learn and make a connection. Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of Indspire[2], a charity that invests in the education of Indigenous youth, says that she has never been more optimistic about the future of Indigenous people. She says that before we can move forward, we need to understand our shared history. When that happens, positive change will be possible[3].

1. To learn more about the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, visit Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
2. For more information about Indspire, visit their website
3. Latif, A. (June 13, 2017). We need to understand our shared history, says Roberta Jamieson. Retrieved from *Waterloo Chronicle*.

# 4.9 Learn to use inclusive language: The LGBTQ2I+ community and inclusion

LGBTQ2I+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit, intersex, and other gender and sexual identities. Building an atmosphere of trust and positive space for the LGBTQ2I+ community includes the use of inclusive language. Much of our language reflects a particular type of socialization. For example, the terms "husband" or "wife", are commonly used instead of "partner". When we make assumptions about people's sexual orientation or gender identity, we may contribute to a culture that excludes people who do not fit in a binary framework, rather than includes them across a continuum of identities.

For someone who is trans, it is particularly important to use inclusive language to avoid pronouns that fit the traditional paradigm of "he/she" or "him/her". Some individuals do not subscribe to a binary idea of gender and may identify as both a man and a woman, as neither, or as another identity. Often the pronoun they prefer is "they", "them" or "their" used as a singular pronoun.

> To create LGBTQ2I+ positive space, it is important that your board does not make assumptions about a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Here are some ways to practice inclusive language:

- Incorporate gender-neutral pronouns, such the use of "they/them" (used as a singular pronoun), in board work, including policy and procedure documents to raise awareness about gender diversity among board and organization members.

- Invite everyone to identify their pronouns at meetings or events so that it becomes a common practice and removes the onus on some members to identify themselves as "different". This practice can also be adapted for email signatures. (i.e., Hello, my name is _____, and my pronouns are they/them; my pronouns are he/him; my pronouns are she/her)[1]

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1. Adapted from survey recommendations in Government of Canada (2017). Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Retrieved from Government of Canada

# 4.10 Engage youth in your board process

There are many reasons to think strategically about how to engage youth on governance boards, bearing in mind that the process of youth engagement can sometimes take time and effort. Although youth have a lot of potential to contribute, many barriers often stand in the way of their full participation.

Despite these challenges, involving youth in governance initiatives benefits organizations and our society because it:

- Promotes positive youth development
- Strengthens the ability of adults and organizations to work with young people
- Prepares the next generation of civic leaders
- Brings new perspectives to the decision-making process

Although youth participation is important on all governance boards, it is particularly important when the not-for-profit organization is one that serves children, youth and/or families. In these organizations, the voices of youth on the governance board help to represent the needs of the communities served by the organization.

**Considerations for including youth on your board**[1]

- **Scheduling and transportation**

  Lack of transportation, busy schedules, commitments to school and work, and extra-curricular activities can be barriers to youth participation. Scheduling and transportation demands are different for youth than for adults. Adults need to be flexible and to give youth consideration in planning board meetings and activities. Here are some strategies to reduce these barriers:

  - Provide transportation or public transportation access
  - Schedule meetings and activities to accommodate youth
  - Provide child care for youth with children

1. Adapted from Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development (2013). Youth Participation in Governance: Creating Youth Friendly Communities. Retrieved from Heartwood Centre

◦ Partner with schools so that youth can earn a credit or volunteer hours for their participation

◦ Consider creating a youth advisory committee on your board.

- **Healthy youth/adult partnerships**

To partner with youth, adult board members need to learn how to effectively work with youth, and youth need to learn how to build the skills they need to function and contribute as adults.  This type of learning exchange will take time and effort. Here are some ways to make it happen:

◦ Adults need to be sensitive to different levels of experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources and language between adults and youth. They can learn to build an understanding of youth culture, adopt a youth-friendly language, and develop participatory skills.

◦ Youth need to be supported to develop a positive identity, and realize their potential to participate in decision making. Many young people do not recognize their right to participate in processes and decisions that affect them. Adult mentors who can "be there" for youth can support the development of their skills in areas such as communication and orientation to the organization, programs and board. They can also provide opportunities for youth to evaluate and celebrate their contributions.

◦ Create a partnership model where adults and youth share roles and responsibilities. Ensure that youth have an equal opportunity to share their opinions and ideas, and set time aside to play together and team-build.

## • Meaningful contributions

Involving youth on your board must be meaningful for them:

◦ Make it clear that youth are meeting a genuine need, and that their contributions are making a difference

◦ Link youth participation to their own lived experience

◦ Ensure that their participation offers them a challenge, adventure and new learning

◦ Recognize youth contributions

## • Different youth voices

Do not assume that one youth represents the experiences of all youth. Be aware that there are many different communities of youth[2] with different identities and experiences.

## • Evaluation

Regular evaluation of youth participation helps to build evidence on the positive outcomes of youth engagement in decision-making and how to strengthen or restructure programs and practices[3].

◦ Take a systemic approach to document, evaluate, integrate and replicate successful participatory processes

◦ Include youth as evaluators and developers of evaluation processes

2. A community of youth is defined as a population of youth who share backgrounds, situations, or lifestyles with common elements or concerns (this can include, but is not limited to ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic background, gender, geographic area (for example, rural, urban or neighbourhood based), LBGTQ2 or youth)
3. United Nations Economic and Social Affairs. (2004). Youth Participation in Decision Making. In World Youth Report 2003 (pp. 270 – 288). Retrieved from United Nations Economic and Social Affairs.

# 4.11 Create a culture to include people who live on low income

People who live on a low income have particular skills and lived experiences that can benefit a governance board, but may also experience barriers that could make it challenging for them to join a board and to participate in board activities.

There are many reasons why people may live on a low income:

- Systemic factors in society that prevent them from moving out of poverty, such as sub-standard housing or inaccessible transportation.
- Their lives may be in transition, or in development, such as youth
- They are temporarily in a low-income situation, such as after a change in jobs
- They have had a major life change, such as recent immigration to Canada

People in these situations have skills and experiences that can offer value to a governance board. Boards need to find ways to ensure that people who live on low income are included and their contributions, valued. Here are some strategies to cultivate a culture of inclusion for those who live on a low income:

- **Recruitment**—highlight both skills and lived experience for potential board candidates.
- **Orientation**—assign a mentor to new board members during their first year, particularly for those who are not familiar with your governance structures.
- **Language**— use respect when talking about the populations served by your organization. Avoid using "us' and "them" terminology, particularly if you are serving marginalized people in low income communities.
    - When inviting participation from all board members, ensure that the questions and content are inclusive and do not make assumptions about income levels and past experiences.

