

# Staying the Course: Sustaining Your Organization's DEI Strategy During Times of Crises

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

## STAYING THE COURSE: SUSTAINING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S DEI STRATEGY DURING TIMES OF CRISES

Have your diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts stalled due to the unpredictable events of 2020 and 2021? During this session, we will explore actionable methods that can be applied within your organization to regain momentum for your DEI efforts during turbulent, unpredictable times.

### Participants will:

- Learn methods to re-center DEI as an organizational priority
- Hear examples of how organizations are maintaining momentum for their DEI programs during this time of uncertainty
- Explore a variety of best practices to re-establish organizational accountability to DEI efforts



**Emily Holthaus:** Hello, everyone. Good afternoon, good morning or good evening, depending on where you are in the world today. We are so excited to have all of you join us for our brand new 2021 education series called Resilience. We're truly excited for today's first topic in which we're going to talk about Staying the Course: Sustaining Your Organization's DEI Strategy During Times of Crisis.

For those of you that are not familiar, this series is sponsored by Nonprofit HR. We've been around for the last 20 years, serving nonprofits, of all shapes and sizes, the social sector and social impact organizations to support everything HR. From prior to people coming into your organization all the way through the lifecycle to successfully and respectfully offboarding team members. We're here to support organizations with everything that you need related to HR. And, as you all know, diversity, equity and inclusion is an important part of that. Just to give you a snapshot here, these are the areas in which we support nonprofits and social enterprise organizations: Strategy & Advisory, Outsourcing, DEI, which is the topic of our conversation today, everything Total Rewards, Impact Search Advisors and SITA, which is our social enterprise piece to serve HR for social enterprise organizations.

So, we are really excited to have all of you here with us today. We've got a really packed agenda. But before we jump in and get started, I did want to go over a few items that will help all of you be able to participate in today's event. So, you've joined the presentation and probably are using your computer's speaker system by default. If you prefer or have connectivity issues, you can join over the telephone. Just select telephone in the audio pane, and the dial-in information will be displayed.

Throughout, as you're listening to our panelists and contributors today, you'll have the opportunity to submit text questions to our presenters, and you can use the questions pane on your control panel. At any point during our presentation, you may type in your questions and our amazing team who is producing behind the scenes will be gathering all those questions for us. Then, after the presentation when the contributors get through the information, we are going to have a full Q&A session where we'll try to answer as many of those questions as we possibly can. Knowing that we probably won't get to all of them, we will also follow up with you to answer questions that do not get addressed.

Additionally, today's webinar is being recorded, so you're going to receive a follow-up email within the next few days with a link to the recording.

With that, let's go ahead and jump in and get started. I'm going to turn my camera on, so I can see all of you, and you can see me.

My name is Emily Holthaus. I'm the Managing Director for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Nonprofit HR. My team supports organizations with the people side of things: How does it feel to be in an

organization? How do we treat each other? How do we make decisions? We also support organizations with the equally important system side of things: How well are the systems and processes working? Are they equitable? And if we find out that they're not equitable, how do we then reimagine those systems to ensure equity and mitigate bias throughout the talent management lifecycle?

I'm incredibly excited today to introduce this topic. The year 2020 was quite a year full of volatility, uncertainty and the multiple crises that we were dealing with throughout, whether that is the pandemic and everything that stemmed from it. Many of you in organizations probably went from having workforces that were in person, doing things together in spaces and places, to virtual workforces. And that's an example of the overlay of what can happen related to the pandemic and its effects. We also had an incredibly challenging year related to racial justice in America and across the world for many different reasons. And so that overlay, adding to the additional stress of everything else going on, created multiple crisis points within our organizations and within our communities.

And so today, we're here to talk about, if you had a DEI piece that you were working on and all of the things that happened in 2020 have caused that to stall or maybe you just need some extra energy to restart or maybe it was because some of the things that happened during the crisis moments over the last year have required you to rethink your strategy.

What we're going to do is a top 10 style today. We're going to do a countdown of our top 10 tips to support nonprofits and social enterprises as you think about your strategy and how to navigate this time of crisis that we've been a part of over the last year, that still continues into 2021. And so, I'm really excited. It's not just going to be me with you all today. This whole top 10 list is going to be brought to you by some pretty amazing guest contributors. I have several members of my Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consulting team at Nonprofit HR, but I'm also really excited to have this event be co-sponsored by our internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Team. You're going to get to hear from several leaders that serve on that advisory team and do amazing HR work for organizations all across the country to support our top 10 list for today.

