Evaluation, Accountability & Sustainability
for Nonprofit DEI/Antiracism (DEIA) Policies and Programs

Over the last several years, many nonprofits have developed policies and programs to address the challenges and opportunities of diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and antiracism (hereafter called **DEIA**) – both in their organizations and in the communities they serve. Often the policy is formally approved by the Board of Directors, and in many cases both Board and staff receive education and technical assistance to help develop their DEIA program. Some nonprofits create committees of staff (and sometimes clients or other community members – one approach to such committees is presented below) to provide input to these efforts, designate a staff person to supervise them, or both.

But these policies and programs are much likelier to survive over time and have real impact if they are evaluated, and the resulting evaluation data used to address the organization's accountability for dealing with DEIA issues. Policies need to be re-examined, and in some cases modified; programs need the same, plus funding support to continue doing what works and to gather and interpret evaluation data. These actions promote sustainability of the policies and programs over time. Increasingly funders of nonprofits - foundations, government agencies and corporations – are requesting or even requiring input about nonprofits' DEIA activities and outcomes as part of funding applications. In some cases, nonprofits are requesting funding specific to supporting DEIA work, e.g., a "DEIA Coordinator."

Since 2019, CSUN Valley Nonprofit Resources has partnered with CSUN Social Work Professor Allen Lipscomb to provide education and technical assistance on DEIA issues to nonprofits in the San Fernando Valley (an example is at the end of this piece). In 2022 this work moved into the evaluation, accountability and sustainability space, starting with an educational workshop attended by all the Valley nonprofits to which Prof. Lipscomb has provided TA under VNR's support. This publication summarizes the principles and strategies presented at the workshop. Editorial input to the publication was provided by an Advisory Committee (see listing at the end). This work has been partially supported by The California Wellness Foundation and the California Community Foundation.

►A PLACE TO BEGIN

This brief publication is intended to be a "think piece" to help nonprofits begin the work of evaluating, holding accountable and sustaining DEIA policies and programs. It provides definitions, principles and some tentative guidance for a part of the DEIA space for nonprofits that has had relatively little coverage to date. The content here is focused on communities of color, but it could be applied to other diverse populations. It does not address specific evaluation processes (like how to do surveys), nor does it look at differences between various groups as they may impact the work to be done. The piece is a success if it starts a dialogue!

► DEFINITIONS

To be sure the dialogue starts with some common understandings, below are brief definitions of some of the key terms used here. Discussions about DEIA may include differences in ways to think about any of these terms.

Diversity is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, disability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective (with an emphasis on underrepresented groups). This publication emphasizes differences for communities of color – such as those of Black, Asian, Latinx, and Native American staff, Board members, clients, families, and communities.

Equity is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by organizations or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities in society.

Inclusion activities ensure that those from underrepresented groups actually feel a sense of belonging, value, and are welcomed – in particular, that they are able to participate fully in the organization's decision-making processes and opportunities.

Antiracism is the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Antiracism has tended to involve an individualized approach and to be set up in opposition to individual racist behaviors and impacts, but increasingly these activities also are set in the larger context of what entire communities and historical systems contribute to both the challenges and opportunities.

Evaluation can be carried out by nonprofits once DEIA policies and programs are set in place, focusing both on the process (how well they were implemented) and outcome (what impact they have) levels. Evaluation measures can include interviews or surveys of staff, clients and others in the community. And they can include a review by an internal committee focused on these matters, or a qualified outside person who can do a "site visit."

To begin evaluation work, nonprofits might use the DEIA Assessment Tool – presented at the end of this publication. Developed by Professor Allen Lipscomb and adapted from his work with AWOKE, a Valley community-based nonprofit, this Tool can start the process of thinking about how DEIA policies and programs are being implemented, and about what impact they have.

Accountability is more than compliance – nonprofit organizations are held accountable via the results they achieve, and their DEIA efforts are no exception.

Sustainability is the potential of a policy or program to continue operating and have impact on the organization, the people it serves, and the community.