- **Participation**— do not expect board members to make financial contributions to the organization, such as buying tickets to fundraising events. Provide other opportunities for board members to serve and participate in fundraising events or activities.

    ◦ Do not assume that board members can contribute to food at meetings, either brought or bought (if this is a board practice).

    ◦ Be aware of work schedules when choosing times for meetings. Not all workplaces are flexible when it comes to allowing employees to take time off to participate on volunteer boards.

# 5. Embed a Culture of Inclusion

Engaging in diversity, equity and inclusion work can be challenging. It is possible that you will encounter some barriers when you begin to do this work. Creating a welcoming and inclusive culture involves challenging the status quo and shifting the balance of power on your board, which may make people uncomfortable. Here are some common challenges that you may face, with some suggestions about how you might overcome these challenges.

# 5.1 Learn how to manage resistance

When the balance of power shifts, resistance is inevitable, and it may come from unexpected directions, including your own reactions, which may surprise you. Shifting norms can take time, and the emergence of resistance can actually be a sign that your strategies are working.

## Navigate common challenges

**Some people feel attacked in conversations about power, privilege, equity and inclusion.**

> *"I didn't choose to be born this way. I am volunteering on a not-for-profit board. It's not like I am doing bad things with my privilege, so why do I always feel like I am being attacked?"*

**Strategies**

- It is important to emphasize that creating a culture of inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has access. It does not involve an attack any one person or identity. When a person on the board is feeling attacked, an individual follow-up gives them an opportunity to talk about their feelings and thoughts about the process

- Training on unconscious bias[1] can help board members reflect on how our biases impact our decision-making every day. This type of training can refocus the conversation on how we can learn to shift our unconscious bias so that we do not exclude others.

## Change takes time and energy

> *"Haven't we done enough of this diversity and inclusion work already? We've been at it for a year already! We never have time for anything else!"*

**Strategies**

- Engaging in diversity, equity and inclusion work takes lots of time and energy It is important, however, to maintain a healthy balance in the work that you are doing with your board.

- Set realistic goals about creating a culture of inclusion on your board. Celebrate small milestones and reflect on how far you have come. Move forward at a pace that allows time and space for your board to engage in

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1. An example of this type of curriculum can be found at ParadigmIQ (2016). Managing Unconscious Bias: Strategies to Manage Bias and Build More Diverse, Inclusive Organizations. Retrieved from [Managing Unconscious Bias](Managing Unconscious Bias)

all of the important work that they have set before them.

## Complacency

*"We're good. We've got a good organization with lots of diversity and everyone likes each other. Why do we need to work on building a culture of inclusion? We've arrived. We never have any issues".*

**Strategies**

- Not everyone sees the need to build a culture of inclusion. People who, have been included and held power and privilege, may have a particular perspective about inclusion. Conversely, people from under-represented groups may have learned not to question the status quo and to be satisfied with the way things are.

- If the conversation on inclusion has not yet begun, and no one has identified a need, it may be helpful to invite an external consultant or facilitator for an initial dialogue, focused on what the board is already doing well. The conversation can then turn to how the board can become more inclusive and how board members can unintentionally exclude other members.

# 5.2 Best practices to build a culture of inclusion

There are many different ways to build a culture of inclusion on your governance board. Each board is different and you will need to develop the specific practice that works for you. Here are some best practices for you to consider as you continue your important work.
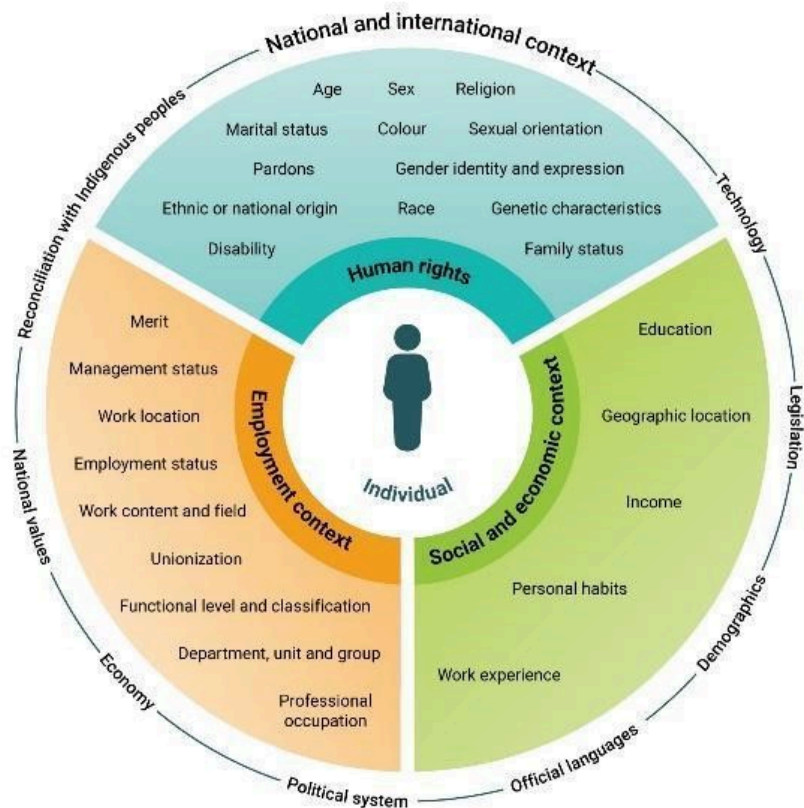
**1. Develop a clear purpose statement for the board**

Your board's commitment to diversity and inclusion could be incorporated into your mission statement or could be graphically represented to show what your inclusive culture looks like.



The two images are a good example of how to visually represent a commitment to diversity and inclusion. They are

based on the results of a diversity and inclusion survey done by Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and represent their definition of diversity and their commitment to diversity and inclusion[1]. For an example of an Inclusion and Diversity Statement, review Appendix 7.

## 2. Cultivate a community of learning

When people share their perspective, they often fail to share the facts or experiences that inform their thinking. Begin by inviting the other person to share their perspective first, by saying something like, "I'd really like to hear your view on this." Wait for them to respond and be patient, rather than rushing to share your view. You will have an opportunity to talk, but by taking a step back and allowing the other person to speak first, you enhance the potential for learning. [2]

## 3. Create an intentional dialogue

Creating an ongoing dialogue about how to build a culture of inclusion is a good way to ensure that progress continues[3]. Everyone on the governance board needs to take ownership of the discussion about diversity, equity and inclusion[4].