So again, just remember as you're listening to the top 10, feel free to put your questions in the chat and we're all going to come back at the end to be able to jump and interact and answer those questions for you.

Top 10 style means we start at number 10, so I'm going to introduce number 10. Number 10 is the idea that we know many of you in 2020 and even now into 2021 have had to make some really tough decisions. Revenue streams, philanthropic giving and all of the things that we were doing as a well-oiled machine before the pandemic has oftentimes been upended by everything that has happened.

This top 10 piece here, number 10, is: What are the equity implications if downsizing becomes your reality or has become your reality? If things like layoffs are something that you have to think of? If things like utilizing resources or redirecting resources is something that you need to think of?

I just wanted to give a few tips in this area, and I think the biggest thing if you're getting ready to do some layoffs or downsizing is to really, at the beginning of that process, slow down and consider the equity implications. When we don't take the overlay of equity, and we're working in that crisis mode, that is what allows bias to creep into our process. We do things like look at affinity biases or historical biases of who's been in our organization and who hasn't. And as we're making decisions, if we don't slow down to say: What are the implications from an equity standpoint? It doesn't allow us to really interrupt the bias that might exist in that decision making about who is staying and who's going.

And that leads me to the second point. It's very important to pay attention to the trends, as you're thinking about deciding which functions are most important, who is staying and who is going and why. It's important to look at those lists and look at the demographics. Slice them by age, slice them by gender, slice them by race, slice them by tenure, and just make sure that, as you're making those decisions, there aren't any disparities that are happening based on any of those dimensions of diversity. Because what will happen is if you do end up making some large cuts and there's a specific, maybe underrepresented, population that gets strongly impacted by that and you weren't thinking about that from the beginning, it can have some really rough side effects related to equity and inclusion and connection for your organization going forward.

The next point is just ensuring transparency throughout the process. This is difficult, but it's important. As much as possible, to allow your team members to understand what is happening, why it's happening and over-communicating what's going on. People appreciate, even though things are tough and things are hard, the communication and transparency when you're in the middle of a crisis and you're still able to just say, "Hey, we need some more time to figure this out, or we're looking. And we're using an equity lens to make sure we're making good decisions." Communicate those pieces over and over to create transparency as much as possible in the very difficult process.

Then lastly, when we do have to exit people from the organization due to downsizing or layoffs, it's really important to remember that step of thanking people for their contributions. Allowing your employees to exit the organization as respectfully as possible. It's pretty hard to do layoffs in a humane way, but it is an intentional act to think about some ways you can infuse humanity into this process as much as possible. Again, the idea is that when people leave the organization, there's a lot of feelings that go with it, but the more that we can do to be intentional about having inclusive



communication and treating people with respect and humanity supports when we need to rebuild the culture after a layoff or a downsizing occurs.

So, that is number 10 and I'm going to introduce my DEI Senior Consultant, Steven Krzanowski. He is going to share number nine. Steven?

**Steven Krzanowski:** Thanks, Emily. As we explore opportunities to leverage DEI and justice-focused efforts to reimagine our organization's programs and services, it's important to start with a baseline understanding of your constituents and staff needs. I always recommend to our partners that the best way to fully understand needs is through an equity assessment. And I recognize that not all organizations are at that place in their DEI journeys.

So you can start with collecting data to gain a deeper understanding about how your organizational systems are interconnected, which is paramount to creating a foundation needed to sustain and advance this work. For example, when exploring internally, start by examining the representation and experiences of identities that make up your workforce.

Do you have a diverse representation of group identities within your organization?

What are the experiences of all staff as it relates to their group memberships? For example, how are staff with disabilities or staff of color experiencing the same work environments? Are they showing up as their authentic selves?

Explore how decisions are made, by whom and how are they communicated?

Are all identities taken into consideration during the decision-making process?

What does power and privilege look like within your organization?

These are just several examples of questions that organizations should start exploring. When you're advancing your external programs and services, analyze demographic data that explain who's using your programs and services, then start finding answers to the following questions: What identity groups are and are not utilizing your programs and services?

What barriers in specific issues of access exist that is preventing full participation?

What are specific needs of your marginalized group identities? And is your organization meeting those needs?

If you're not designing your programs and services with that question at the forefront of your process, you're most likely leaving folks out of the equation.

While we must also recognize that our identities are intersectional and not siloed experiences, when you determine constituent needs from a lens of race and ethnicity, gender, age and other social identities, your organization will be able to develop more holistic and inclusive programs that benefit all. This is just the beginning of how to reimagine some of your programs and services. Part of this work is about elevating voices and identities that may not be around the decision-making table and being intentional on leading using a DEI lens. This will take time and investment across all staff in your organization.