One other term relevant to this publication is **Implicit Bias** - a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, but that affects judgments, decisions and behaviors regarding diverse populations (such as racial or ethnic groups, as well as bias based on age, gender, etc.).

► **TEN DESIRABLE ASPECTS OF DEIA EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The strategies presented here are more likely to be successful if the nonprofits using them manifest the following desirable aspects, which come both from the authors' experience in the nonprofit space and from the limited literature on this topic.

- Organizations, community leaders, partners and agencies are mutually responsible for planning, identifying, collecting, and using data
- A transparent, non-punitive culture around data analysis and use is created - that is different than just reporting
- Communities aren't blamed for any system failure as it relates to DEIA work
- Data about DEIA is shared with the community and is used consistently
- Data skepticism is addressed head on (see below)
- Solutions are picked with an eye to root causes (see below) so that these solutions will more likely work to disrupt and shift disproportionate outcomes
- Authentic, trusting relationships are established so that when data goes in the wrong direction, the nonprofit and its stakeholders will collectively encourage and empower people to seek solutions rather than blame team members
- All efforts begin by asking the question: Whose lives are you looking to impact?
- All work is done in the larger context of transforming systems to get more equitable outcomes for communities of color
- All work is done under the assumption that the whole community cannot experience well-being when communities of color experience those conditions at disproportionately lower rates

► **DETERMINING THE ROOT CAUSES OF RACIAL DISPARITY THAT DEIA ACTIVITIES ADDRESS**

Getting to these root causes can be helped by asking the following questions:

- What are the factors that contribute to the racial disparity seen in the data nonprofits collect?
- What factors may affect these root causes in the future?
- What are the data trends over time that highlight racially disproportionate, systems-level outcomes for communities of color?
- Ask "WHY" 3-5 times to get closer to root causes (e.g., Why are we seeing this? Why do we continue to get the same results?) to move past superficial understandings of the sources of racial disparity

Implicit bias as defined above certainly is part of the landscape defined by root causes.

► ACCOUNTABILITY

Evaluation data can be used to promote accountability, focused on results achieved by DEIA activities as these results are appraised by the nonprofit's various stakeholders, its Board of Directors, and possibly by funders as well. All those involved with translating evaluation data into measures of accountability need to address data skepticism, discussed below.

Gathering evaluation data makes it more possible to do results-based accountability, which has the following characteristics:

- Data-informed, transparent decision-making
- Starting at the end to determine what a nonprofit wants to achieve and working backwards to the means for doing so
- Identifying the right level of accountability, both discussed below:
- Population or whole community (long term)
- Performance: programs, services, agencies, systems and initiatives
- Establishing partnerships that help in gathering data and interpreting results, discussed below – important not just for accountability activities but for the entire range of DEIA efforts (partnerships are discussed further below)

Data Skepticism The activities discussed here occur in the context of many people's skepticism about evaluation data - both within the nonprofit's staff or Board and among community stakeholders. Two questions are particularly relevant:

- Has data historically been used to reinforce racist, deficit-oriented ideas about communities of color?
- Has data been collected from communities of color for research purposes and the learnings have not been shared back?

If the answer to one or both of these questions is "yes" repair work is needed, and the organization must take responsibility for addressing data skepticism, even if current leadership is not responsible for damage done in the past.

Questions about Population Accountability Moving towards accountability for a nonprofit's DEIA work with an entire population can be helped by asking the following questions:

1. What condition of well-being do we want for our community (results)?
2. What would these conditions look like if we achieved them?
3. What measures can we use to quantify these conditions (indicators)?
4. How are we doing on the indicators quantitatively (data trend) and qualitatively (root cause)?
5. Who are the partners with a role to play?
6. What works to determine accountability?
7. What specifically do we propose to do?

Questions about Performance Accountability Similar questions about the actual level of performance a nonprofit achieves in its DEIA work can help:

1. Who does your nonprofit's work serve?
2. How can you measure if they are better off as a result of your activities?
3. How can you measure the quality and quantity of your nonprofit's work?
4. How are you doing on these measures quantitatively (data trends) and qualitatively (root causes)?
5. Who are the partners you need and what is their role?
6. What works (practices, processes, and/or policies)?
7. What do you propose to do, in what timeline and in what budget?