## 4. Acknowledge and challenge the biases

We all have biases. It is important to acknowledge them so that we can learn how to minimize them, and can support each other in breaking them[5].

In her 8.5 minute TED Talk called Are you Biased? I Am, Kristen Pressner addresses unconscious bias. She encourages us to recognize the 'shortcuts' that happen in our minds and shares a free and fast approach to test ourselves for unconscious bias.

Canadian educator Shakil Choudhury is a consultant in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion. He talks about unconscious bias with Steve Paikin of TVO's The Agenda in a 25-minute interview called Diversity: Not so black and white.
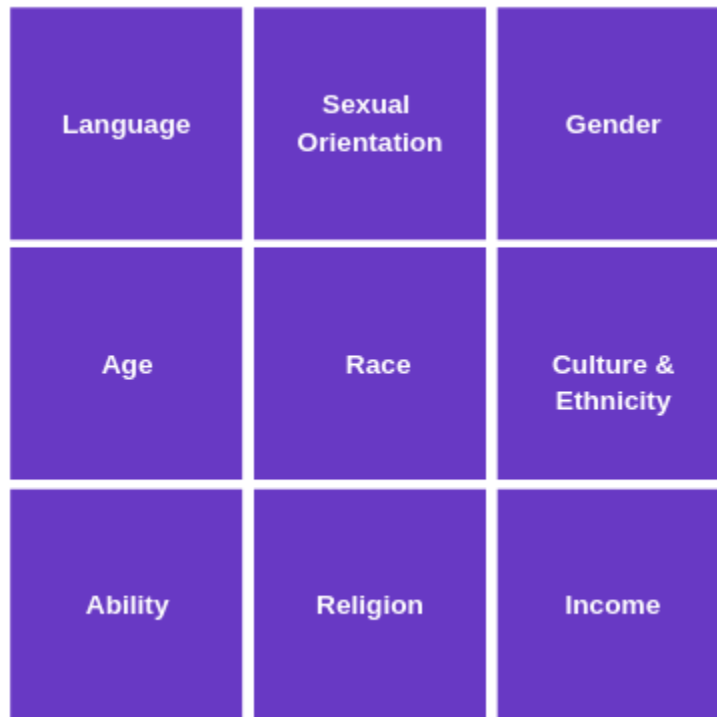
## 5. Embrace the differences

Although it is comfortable to do things the same way, with the same people, the way you have always done them, there is tremendous value in difference. As you continue in this process, remind your board members of the positive impact that diversity and inclusion have had on the important work of the board[6].

1. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2017). Building a Diverse and Inclusive Public Service: Final Report of the Joint Union/ Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion. Retrieved from Government of Canada
2. Stoker, J. (May 4, 2017). 12 Steps for Creating a Culture of Inclusion. Retrieved from Lead Change
3. Donius, B. (November 17, 2011). The Workplace: Culture of Inclusion v. Culture of Exclusion: What is the Impact? *Life*. Retrieved from HuffPost
4. Shulman, S. (March 11, 2011). Building a Culture of Inclusion. Retrieved from Diversity Journal
5. Graham, C. (July 20, 2018). 5 Strategies to Create a Culture of Inclusion. Retrieved from Forbes
6. Graham (2018)

# Appendix 1: Develop a Framework for Inclusive Governance

Building an inclusive culture within your organization starts with your governance board. Building a culture of inclusion goes beyond 'tokenism' where individuals from under-represented groups are recruited to fulfill a quota or prevent criticism.  To build a culture of inclusion you need to normalize difference and accommodate for it so that each person feels like they have a right to come to the table, that they have an equal voice and an equal right to speak. Often diversity becomes a code word for 'race' or 'culture' but there are many intersecting ways that people are pushed to the margins and given less access to power and privilege around board tables.

Although there are many kinds of differences among people, the diagram below shows differences linked to structural inequalities. [1]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Language | Sexual Orientation | Gender |
| Age | Race | Culture & Ethnicity |
| Ability | Religion | Income |

**Questions to frame your conversations about board diversity and inclusion**

The following questions and considerations may be helpful to guide your initial conversation about inclusion and how to build a culture of inclusion within your board. These are questions that invite your board members to think about the

1. Adapted from Alberta Urban Municipalities Tool (2014).

relationship between diversity and inclusion, about the good work that they have been engaged in, and also about the work ahead. You can use them as part of a visioning session as the board seeks to determine its next steps or as a way to start the conversation about inclusion.

1. **What is our understanding of diversity?** What kind of diversity exists on our board? Have we completely acknowledged that diversity, or have we been looking at diversity as fulfilling a 'checklist' of particular identities (e.g., race or culture)?

2. **Why are diversity and inclusion important to our organization?**

3. **What is our board's understanding of privilege** and how does it impact interactions on the board? Has the concept of privilege informed the conversation about diversity and inclusion?

4. **In what ways do you think our board has adopted inclusive practices ?** (Ask members to share specific examples.) Possible topics for discussion are:  What assumptions underlie our current practices for board terms, orientation and meetings? What assumptions have we been making about individual and collective responsibilities for participation in board meetings?

5. **How do you feel our board could more effectively create a welcoming and inclusive environment** for both new and current members? (Ask members to share specific examples and incorporate assumptions that surfaced in the previous question.)

6. **Whose voices and perspectives were most represented** in the major decisions our board made over the past year (two years)? Whose voices were missing?

7. **Have changes in board membership to reflect more diversity resulted in changes** to decision-making? Why or why not?

8. **Are there board structures such as policies and procedures or unwritten rules that embed inequity** in our board? What are they? What can we do to change them?

9. **If we imagined our board as a place that was welcoming and inclusive, a place where difference was valued and contributed to the successful working of the board, what would our board look like?** What would need to change? What are some of the steps that you think we would need to take to get there? (Be as specific as possible.).