As you learn about your staff and constituent needs, start to think about your organizational aspirations. Is DEI a value of your organization? Does it guide your mission and decision making? Your relationships and partnerships? Does it reflect and enhance the experiences of the communities that you serve?

As you develop your value statement, use this as an opportunity to engage your staff and constituents in the process. This should be a highly collaborative process that incorporates as many identities and perspectives as possible.

Use your DEI statement as your north compass and rely on this statement to reaffirm and determine the future direction of your organization.

As your organization re-envision programs and services that are rooted in DEI best practices, it is essential to establish actionable and measurable goals with metrics that hold your organization accountable for its progress. For example, after the death of George Floyd, hundreds of organizations affirmed and reaffirmed their commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion through public value statements. For many organizations, their statements lacked accountability so not much has changed since then. Accountability and action are essential to being organizations that champion cultural change and justice.

I encourage you to partner with local grassroots and national organizations that share mission-alignment opportunities. DEI based outcomes can lead to funding and partnership opportunities that benefit and advance inclusion for all.

Lastly, share your vision and progress widely. Remain steadfast, committed and transparent throughout your DEI journey. If missteps occur, apologize. As change and progress occur, celebrate and recognize those measurable outcomes in a thoughtful approach.

When you start leading using a DEI lens, your organization will create a lasting impact. So I challenge you to be bold, actionable, intentional, accountable, supportive and transparent. As I close, I wish you all success and leave you with a quote that has guided my work over the last 15 years: "If you want peace, work for justice." Thank you.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Steven, and for giving us number nine on our top 10 list. I want to welcome next one of our guest contributors, Gabby Garcia. She is part of our amazing DEI Advisory Team, and she serves as a consultant on our Outsourcing team. So Gabby, I'm going to turn it over to you for number eight.

**Gabby Garcia:** Thank you, Emily.

While we do recognize that DEI work is often achieved through high-quality HR, how does that translate to our recruitment processes, compensation and benefits, and performance reviews? I'm here to share some tips and tricks.

First, with regard to recruitment, hiring and selection.

The first tip that I would like to offer is to standardize interview ratings and questions. Interviewers tend to form an opinion of someone within the first 10 seconds of the interview and then, they tend to spend the rest of the interview looking to confirm those suspicions. Rather than using subjective observations to make a hiring decision, use an interview scorecard to ensure that every potential hire is measured on the same criteria. This will help reduce the impact of implicit bias on hiring decisions.

Secondly, select a diverse interview panel. A diverse hiring team can help mitigate each person's unconscious bias and improve the chance that the best hire is made.

I also would recommend conducting blind candidate ratings by removing the names and any personally identifiable information. You can solely focus on the person's qualifications and what they actually bring to your team.

I would also recommend to rewrite your job descriptions. Use gender neutral titles and pronouns in your job descriptions. When describing the tasks of the ideal candidate, consider using "they" or "you" instead of gender-charged pronouns. Make sure that you're only listing what's actually required to perform the tasks that are a part of the position. For example, carefully consider whether a four-year degree is required. By asking for a specific degree, you run the risk of unintentionally minimizing the number of diverse candidates who might apply for your position.



With regard to compensation and benefits, I would recommend that your organization aligns your compensation practices to your values. What you choose in your total rewards package really should reflect your values as an organization. For example, if transparency is a value for your organization, consider sharing pay ranges and market data with employees. If innovation is a value, how do you best incentivize employees to be more innovative through your company's compensation plan?

Secondly, I would recommend that you review your organization's compensation in terms of equity. You'll really want to understand the responsibilities of each position and by analyzing those responsibilities, learn the value of each job, understand what the essential functions are. Then, compare required skills across jobs and job levels. Are there two employees who are doing the same job and are paid the same? If not, is the reason for the discrepancy based on job-relevant factors such as performance, education, experience and tenure? It's important to look into all of these different factors.

With regard to your performance reviews, I suggest creating an effective rubric. Without structure, people are more likely to rely on gender, race and other stereotypes in making decisions. By creating and using an effective rubric, we can consistently rate performance across all employees, and you'll be less prone to rate employees based on gut reactions.

Secondly, I would recommend that you reread all performance reviews for consistency. Even if you have clarified the criteria and create a checklist to guide your assessments, you may still fall into patterns that are more favorable to some employees. To be fair and more consistent, you might prompt yourself to identify three specific, measurable goals for each of your employees. When setting these goals for your employees, make sure that they're SMART goals, meaning specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound.