► SUSTAINABILITY

After evaluation data have been gathered and accountability questions addressed, nonprofit leaders next need to look at how DEIA activities that are shown to be successful can be sustained over time. An annual evaluation and accountability report, drafted with input from various stakeholders and disseminated widely in the community, might be one part of moving towards sustainability. Including DEIA results in the nonprofit's overall annual reporting also may be important. And the nonprofit will need to commit to the financial resources needed to continue DEIA efforts shown to be effective – these activities are not cost-free! Nonprofit leaders may take lessons from other programs or activities they want to continue, and they can apply these to promoting sustainability of their DEIA programming.

► SELECTING MEANINGFUL PARTNERS

To have successful results from DEIA activities, including but not limited to accountability, nonprofits must partner with community leadership where they do their work, and frequently with a broad range of other partners:

- Government agencies
- Other nonprofits
- Foundations and corporations
- Community-based advocacy and organizing groups
- Education institutions – primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities

For each partner, the nonprofit needs to determine what role the partner will play in the DEIA work, and in related evaluation, accountability and sustainability activities:

- Why are they important?
- What are they needed for?
- When would it be effective to bring partners into the effort so as to phase the work strategically?
- What partners on other topics is a nonprofit already working with that could be brought into DEIA partnerships?

► MANAGING DEIA WITH A JEDI COMMITTEE

To help implement, evaluate and enhance DEIA activities over time, nonprofits can create a Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) committee. A JEDI committee will be most successful when organizational leaders believe in the value the committee will bring to the organization. Leadership buy-in helps DEIA initiatives get the attention and funding they deserve so real change can be accomplished, evaluated, and sustained. JEDI committees work best when they are made up of an inclusive and diverse group of stakeholders, but not so large that it becomes difficult to hear every committee member's voice, enact change, hold the organizational accountable, and run effective meetings.

To organize such a committee, the first step is to survey the organization to gauge board, staff, volunteer and stakeholder interest in joining a committee, DEIA experiences, and diversity characteristics. Then the nonprofit can choose 5-15 people who are passionate about DEIA, ready to act, and represent the organization and the community/population served.

In operating the committee, it may be helpful to "mix things up" to prioritize people who may have different perspectives and workplace experiences. In addition, it may be useful to select one or two committee chairs to provide team leadership and act as a liaison between the committee and organizational leadership.

► CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Aspects of all the above guidance may be somewhat different for various groups, as reflected in their culture and orientation towards the primary themes of evaluation, accountability and sustainability. It was mentioned in the beginning that the focus here is on communities of color, but within that broad category some significant differences might exist if a nonprofit's staff and stakeholders are primarily African American, Latino, Asian, etc. Their views on DEIA may be different, and they might have different understandings about how to gather evaluative information, how to hold a nonprofit accountable for its program or policy, or how to promote its long-term sustainability. Therefore, at the beginning of any effort to implement the above strategies a nonprofit's leaders and staff need to consider how to shape implementation in light of the characteristics of a predominant group – or how to balance various groups in a multicultural environment.

- Implementation of the strategies discussed here also can and should be influenced by some other important considerations:
- Clarity about who/what a nonprofit serves gives focus to the evaluation measures selected – it also ensures that the nonprofit does not unintentionally hold people accountable for change outside of the scope of the work
- Not every activity will impact community members directly; some will impact other kinds of stakeholders, such as public officials, staff and Board members
- Even when organizations select actions that they believe will address DEIA goals, it is critical to regularly review data at the performance level and ask, "why?"