# Appendix 2: Levels of Inclusion Assessment Tool

**Read the statements below and check the box beside all statements that apply to your board.**

| | |
|---|---|
| The board is unaware that bias is an issue. | |
| There is some awkwardness or discomfort in interacting with people who are seen as 'different'. | |
| Homogenous social groups are the norm. | |
| There is resistance to accommodating for people with disabilities because of the cost and because it disturbs the 'norm'. | |
| There are no 'out' LGBTQ board members currently serving on the board. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| There is a welcoming atmosphere by some board members and a sense of curiosity by other board members about differences between people. | |
| Most board members expect new board members to assimilate quickly into the board. For example, if the new member is an English language learner, they expect them to keep the same pace as everyone else. | |
| There is a growing awareness that bias exists and that people are negatively impacted by it. There is intellectual struggle around what is 'fair' and how to 'fix' the problem. | |
| There are occasional conversations on the board about the value of diversity. | |
| You hear occasional statements in board conversations like "I'm colour-blind, I don't see race."; "Residential schools were horrible and I'm glad we've closed that chapter in Canada's history. Now Aboriginal people need to move on."; "Of course gays and lesbians should have equal rights. Just don't throw your sexual practices in my face." | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Board members struggle on how to be inclusive and value differences on an interpersonal level. | |
| There is confusion and discontent. Some board members resist change and keep the status quo; some feel guilty; some continue to question and be upset with leadership when they see practices that exclude some members. | |
| Board members are beginning to see how structural inequality operates to negatively impact marginalized populations while maintaining benefits for the mainstream, maintaining systems of power and privilege. | |
| Board members express a desire for more strategic conversation or education about difference, culture, inclusion or equity | |
| There is a genuine desire to build inclusion but when conflict arises or board members are challenged on their behaviour, they may resist or retreat. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Board members understand that inclusion is about treating people fairly (equity) rather than the same (equality) and strive to accommodate differences. | ▬ |
| Training is available to increase board members' skills and awareness. | ▬ |
| The majority of board members are aware of the value of all of the different board members and of the need for different histories and perspectives. | ▬ |
| There may be a few board members who question the need for so many different perspectives on the board (and the time it takes to incorporate all of these different ideas!). | ▬ |
| Board members who don't come from identities that have historically held positions of power and privilege, don't trust that they will be fully welcomed and included (and don't expect it) | ▬ |

| | |
|---|---|
| All board members are seen as valuable members, they enrich and contribute to the governance of the organization. | ▬ |
| Diversity is the norm. | ▬ |
| Board members are willing to talk about difference and diversity to each other even when it is painful, uncomfortable, or brings challenging issues to light. | ▬ |
| All kinds of differences are respected and valued as opportunities for learning and problem solving, and board members have the skills and support to engage in hard conversations. | ▬ |
| Cultural change is embraced, with all board members accepting and articulating how and why diversity and inclusion is integral to the organization's success and wellbeing, and seeing them as everyone's responsibility. | ▬ |

| Tally the number that you checked in each category and write it in the box beside the corresponding part | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ▬ | | ▬ | | ▬ | | ▬ | | ▬ | |

Which box did you check the most boxes beside?

Look at the definition that corresponds to that section. Although you may have checked a few boxes in other categories, it is likely that this category is the place where your board is currently functioning. If you checked a similar number of boxes beside more than one section, this indicates that your board is in transition from one category to the next.

The purpose of this assessment tool is not to define your board, but rather gives you a place to begin a conversation with your board about how to continue to cultivate healthy practices and make changes where necessary to build a stronger culture of inclusion.

**Invisible**

Diversity and difference are barely on the radar, and there is no recognition of the value that inclusion brings to the board or the organization. Overt or subtle discrimination is present. When a discriminatory incident happens, it may be minimized and there is no attempt at redress. Individuals who face discrimination must deal with any of its negative impacts without support. There is also the feeling of not being valued or respected. Individuals can feel that they don't belong, and that their perspectives are not welcomed. There is a very entrenched/simplistic sense of who is seen as "normal" and who is seen as "different".

**Awareness**

There is some effort made to welcome under-represented people onto your board, based on a belief that all people are equal and so should be given equal opportunities for participation. Discrimination is seen as somewhat important to address, but actions taken to address it lack adequate resources, do not happen consistently and are ad hoc.

**Intentional inclusion**

The board has made an official statement about the importance of inclusion and diversity, and a structural understanding of inclusion and inequity is being advanced in the formation of policies and procedures. Interventions are planned with the goal to incorporate more equitable practices and attitudes into the entire organization. People have made verbal commitments to inclusion work.

**Strategic inclusion**

Long-term, broad-reaching strategic measures are taken to decrease barriers to participation for people who have long been marginalized, with the understanding that focusing energy on those with the most barriers is important for everyone. Strategies to transform processes that maintain systemic discrimination and provisions for measurement and accountability are in operation. Efforts are made to understand and address the root causes and systemic issues that lead to exclusion and marginalization. When discrimination happens there are policies and procedures in place to address them.

**Culture of inclusion**

All layers of identity and difference are considered and supported, and systemic processes for maintaining inclusion are fully woven into the organization. The value of all people is a widely held value, and everyone is comfortable with and sees the benefits of diversity, so exclusionary incidents rarely happen[1]. Continuous improvement of inclusion is embedded within the organization. Inclusion is a way of life and all members are supported to reach their full potential.

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1. Please note: Building a culture in which exclusionary or discriminatory incidents rarely happen is very different than having a governance board culture where the people on the board with power and privilege are not aware that others are being excluded through language, structures or practices. A culture where exclusionary or discriminatory incidents rarely happen is not often a culture that forms organically. Instead, it requires deliberate discussion and action often over an extended period of time.

# Appendix 3: Discussion Tool to Assess Inclusivity

This tool could be used by a facilitator to:

- Lead a debrief session with the whole group once each member of the governance board has completed it separately.

- Facilitate all governance board members to complete the Levels of inclusion assessment together and then lead a discussion about the assessment results.

> **Once the governance board has assessed its inclusivity level, you can use the following questions to engage the board in a discussion about taking action.**

1. **Was there anything surprising** for you about our inclusivity level?  What was it and why did it surprise you?

2. **What do you think would have to be different** for us to be able to confidently assess ourselves at the next level up?

3. **What actions would we need to take** as a board to get there?

4. **What resources do we need** to get there?

5. Given our discussion today, and our recognition that we can grow in our support of a culture of inclusion, **is there anything that that we need to act on immediately?** If so, what is it and what actions do we need to take?

# Appendix 4: Sample format for committee terms of reference

**Sample committee terms of reference, Ontario Hospital Association** [1]

**Role**

A general statement of the committee's purpose or role should be set out. The role should be relevant to the work of the board.

Example: The role of the governance committee might be expressed as: "To advise the board on matters relating to the board's governance structure and processes, evaluation of the board effectiveness, recruitment, education and evaluation of board members."

**Responsibilities**

A specific list of activities the committee is to undertake, usually without setting out in detail the process the committee is to follow.