Implicit bias does pose a serious challenge to equity within the workplace, but we can minimize the impact of implicit bias by standardizing our recruitment and performance management processes, inviting a diverse panel to interview candidates and establishing criteria for pay and promotions.

That's I have for you. Back to you, Emily.

**Emily Holthaus:** Alright. Thank you so much, Gabby, and you are very right. One of the foundations of equity is just getting the HR basics right, and so I appreciate that overview. The good news with that is that those things you talked about don't cost us anything; it's just about diving into how we interact bias in our system. So, Gabby, we thank you for giving us number eight.

And I'm going to bring up Alexandra Taylor, who is one of our amazing DEI consultants here at Nonprofit HR, and she's going to talk about number seven: transparency and honesty when things aren't going as planned. Alex, I'll turn it to you.

**Alexandra Taylor:** Thank you so much, Emily. Hello to everyone, I wish I could see everybody's faces. I see that we've got over 145 folks joining us this afternoon. It's afternoon, where I am here in Texas.

And so, I'm just thrilled to be with you all to talk about something that is one of the things that I think is harder sometimes to wrap our heads around when we're thinking about implementing a DEI strategy, overall organizational change and things that we're trying to influence. This is one of my favorite quotes from Brené Brown: "Clear is kind." I'm going to mention a couple of things from her. If you haven't read "Dare to Lead," I would strongly encourage you to pick up a copy of that book. It has implications and application across all kinds of organizational strategy.

I think when we're thinking about whether it's our DEI strategy specifically or just what's going on in our organization, think about the importance of clarity. And that being clear is kind and being unclear is unkind.

This ties directly to being transparent and honest as leaders about what's working and what isn't working. When things aren't going as planned, it's really hard to swallow and say that out loud sometimes in front of a group of staff. Sometimes it's our own ego, where we've put so much personally into this work, and we don't want to acknowledge that things aren't working. Or we want to make sure that our staff, our volunteers or whoever it is that we're working with, feel like they can trust us. And so, if we're clear about things not working, how's that going to reflect on us? Sometimes, it's a need to appear to be in control of what's happening in the organization and so, all of those things can factor in.

The reality is that each time we don't choose to be transparent and honest, the individuals within the organization that we're part of start to lose trust in us, which will really, at the core, undermine what we're trying to do with our DEI strategy. Brené talks about this, she says, "Don't feed people half truths, to make them feel better," which is almost always about making ourselves feel more comfortable. We really need to think about that. Not being clear with a colleague or a team member about our expectations because it feels too hard, but then, holding them accountable or blaming them for not delivering is also unkind. And so, there's all kinds of places to reflect on that transparency piece.

So, again, another just fantastic quote by Brené Brown: "Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior." When we're really thinking about organizational

shifts and changes, and the need for transparency and honesty, one of the places that we really have to give energy and attention to is the fears and feelings of our employees.

Seeking change, trying to change systems and trying to address inequities within an organization are things that raised this. There are going to be bumps, there are going to be things that we have to shift and change and adapt to as we go through it. And we have an incredible opportunity to really listen well as leaders because otherwise, what we're going to end up doing is, on the other side of that is, she says, squandering that unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior that comes out of those fears and feelings that we haven't taken the time to address.

A critical piece, the bedrock of collaboration and teamwork, critical to all DEI strategy, is trust. How do we build it? How do we create a culture in which people feel safe, seen, heard and respected? And some questions that we have to reflect on a little bit are:

What gets in the way of us as leaders doing this in our organizational culture?

What keeps us from diving into those fears and feelings and spending time or investing that time into it?

What are the cultural barriers that are keeping us from doing this?

Every organization's barriers might look a little different; maybe something is going on inside the leaders themselves, and there may be other barriers that are happening within the organization, but we have to be willing to take a look at that.

Daring is not saying I'm willing to risk failure. Daring is saying, I know I will eventually fail, and I'm still all in.

It's really critical, and this is a lesson I've had to learn myself as a leader in organizations, that there is an incredible opportunity to build this trust through loss and failure. And you are experiencing things right now, across all of your organizations I would guess, whether it's around COVID-19 or around things that we're personally struggling with internally and externally as we confront injustice and inequity within our organizations, within our culture, within our country, within our world. There's a lot of this feeling of personal, professional and organizational loss. We sometimes try to build trust through persuasion, but trust is really built and maintained through connection. And it comes from understanding, and when the other person understands that you understand, you can really lean into some of that conflict that feels inherent in diving into loss and failure and listen well. We can lean into the reality of imperfection and this is crucial to ensuring authenticity in our DEI strategy. We

have to own what we don't know, what we don't understand and what we're in the process of learning. And we have an incredible opportunity to do that.