- It also is critical for evaluation activity to look honestly at whether DEIA activities are – even inadvertently - perpetuating systemic failures to address racially disproportionate outcomes, and disrupting those failures
- Evaluation needs to address leverage - how likely are DEIA activities to change the trendline? What additional resources for change does evaluation activate?
- Reach is another important evaluation objective – is the DEIA activity feasible in the larger environment in which the nonprofit lives? Will it benefit substantial communities of color experiencing disparity?
- Does the evaluation program have a timeline with deliverables?
- No one program or policy will produce all the needed results, but over time, multiple strategies can have an impact (including DEIA work a nonprofit already is doing)
- Sometimes low-cost or even no-cost ideas can be part of the mix

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DEIA Assessment Tool

Purpose

DEI/Antiracist (DEIA) work requires persistence and dedication. This tool can be used to provide input from those involved in creating DEIA policies and programs, and other observers, to begin evaluating process and outcomes, as well as to promote accountability and sustainability.

Using This Tool

Answers to the following six questions can be quickly given online or on paper, and responses compared among creators of a program or policy, and both internal and external observers. The questions also can be used for discussion by Boards of Directors, by Community Advisory Committees, and specifically by JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Committees set up by nonprofits to manage DEIA activities. Exploring any differences among respondents can be especially useful.

Assessment Questions

1. In a sentence or two, what are the essential elements of this organization's DEIA policy and program?
2. In what ways do they center on the experiences and voices of diverse people?
3. In what ways do they disrupt white supremacy or other DEIA challenges?
4. Which community members is the DEIA program benefitting and how?
5. What are the specific and measurable ways the organization plans to evaluate the DEIA policy and program?
6. What about the DEIA policy and program still needs work, and where are the greatest opportunities?

Example of DEIA Policy and Program

In 2020-21, Professor Allen Lipscomb provided consultation to Child Development Institute, which for more than 25 years has been providing early childhood services in the San Fernando Valley. Prof. Lipscomb worked with the CDI leadership and with the entire team of 90 staff. CDI put their work on DEIA in the larger context of Black Lives Matter, 2020 demonstrations in Los Angeles, and heightened awareness of pervasive inequities including systematic racial biases and white privilege. According to CDI leadership, there was much interest, concern, and confusion about how to address these issues in open and safe dialogue. These inputs were shared this along with specific questions and concerns submitted by the CDI team before each of two Zoom meetings with Dr. Lipscomb. The presentations divided staff into two groups to engage more individuals in the conversation.

Feedback about these early activities was uniformly positive, as measured by a brief survey of CDI leadership. There was a request to continue the dialogue with Dr. Lipscomb. Leadership also reported that the presentations inspired them to revisit the CDI strategic plan to make it more explicit and proactive regarding internal and external communications and action on DEIA matters (including the Statement of Culture presented below, adding more attention to these issues in staff trainings, and creating a DEIA Committee).

CDI added a goal to its strategic plan - to define commitment and action for proactive communication and advocacy addressing the vast inequities facing families of color in their community. It also pledged to continue to develop internal learning and sharing around race issues and focus on creating a safe space for the CDI team to be educated about implicit bias and white privilege. CDI added questions to its annual staff survey about progress in implementing its DEIA approaches, and it created an anonymous survey for staff to bring up concerns they want leadership to address.

The CDI policy on DEIA took the form of a Statement of Culture adopted by the CDI Board of Directors:

CDI is committed to ensuring that all children and families have access to high quality support and services regardless of race, social identity, and socio-economic status. We value the diversity of multiple experiences, perspectives and ideas that result in an effective organization. We continue to educate ourselves to ensure inclusion and equity are embedded across our work and advocate for the needs of vulnerable and underserved children and families. We believe our organization should be reflective of the community we serve and are working to increase diversity at our executive management and board level. Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee meets every other month and continually reviews and updates our policies and procedures, to advance our DEI knowledge and practices. Furthermore, CDI continues to develop partnerships across the field of early intervention and child development to build the transformational work of dismantling oppressive systems and creating anti-discriminatory policies, and systems. We value collaboration and communication that challenges racism and prejudices and supports cultural, racial, and social equity and inclusion.

Further evaluation activities are being planned as the DEIA program working under this Statement continues.