Example: Governance committee responsibilities might include:

- Review by-laws and recommend revisions as required;
- Conduct process for succession, interviewing and recommending candidates for election to the board; and
- Evaluate effectiveness of board governance structures, processes and recommend changes as required. (Review Appendix 5 for further examples for further examples.)

**Membership and voting**

Set out the number of appointed and ex-officio committee members and whether they are voting or non-voting.Example: Voting members:

- Chair of the board;
- At least four directors appointed by the board;
- CEO as an ex-officio member.

Non-voting member:

- Vice President of Planning.

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1. Corbett, Anne and James M. Mackay. Guide to Good Governance, Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations, Ontario Hospital Association, April 2009, pp. 153-154.

**Chair**

Describe who the chair will be. <u>Example:</u>  A member of the committee appointed by the board.

**Frequency of meetings and manner of Call**

Specify if a minimum number of meetings must be held. Example:  At least quarterly at the call of the committee chair.

**Quorum**

If there are non-board members on the committee, the quorum should reference the board members.

<u>Example:</u> 51% of the committee members, provided a majority of those present are board members OR 51% of the members entitled to vote.

**Resources**

Specify if a member of management is to be assigned to the committee as a resource and committee support.

**Reporting**

Specify how the committee reports. It will usually be to the board, but a subcommittee may report to a committee.

<u>Example:</u> To the board.

# Appendix 5: Sample Board Governance and Nominating Committee Responsibilities

**Board governance and nominating committee, Ontario Hospital Association** [1]

## Board recruitment

- Develop for approval by the board a description of the skills, experience and qualities including diversity of the directors;
- Consider skills, experience, qualities and diversity of current directors to determine board needs;
- Oversee board recruitment and nomination processes and recommend to the board candidates for election at the annual meeting.

## Board education

- Ensure a comprehensive orientation session is provided to all new board members;
- Oversee board education sessions to ensure board receives periodic education on governance, industry issues and the organization's operations;
- Organize, with the input of the CEO and board chair, the board's annual retreat.

## Board chair

- Ensure succession planning for the office of board chair – this would be a great opportunity to create a mentoring relationship that provides an opportunity for someone who might not have had the same kinds of opportunities or experiences previously;
- Oversee and implement the board's process for selecting a board chair and recommend an individual for election by the board as chair;
- Make recommendations to the board for vice chairs and other board officers.

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1. Corbett, Anne and James M. Mackay. Guide to Good Governance, Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations, Ontario Hospital Association, April 2009, pp. 157-158

## Board committees

- Ensure periodic review and evaluation of committee performance and Terms of Reference and make recommendations to the board as required;

- Recommend to the board, with the input of the chair, nominees for all board committees and committee chairs, ensuring that all candidates are being taken into consideration

*There are many ways that people can contribute to committees and many reasons for people to take leadership roles. It does not always have to be the person with the most experience who takes on a leadership role. If this is the case on your board, you will likely miss out on other important experiences and perspectives.*

## Evaluations

- Establish and implement a program to evaluate board performances including individual director performance, performance of the chair, board committees and committee chairs
    - It is important that multiple voices contribute to the design of the evaluation materials to ensure that they reflect multiple perspectives);

- Consider the results of board evaluations in connection with renewal of the terms of existing directors;

- Review and make recommendations to the board concerning:
    - Board composition
    - Board size
    - Board structures
    - Board policies and procedures
    - By-law amendments
    - Board attendance
    - Other

- Such other matters as may be required by the board, from time to time.

# Appendix 6: Sample Board Diversity and Inclusion Policy

**Sample organizational board diversity and inclusion policy**[1]

This policy is intended to provide a framework for inclusion to promote diversity and inclusion in the board of [insert organization name]. The Board of Directors of [insert organization name] believes in the benefits diversity brings and it recognizes that diversity of thought contributes to the formation of a strong organization. Having a board composed of people with diverse skills, experience, backgrounds and perspectives can contribute to:

- a robust understanding of opportunities, issues and risks
- inclusion of different concepts, ideas and relationships
- enhanced decision-making and dialogue
- heightened capacity for oversight of the organization and its governance
- sustainability of the organization

For purposes of board composition, diversity includes, but is not limited to:

- skills and experience
- gender
- race
- culture/ethnicity
- sexual orientation
- income
- ability
- age
- language

The board will make good use of these differences and distinctions among individuals to determine the optimum composition of the board. All board appointments must collectively reflect the diverse nature of the environment in which the organization operates and be made on merit, in the context of the skills, experience, independence and knowledge which the board requires to be effective. The board is committed to ensure gender diversity and to diligently act to effect change. This policy applies to the board of [insert organization name]. It is not intended to apply to employee diversity, which is covered by a separate policy created for that purpose.

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1. Based on a compilation of many different diversity and inclusion policies

**Principles**

Diversity of thought is enhanced through intentional effort. [Insert organization name] will be intentional in ensuring diversity and inclusion. Credibility is enhanced through board and leadership diversity. There is a significant relationship between board and leadership diversity therefore, [insert organization name] will pursue a well-rounded, diverse, and credible approach to ensuring board and leadership diversity.

The board values a diversity of voices and sees the value that they can contribute to creative and innovative thinking within the organization. To ensure the diversity strategy of the organization is viewed as a legitimate process, all appointments will be made on merit. However, the board acknowledges that there are many different skills and knowledges that will enhance the board and its decision-making and so understands that merit is relative to the particular needs of the board. Being transparent and public about the board diversity and inclusion strategy is a helpful step in holding the board accountable, setting an example and providing thought leadership in the sector. Accessibility is enhanced through a powerful collective voice. The board will balance the intent of this policy with the need to be a powerful voice for diversity in all of its forms.

**Process**

To achieve its diversity aspirations, the board will:

- ensure the board's composition considers the balance of skills, experience, knowledge, perspectives, independence and characteristics in alignment with the strategic needs of [insert organization name] and the environment in which it operates
- identify suitable candidates for appointment to the board, considering candidates on merit against objective criteria, and with due regard for the benefits of diversity on the team
- maintain an ongoing list of potential candidates
- monitor and report annually, in the corporate governance section of [insert organization name]'s annual report and on its website its progress with respect to this policy.

**Review**

Annually by board

# Appendix 7: Sample Diversity and Inclusion Statement

**Our Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Principles, Forefront** [1] [2]

Believing that the wide array of perspectives resulting from diversity and inclusion allows all organizations to be more effective, we are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in philanthropy and the not-for-profit sector. We are also dedicated to greater diversity and inclusion within our own organization and provide equal opportunity to people of all races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, gender identifications, abilities, incomes, marital statuses, ages, geographic locations, philosophies, and veteran statuses in all levels of staff and governance.