So there are a few tips around this, there are some different steps of dealing with loss and failure. Taking that loss inventory, identifying what the losses are and the impact of the loss. Finding safe people to talk about it with. Allowing for those sad feelings. Giving ourselves space and time, and giving our staff space and time to grieve the things that have been lost. Honoring that which is no more. We can say, "This is something that we lost in the process of COVID-19," or, "These are things that we're dealing with as we look at systems and inequities within our organization." We can say, "This is no more," and then saying goodbye to that to allow ourselves to begin to adapt and move on.

I hope, by giving you just a couple of minutes here to reflect and think about this, you'll start to do some of that inventory, either for yourself and the things that you've lost, within your organization, personally, professionally, how you have processed through those; and then, as leaders in your organization, what are you doing to create this kind of environment where you can be transparent, honest and take your staff and your teams through this?

Thank you so much for just spending a few minutes with me as we talk about this. I look forward to hearing from you all as we get to the end of the presentation.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Alex, and I love that you raised this. This is such an important part of personal leadership as all of us, as leaders in our organizations, navigate crisis. How we show up matters is what you're saying and this idea that we have to embrace and really be honest about what's happening and help our teams move through very difficult times that we're experiencing together. So, thank you so much for giving us number seven.

Now we're on number six. Number six is going to be brought to you by another one of our amazing DEI Advisory Team members here internally at Nonprofit HR. She serves in a very senior role to support organizations with HR all across the country. And so, Tracye, I'm going to turn it over to you for number six: knowing when to bring in experts or facilitators from the outside to support your efforts. Tracye?

**Tracye Weeks:** Hi, everyone. I'm so happy to be here with you and to discuss these topics, and I can't wait to get to your questions. I'm here to talk about when you bring in experts or facilitators outside of the organization.

Firstly, we always think we can do it better. I mean, we can admit that we know the subject matter, the company, the ins and outs and the nuances. But what we don't usually have is time. And so, I

want to discuss with you when to bring in help when you can't do it and somebody that can help you maybe do it even better.

When you're thinking about trained experts and facilitators. Basically, use them to make you look good or make you look great. As generalists internally in organizations, we don't normally have a lot of free time to focus on just one thing. So, we're usually putting out fires and helping everyone else do what they need to do. Similarly, maybe you've tried to do these things yourself, but you walk away thinking, "Ah, I wish I would have..." or, "If I had to do this over again, I would..." That's what your expert facilitators are for.

To help you decide when it may be best to consider an outside facilitator, I want to share with you four things, four considerations, I want you to think about when you're thinking about bringing in help.

The first thing: You bring baggage. Yes, you know the history and you know the background, but sometimes that can work against you. Think about unconscious bias, Bring in a trained professional because it's imperative to understanding the strengths and the potential trouble spots of each communication style in order to better communicate with each other. And even though the team has worked together for some time, an external facilitator could see some communication difficulty and give you a whole new outlook on the tools you could use to help understand one another and fix your problems.

The second: What about those situations none of us like to deal with, like the controversial, the sticky, the difficult conversations that we don't really love to do.

Well, that's what external facilitators are for.

Not only are they there to take that away from you, but they also decrease bias because of their lack of familiarity with what's going on or the people involved. They're able to guide the discussions, so we don't unintentionally drive the outcomes towards what we want; they ensure there is a clear line, and that it's consistent. And there are also instances where an objective voice with no knowledge of the community history can be very helpful.

The third: They can give you a fresh perspective. When members of the group can't be neutral enough to facilitate themselves, and we know that happens, external facilitators can lead retreats and do strategic planning, which will help you get a bird's eye view of what's happening, both good and bad, the pros and cons, in the organization. And that can help you deal with the issues that often stir emotions and strong opinions, but give you an opportunity to also participate instead of plan.

And the last thing: You're just outsourcing for an expert opinion. If there is a non-controversial issue, but there isn't expertise specifically within the group to facilitate it or if the group has had a history of spinning their wheels at meetings, those meetings that go on for hours, and we really don't know what we accomplished, an external consultant can help keep you on track. They can help the staff think through where we've been and where we're going. And it also allows them to share openly and honestly without being concerned about the person that they're going to see tomorrow at work.

So, use these top four decision makers to identify your best opportunities to bring in an external partner. And, above all else, give yourself space and time to focus on your expertise, as well as the things that you're responsible for and that are important to you internally.

Thank you, I'll turn it back to Emily.

**Emily Holthaus:** Tracye, thank you so much. And you are so right, that there are times where it helps to bring in somebody who is not swimming in the water with you and can see the vantage point very differently to support moving through a crisis and engaging with your DEI perspective. So, thank you for that. We are now halfway through. We're at number five and our next topic is: What happens when your efforts stall and how do you get that restarted and recover?

I am so excited to have Grace Hochheimer with us today. She is one of the amazing team members from our DEI Advisory Team. She serves as an Associate Consultant in Outsourcing and helps organizations across the country with their HR and DEI efforts. So Grace, I'm going to turn it over to you for a number five.

**Grace Hochheimer:** Awesome. I'm very excited to be here to talk to you guys about how when your DEI efforts have slowed, what you can do to recover.

To begin, when you recover from any problem, it really is important to start from the "why." Why might your DEI efforts have been stalled, before you can then jump into starting that recovery process. So as previously mentioned, hearing from the folks in your organization might provide you with really important insight into how they're feeling and why they think the efforts might have been stalled from their perspectives. But from the work we've done, and maybe some of our personal experiences, I've seen that the fatigue and emotional tax, due to the overlay of all these different crises happening, has really caused there to be an abundance of things going on and not enough energy to do all of it. As many of us are hitting this pandemic wall and fatigue and burnout across organizations, it's important to recognize that this is happening. And then, in addition to that happening for all of us, we also see that many times for DEI efforts, we're leaning on our staff of color to lead those DEI efforts, which might involve an even higher level of emotional tax for them.



And so, as you are recognizing what those underlying problems might be, you can start to think about how you can implement targeted outreach, but also move toward that recovery process in order to move forward. Once you've gathered that information, and as Tracye and a few others have mentioned, having your DEI work on top of all your regular work might be a big issue that's going on. I'm so sorry, I just got completely jumbled in my notes.

For the recovery process, we want to do three large things. So first, you want to widen your lens of DEI. Then, you want to look to things, as Tracye just mentioned, like getting wider outside support. Then finally, you want to slow things down in your organization.

So, as you are widening your lens, looking at things like, is it part of your values? Is this embedded in all of your policies and procedures? DEI is a lot more than simply, do we have representation at our organization? You might be implementing more pieces than you realize by doing things like revamping your hiring process or making sure that your handbook is written in a way that it's inclusive for all of your employees.

Next, as Tracye just shared for getting outside support, many people have a ton on their plates right now, and adding on internal DEI work to their probably-already-full workload can be maybe too much. So knowing when to look for and add in that outside support to continue those DEI efforts could really help jumpstart those things as well as show your employees that you are willing and want to provide support for them and not just add more pieces to their plate in order to be implementing DEI at your organization.

Then finally, we want to think about slowing things down. Like the old adage, "Slow and steady wins the race," it was so energizing and exciting to see such a huge increase of commitment to DEI efforts at organizations across the country and across the world. However, it's really vital to remember that DEI, and also anti-racism work, is not something that's necessarily going to be achieved, but rather an ongoing journey that is going to always be evolving and changing at different organizations.

My colleague Steven mentioned that actionable, measurable goals with metrics on accountability are really vital, and I just want to echo that as well. These things might need to be broken down into even smaller steps than you originally imagined. Maybe those huge, wide goals aren't going to happen this month or this quarter. But having them laid out in a plan to move forward can help make sure that you are continuing to incorporate DEI and not allowing those things to simply fall by the wayside.

This also might look like creating year-long strategies that have those goals, or asking your employees what they see as the most important pieces happening first, and then moving forward with other pieces later.

And then finally, before I finish up my piece, I wanted to share one specific item that I found was really interesting that could help foster or restart DEI efforts, and that is a mentoring program. A lot of research has shown that mentoring programs can help foster DEI at organizations and improve both representation and upward mobility for many underrepresented groups, particularly when those programs come from assigned mentors or mentees, as opposed to mentees having to reach out and ask for that mentorship.

And so, remembering that you have a long process and an ongoing journey, and really trying to find those small steps to restart your process and keep going is the most important piece.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Grace, and I love, especially when you were talking about how it's okay to give yourself permission to slow down. It's not always that we have to hurry up, and if something gets off schedule, to feel bad about that. At the end of the day, I love that slow and steady wins the race. And it really is about what some of those continued, maybe even quick or small, wins are that help us just to keep the momentum going forward. I also love, ask your employees what's most important to you now at this point in time and then prioritize from there.