**Diversity Principles**

The following principles and practices originated from the philanthropic sector executives, CEOs, and trustees of the Diversity in Philanthropy Project. They express the unity of our intention while respecting that our approaches may vary.

The principles and practices outlined here are not meant to be prescriptive; rather they represent a collective, affirmative effort to lift our field to a higher standard of operating practice. They can be employed in whole or in part to help philanthropic institutions more effectively achieve their missions.

**Our Principles:** We seek to encourage all foundation leaders to embrace the following principles intended to promote diversity as a matter of fairness and effectiveness in our profession.

- **Mutual Respect:** Within the parameters of our core values and charter requirements, we are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and we fundamentally value and respect experiences that are different from our own.

- **Freedom and Flexibility:** We promote a broad approach to diversity while respecting each individual foundation's commitment to address those aspects most germane to its mission.

- **Knowledge and Creativity:** By increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion, we believe we will access more expansive and varied ideas, information, and perspectives, making us more creative, informed investors.

- **Strategic Approach:** To achieve our aims, we believe it is necessary to be strategic and intentional in formalizing and pursuing meaningful diversity goals as central aspects of our governance and programming.

- **Transparency:** We believe we have a responsibility to society and our sector to achieve our goals with honesty and transparency, regularly reporting progress and lessons learned along the way.

- **Promising Practices:** We seek to advance field effectiveness by encouraging voluntary diversity practices

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1. Our Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Principles, Forefront. Retrieved from Forefront
2. The Board of Directors adopted this new statement in 2010. While they had had a Diversity statement since 1991, it had not been updated since 1996

that have shown potential to enhance philanthropic sector performance – including periodic self-assessments of board and staff appointments, grantmaking and contracting that better enable institutional leaders to identify and act on strategic opportunities to increase their inclusivity and public problem-solving leadership.

Following are exemplary practices we have identified that more and more private grantmaking institutions are successfully utilizing in these connections:

- **Internal Diversity Assessments:** Conducting periodic assessments of board and staff appointments, grantmaking, and contracting to help institutional leaders identify priorities, recognize strategic opportunities, and enhance their diversity performance.

- **Diversity Plans:** Developing and implementing diversity plans to help leaders design specific and concrete steps to expand representation and engagement from diverse communities in their mission and work.

- **Field Development and Coordination:**Supporting more integrated and coordinated planning, investment, and action to expand the field's overall capacity for change.

- **Peer Support:**Building peer networks, both formal and informal, to help individuals, their institutions, and the larger field achieve greater diversity.

- **Periodic Progress Reporting:** Tracking progress, communicating accomplishments, and sharing lessons learned to establish field-wide performance benchmarks and enhanced transparency and public accountability.

- **Public Leadership:**Exercising visible leadership by encouraging others to join, publicly promoting the benefits of diversity, and identifying new strategies that lead to greater effectiveness.

# Appendix 8: Sample Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement, Law Foundation of Ontario**[1]

The Law Foundation of Ontario (the Foundation) is committed to being a leader in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. We value the diversity of the people and communities we serve and recognize and respect human differences and similarities.

Our commitment to diversity includes all of the groups protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code. We recognize that an individual's needs and experiences may reflect intersecting membership in more than one of those groups.

We also understand that diversity can include a variety of other personal characteristics such as area of residence, thought and opinion, or socio-economic status.

To effectively advance access to justice, the Foundation believes we must engage in the full range of human experience paying particular attention to groups who have experienced injustice or inequity – past or current – and those who have experienced exclusion or barriers in society.

Our *Diversity, equity, and inclusion statement* applies to all Foundation activities including:

- Our strategic and operational priorities
- The grants we make
- The communities we serve
- The organizations we support
- How we communicate with others
- Our workplace environment and employment practices
- Our relationships with applicants, grantees, partners, and all others interested in access to justice

Our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion allows us to better achieve our vision and mission by ensuring that our grantmaking is responsive to individual and community needs.

We have a long tradition of considering and valuing diversity in our grantmaking. We intend to continually improve how we apply principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion to all our activities and are convinced that this improves the contributions that the Foundation, grantees, and our partners make to advancing access to justice.

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1. Diversity Equity and Inclusion Statement, Law Foundation of Ontario. Retrieved from Law Foundation of Ontario

**Illustrative practices**

- Ensuring that our grants serve diverse communities and that our grantees have the skills and experience to serve those communities, including the involvement of persons with lived experiences

- Making outreach efforts so that diverse communities are aware of granting opportunities and included in Foundation discussions about the access to justice landscape and assessment of need

- Having accessible customer service and workplace policies

- Actively offering French language services to grantees

- Integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into all our human resource policies and decisions

- Providing training and educational opportunities to staff that help create a positive work environment and strengthen our ability to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

# Appendix 9: Discussion Questions on Developing an Inclusive Governance Culture

Identify a priority group or groups to include on your board that often face barriers to inclusion and have been discussed in this toolkit, such as women, racialized communities, persons with (dis)abilities, Indigenous peoples, the LGBTQ2I+ [1] community, youth, and people who have low income.

There are a number of additional groups and possible practices that are mentioned in Chapter 4.

**Questions for discussion**

1. What have we already done that reflects steps in the right direction in this area?

2. What gaps or opportunities exist to become more inclusive in this area?

3. Is there someone who could give us more insight on this area?

4. What actions do we need to take to become more inclusive in this area?

5. What barriers exist that will prevent us from becoming more inclusive in this area? What resources do we need to navigate them?

> Once you have engaged in this process with one group and are satisfied with your progress, start the conversation about another group.