Thank you so much for what you shared, Grace, with us for that one, and we're going to move into number four. We know that with the pandemic, oftentimes our resources are shorter than they were before. And maybe that has a big factor to play into what you can or can't do related to your initiatives for DEI. So, I'm excited to have Valerie Lara here. She is also part of our internal DEI Advisory Team, and serves as an HR Consultant here at Nonprofit HR. So, Valerie, please jump in and tell us about your topic.

**Valerie Lara:** Sure. Thank you for having me. I'm so excited to be here just like everyone else.

First, let me say that DEI is worth the time and money. There are no successful paths to implementing DEI initiatives that do not come at a cost, be it your time or your money.

But, with that being said, you may be thinking, "Well, Valerie, we don't have the budget. We don't have the bandwidth. We're living in times of crises, what can we do?"

Well, first off, the fact that you want to do the work is a great starting point. Next, you just need to come up with a few creative and lean ways to kick things off. And I have a couple of examples I'd like to share with you.

First, one of the things you can do is to make your commitment official by putting it in writing; then, you can sign off on it and share it with your staff. If you don't have one already, build an official DEI

statement that outlines the importance behind why you want to do this critical work. Make sure you add in goals that tie back to your mission, vision and values. You also want to outline specifics of what you're going to do in your DEI statement, so that you hold yourself accountable to these goals.

Maybe you don't have time to create and build a DEI statement. Another option for you is to visit this website, [ceoaction.com](https://ceoaction.com), and sign their pledge. This is one of the largest CEO-driven business commitments to advance DEI in the workplace. Their goal is to collectively take measurable action in advancing DEI. So by signing the pledge, you're recognizing that it is the first of many important steps toward meaningful change. But, you're also pledging to contribute to and learn from the actions of other companies who have taken the pledge. With organizations anchored in almost every community across America, pledges have the opportunity and the responsibility to play a meaningful role in this important work.

So, training doesn't have to come at a large cost. There are plenty of well-known resources out there that are free, or low cost, and they're very reputable. Facebook publishes their internal training for managing bias, which is a series of videos that are designed to help employees recognize their bias to reduce its negative effects in the workplace. Many organizations have actually adopted this training and offered it for free for their staff.

Another great tool that is free is something you can offer yourself as having employees take this implicit association test. This was created by a nonprofit organization called Project Implicit. The goal of this organization is to educate the public about hidden bias. This test actually measures the attitudes and beliefs that you may be unwilling or unable to recognize.

There's also this other great tool that's free to download at [alexjs.com](https://alexjs.com) that is very similar to the tool Grammarly, if you've ever heard of that. Where Grammarly gradually checks your typing for grammar mistakes, this tool identifies insensitive and non-inclusive language that you may be inadvertently including in your writing, and it also suggests more inclusive language for you to change it.

Another great idea that I recommend is getting your staff involved in a book club or a podcast discussion group. Right now, your employees crave engagement and connection more than ever, and what better way to do that than dedicating an hour a month to discussing a chapter on DEI, or an episode that they just listened to related to DEI. I'll show you these three examples of books: "Lead like an Ally" is only \$15; "Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People" is only \$10; and then there is "Dirty Diversity," which is a practical guide to foster an equitable and inclusive workplace for all that's only \$20 and was written by Doctor Janice, who also started her own podcast, which I recommend. And then, there's another podcast, The Diversity Gap Academy, which recently aired an episode about stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and the four dimensions of racism. This last podcast I'll recommend is called Diversity Deep Dive. And I recommend it because there, you will

hear insights of uplifting stories of resilience and perseverance against the odds. And there are so many more where that came from. There are many books and there are many DEI podcasts out there that are low cost and, in most cases, free.

So, I hope these suggestions are helpful in getting you started or in keeping the momentum alive for DEI. If anything, I ask that these examples act as a springboard for you when your organization's bandwidth and resources do become available because I think DEI is, of course, worth it. Thank you.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Valerie, and I am going to check out some of these resources; I haven't seen a couple of these yet. Thank you so much for sharing, and I think what you said here at your last piece is there is such a wealth of really amazing, free or low-cost things out there. Don't let the price tag or the cost piece scare you or stop you from giving your organization ways to move forward and advance.

So, thank you so much, Valerie, for sharing with us, and we are going to jump into number three. This one is all about the intersection of DEI and mental health, and how the crisis hits this on the top of their head very clearly. It's something that we don't always talk about, but it is an important overlay of what crisis brings to your organization. So, I'm excited to introduce you to Je'Nai Talley Jackson. She is on my team as a Product Manager and Consultant for DEI. Je'Nai?