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1. Literature and practice label this group of sexual and gender minorities in different ways. For the purposes of this toolkit, we have chosen to use the term LGBTQ2I+ to represent this group as it is the term used by the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

# Appendix 10: Glossary of Key Terms

**Diversity** is the range of visible and invisible qualities, experiences and identities that shape who we are, how we think, and how we engage with and are perceived by the world. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical or mental abilities, religious/spiritual beliefs or political ideologies. They can also include differences such as personality, style, capabilities and thoughts/perspectives. [1]

**Equality** is treating everyone the same, regardless of their needs.

**Equity** is fairness, making sure everyone has what they need to succeed and removing barriers that disadvantage some groups over others. This is distinct and may be different from treating people equally. [2]

**Inclusion** is what a community, group or organization does, or how it acts to ensure that individuals feel welcomed, valued and supported as members. [3]

**Oppression** results from institutional privilege and power. When one group benefits at the expense of another group that does not receive access to the same power or privilege, this creates marginalization and subjugation of the group and the people from that group. [4] [5]

**Privilege** refers to the right (or exemption) granted to an individual or group as an advantage because they fall into a particular identity category, not because they have earned it. This privilege gives the individual or group institutional power simply because of their identity. [6]

**Tokenism** is the practice of doing something only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group). [7].

**Unconscious bias** refers to the information, attitudes, and stereotypes that inform our subconscious mental shortcuts which allow us to process immense amounts of information every day. While unconscious information-processing is a

1. Ontario Public Service Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint (2017). Retrieved from Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint Sun, A. (September 16, 2014). Equality is not Enough: What the Classroom Has Taught me About Justice. Retrieved from Everyday Feminism
2. Ontario Public Service (2017)
3. Morley (2018)
4. Goldbach, J. (October 25, 2017). Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege.
5. Timothy, Roberta (2016). Glossary from the Intersectionality, Anti-Oppression and Collaborative Leadership in Practice Learning Institute.
6. Goldbach (2017)
7. Sherrer, Kara (February 26, 2018). What is Tokenism: And why does it matter in the workplace? Owen School of Management, Vanderbilt University. Retrieved from Vanderbilt University

critical part of human functioning, these mental associations happen without awareness, without intention and without control, and often introduce errors into decision-making.[8] [9]

8. ParadigmIQ (2016). Managing Unconscious Bias: Strategies to Manage Bias and Build More Diverse, Inclusive Organizations. Retrieved from Managing Unconscious Bias
9. Hunt, David B. (2016). Unconscious Bias--What is it? Retrieved from InDemand Interpreting.

# Appendix 11: List of Further Resources

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## Assessment Tools

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**Diversity Inclusion and Equity Assessment Tool**

This tool was designed by the Michigan Non-Profit Association and it is a tool designed to help not-for-profit organizations assess their current status and future progress on the journey to make these values a reality. The assessment was developed with input from not-for-profit experts and practitioners, literature on best practices, and the collective experience of the framing partners. The project was piloted in 2016 and feedback from participating organizations was incorporated into the final product. Assessment scores provide a general indication of an organization's current status. Interpretations should keep in mind that these are complex concepts and all organizations will move back and forth along a continuum of best practices. Costs range from $50 for an individual assessment to $300 for an organizational assessment.

**Advancing the mission: Tools for equity, diversity and inclusion**

This resource was released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a US-based entity that focusses on the case study of their own foundation and their own equity, diversity and inclusion work. This toolkit offers encouragement to start where you can, and the hope that those efforts will persist until equity, diversity, and inclusion are all addressed as central to the work. This collection of tools is based on a case example of what one Foundation has undertaken and accomplished because of a growing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. As such, it is only one story — not a prescription. Here you'll find a description of the concrete steps that have been taken, a little of the back story and challenges of the work, and some tools based on this example that can be adapted for your own organization, if you choose. This is complex work that can only benefit from learning and borrowing from one another.

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## Becoming allies to LGBTQ2I+ communities

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**LGBTQ2I+S Toolkit**

This toolkit is designed with youth in mind and in addition to defining the concept of ally and differentiating between sex and gender, it expands on the importance of adopting inclusive language practices that we highlighted in Section 4.

## Collaborating with Indigenous communities

**Bâtir Ensemble: Les Peuples Autochtones dans les Métiers de la Construction. L'Alliance Autochtone**

This resource was developed by the Canadian Building Trades Union. Although some of the content specifically addresses workplace practices, the principles that are suggested could easily be adopted by a Governance Board. It also includes a section on land acknowledgement that was addressed in Section 4 of this toolkit.

**Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada : Appels à l'action**

The Calls to Action were established as recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and were released in 2015.   There were 94 Calls to Action divided into two categories: Legacy redressing the harms resulting from the Indian residential schools and Reconciliation to bring the federal and provincial governments and Indigenous nations of Canada into a reconciled state for the future.

## Creating inclusive environments for all abilities/(dis)abilities

**Inclusion Toolkit: A Guide to Including and Engaging People with Disabilities in Service and Conservation**

This toolkit was design by the Utah Conservation Corps to look at how to build an inclusive environment for all people, with all levels of abilities. Although the particular case of this toolkit is conservation, the approach and the considerations have a much wider application.

**Inclusive Design Toolkit**

This toolkit was written by the Engineering Design Centre at the University of Cambridge and provides an overview of Universal Design and adaptations and considerations for creating environments that includes people with a wide range of needs.

**What is Universal Design?**

This resource was compiled by the Centre of Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Association. This US based organization seeks to educate about and advocate for persons with (dis)abilities. This site defines Universal Design and its 7 Principles. It provides a history and international policy and legislation. It also includes a number of case studies and examples, illustrating benefits to organizations.

## Supporting youth in governance

**Youth Participation in Governance: Creating Youth Friendly Communities**

This comprehensive resource was put together by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development. It features a number of strategies for engaging youth in all areas of governance, including boards and a list of resources from across Canada.

## Diversity in governance

**Diversity in Governance: A Tool Kit for Nonprofit Boards**

This is a resource that was developed by onBoard Canada and it is a companion to the Building Inclusive Governance Toolkit. This resource provides both a framework and assessment tools to look at building diversity into board governance.

**Diversity on Non-Profit Boards**

This resource is on the National Council of Non-Profits website which is a US based entity. It provides a great summary of the advantages of building diversity and incorporating principles of inclusion into not-for-profit governance.

## Gender equity

**Women Being Board Ready**

This publication, put out by the Government of Western Australia, addresses both the benefits and challenges that women experience throughout the governance board experience. It builds the case for increased participation of women on boards through solid research and provides a number of suggestions about how women can position themselves to take leadership roles on governance boards in both the for-profit and not-for-profit worlds.

## Racial equity

**Racial Equity Resource Guide**

This resource provides a glossary of terms when discussing issues of race. It suggests that a common vocabulary is essential to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words often have different meanings to different people, based on their experiences. The purpose of this glossary, which is a work in progress, is to help avoid such misunderstandings. Not everyone will agree on the definition of every word; but everyone should have a common understanding of how words are being used in particular circumstances.

## Understanding power and privilege

**Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege**

This toolkit was designed by a Social Work Professor at the University of South Carolina for specific use with people working with not-for-profit organizations. Although the tool isn't specifically designed with Board members and leadership in mind, it may be a resource that you can use to start your conversation.

## Understanding the relationship between diversity, equity and inclusion

**Tips for Valuing Diversity**

This tool was designed for individuals or groups who have participated in diversity or inclusion training. While people may come out of the training viewing what they have learned as good practice and/or the right thing to do, they may not be sure exactly what to do to support diversity and inclusion. This tool offers some specific suggestions.

**A Place at the Table: Understanding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

This short YouTube video addresses the relationship between Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

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## Unconscious bias

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### Unconscious Bias and the Board

onBoard Canada has a number of online training modules that support board development. This particular training module available through their website, addresses the issue of unconscious bias and how it can be addressed in practical ways.

### Are you Biased? I Am.

This short TedTalkX addresses unconscious bias. She encourages curiosity to recognize the "shortcuts" that happen in our minds — the ones we aren't even aware of, which sometimes do not represent who we really are or who we want to be. Kristen shares a fast, free and impactful approach to test ourselves for unconscious bias: Mentally flip the person with whom you are dealing with someone else to test for potential bias.

### Diversity: Not so black and white

Shakil Choudhury, a consultant in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion talks about unconscious bias with Steve Paikin of TVO's The Agenda in a 25-minute interview. Note: the section on implicit or unconscious bias begins about five minutes into the interview, at -20:18.

### Managing Unconscious Bias: Strategies to Manage Bias and Build More Diverse, Inclusive Organizations

This great resource looks at building strategies to both manage bias and build more diverse, inclusive organizations. It starts by defining the term and phenomenon of unconscious bias and then suggests how to begin the conversation within your board/organization.

# Appendix 12: Five Action Steps to Inclusive Governance

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## Five Action Steps to Inclusive Governance

- Start the conversation
- Assess inclusivity
- Develop inclusive governance policies and practices
- Adopt strategies to develop a learning culture
- Embed a culture of inclusion

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## STEP #1:  START THE CONVERSATION

It can be a challenge to start the conversation about inclusive governance.  This toolkit provides you with resources to support you in this process:

Developing a [framework for inclusive governance](#) (Appendix 1) provides a form-fill document that you can work through with your board. You can share it with your board members before the meeting so that they have time to think about the questions.

Our [Further Resources](#) section includes information on:

- **Power and privilege:**  how to understand it and talk about it
    - **Diversity toolkit:** a guide to discussing identity, power and privilege
- **The relationship between diversity, equity and inclusion**
    - Tips for valuing diversity
    - A place at the table: understanding diversity, equity and inclusion
- **Unconscious bias**
    - Unconscious bias and the board

- ◦ *Are you biased? I am*
- ◦ Managing unconscious bias: strategies to manage bias and build more diverse, inclusive organizations

## STEP #2: ASSESS INCLUSIVITY

Once you've had the initial conversation, it is helpful to do an assessment. Assessment tools can be useful because they help you to 'check-in' and ask yourselves some questions. They also provide another way to continue the conversation.

Levels of Inclusion Assessment Tool (Appendix 2) provides a self-assessment form that you can work through with your board. You can share it with your board members before the meeting so that they have time to think about the questions and then set aside some time in the meeting to discuss the results of the assessment. We have included a debrief resource for use by the facilitator after the board has completed the assessment. You can find this tool in Discussion Tool to Assess Inclusivity (Appendix 3).

Once you have completed your discussion based on the assessment tool in Appendix 2, you may be interested in further assessment or similar resources. Another assessment tool is the Diversity inclusion and equity assessment tool.

## STEP #3: DEVELOP INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Now that you have had some important conversations with your board, the next step is to focus on your current and future governance board policies

**Determine if you have a board diversity policy or a board diversity and inclusion policy.**

If you have such a policy, form a committee to:

- Review the current board diversity policy
- Recruit new board members for the committee, ensuring diversity
- Ensure that board orientation and ongoing development needs are met
- Ensure the committee has terms of reference, review sample format, Appendix 4, and sample roles and responsibilities in Appendix 5.
- Evaluate how the policy is working and changes that have taken place within the board since its inception. Were these changes positive? Were they expected?
- Review and make recommendations to the board about:
  - ◦ changes to board composition, outreach and recruitment
  - ◦ board size, structures, policies and procedures
  - ◦ by-law amendments and board attendance
  - ◦ changes/additions to the policy, such as new language about equity and inclusion

**Determine if you have a board recruitment policy.**

If you have such a policy, form a committee to:

- Review your recruitment and selection processes for new board members in the context of your conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion.

- ◦ Is there any policy or practice you would change?

- ◦ Is there any process you would change to make board recruitment more welcoming to potential members?

- Ask newer board members about their experience of recruitment. If there were potential members who did not join your board, you could ask them if the process played a role in their decision (Although this type of evaluation can be difficult, it can yield great insights for your board).

**If you do not have a diversity and inclusion policy or a board recruitment policy**, forming these policies should be on your agenda at a governance board meeting in the near future. onBoard Canada has developed a toolkit and online training resources to support you in this process:

- Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Nonprofit Boards

- onBoard Canada Online Governance Training

## STEP #4:  ADOPT STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP A LEARNING CULTURE

This next step is one that you may revisit many times since changing an existing culture takes time and effort.  The following is an action-oriented process that will help to move you forward to build a more inclusive culture for your board:

As preparation for this next step, invite your board to read over the section Go Beyond Token Representation in Chapter 4: Section 4.4.

Identify a priority group or groups to include on your board. Choose one or two areas to focus on over the next quarter, such as Incorporating Practices of Universal Design in Chapter 4.

Use the resource we have developed in Appendix 9, Discussion Questions on Developing an Inclusive Culture.

Based on your response to the discussion questions, develop an action plan that includes ways to consult and connect with people from the priority groups.

Create short and long-term goals and establish an evaluation plan that involves continuous improvement for inclusion. The ultimate goal is to include all relevant priority groups for your board's mandate.

For more detailed information on priority groups and inclusive practices, please check our list of Further Resources.

## STEP #5:  EMBED A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

By the time you reach this step, your board will have done a lot of important work. There may have been challenges and resistance to change.

This final step encourages you to take stock of your progress to create a culture of inclusion, by following Action Steps #1-4.

Here are some questions you may want to consider.

- Have there been changes in your board?  What has caused those changes? You may decide to revisit the Levels of Inclusion Assessment Tool.

- What actions have we completed to build inclusive governance?

- What evidence do we have that we have made changes?

- What are our next steps?

Take time to celebrate your successes and to affirm the steps that you have taken.

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