**Je'Nai Talley Jackson:** Thanks, Emily, and hello, everyone! I'm happy to be here with you all. If you're like me, you're on this call today because you felt and you understand the joy that comes with feeling a sense of belonging in your workspace, and you want to work to help create an inclusive environment for others, as well. So, I have to give disclosure. Social work is my background, my educational background, so I'm always eager to talk about mental health, particularly in the workspace. It's very important to me.

On the screen, you'll see our dimensions of diversity. Now, as a reminder, simply put, diversity is the presence of differences within a given setting. So, it looks like there are 144 of us on this call, that's 144 unique individuals with a lot of different dimensions of diversity. And while this wheel isn't exhaustive, I think it will give us some context for the conversation.

Right in the middle, you'll see that, along with physical ability, mental ability is also listed, so it is definitely relevant to have these conversations as a part of our diversity approach in the workplace. I think several of us have mentioned that in times of crisis, it can be challenging for all of us. There are certain groups who are disproportionately affected within this current pandemic, and the Commonwealth Fund is an organization that does research around health issues, particularly those issues that affect the most vulnerable populations. And this past fall, they sent out a survey, trying to learn more about the disparities people are facing with COVID-19.

Now, what they learned from their research was that Latino and Black people, women, and people with lower incomes are most at risk of mental health concerns. And I'll share with you one of the questions that was on the survey. They asked respondents to report on any feelings of experiencing stress, anxiety or great sadness that they found difficult to cope with on their own since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Again, you'll see below-average income, women, Latino and Black respondents reported it at a statistically significant higher amount than their comparison groups. So, we want to support all of our staff and make sure that we're paying attention to the team members who might be feeling the effects of stress at an even higher level.

Let's get right into how we can support staff with some practical tips while sustaining your organization's DEI strategy, and the first thing I want to highlight is normalizing discussions about mental health.

We don't want to wait until we're in crisis to have these conversations. And when you talk about it early and often, you begin to dispel any stigma around mental health and create safe spaces for your team members. One way to do this is to place equal importance on physical health as mental health. So, you wouldn't ask a team member to come in if they've broken a leg or if they have the flu. Treat mental health with the same level of importance.

The next thing I want to encourage you to do is to highlight employee health benefits and provide resources. Now, I think, for a lot of organizations on this call, you probably have employee assistance programs that provide counseling or therapy for your team members. Or, maybe you remind staff about the options that they have provided through their health insurance benefits. If neither of those situations are relevant to you, I'd encourage you to partner with a community mental health clinic or organization to be an information provider, and to come in and share more education about mental health and the services that they offer that your team might be able to tap into.

One thing that I'd encourage you all to leave here today and do is to check in on your team members. Maybe there is someone you know experiencing stress or has a huge project that they are taking care of. If you do a call with them and you check in about the project, make sure you're also checking in on them to see how they're handling the weight of it all, to see what's going on in their life. And it doesn't always have to be about work projects. If you're like me, and you're home with a toddler all the time, check in on your friends with toddlers; that's important and I definitely appreciate it when my team does that for me.

The next one I want to highlight is building in policies that encourage self-care. I actually talked to several employees who shared that their organization has a very generous PTO policy. However, the workload, the intensity of the workplace, is so high that they don't even feel comfortable taking

advantage of the time off, or they don't feel like it's worth it to take the time off because of the backlog they're going to return to in terms of work. So, making sure that you have those policies is important, but also making sure that you are creating an environment where employees actually feel like they can take advantage of those benefits is just as important.

The last thing I want to highlight is that the World Health Organization has World Mental Health Day every year on October 10. And I am not suggesting that you wait to have these conversations until then, but I think that using October 10, World Mental Health Day, is a great opportunity to have those conversations, continue those conversations, or to plan an event that will provide more information and support for your staff.

So, thank you all, looking forward to the Q&A period.

**Emily Holthaus:** Je’Nai, thank you so much for really providing this overlay of normalizing the discussions. This is all about helping everyone feel they can bring their whole selves to work and be honest about what's happening with themselves. And to really, reach out and talk and discuss if things aren't going well or our stress is piling up. This is a really, really important consideration that we don't oftentimes tie to this conversation. So, I just want to thank you for bringing this up and raising this for us today.

With that, we are on number two, and we're going to bring Steven back here to talk to us about self-reflection and reaffirming your personal commitment to equity, based on whatever vantage point you are sitting in the organization and your leadership. So, Steven, I'm going to turn it over to you.

**Steven Krzanowski:** Great, thanks Emily. Hello, everyone. I'm still Steven, and I'm still excited to be speaking with you today. As I was preparing for this portion of our presentation, I thought about the pre-COVID days. You know, when you were on an airplane and not everyone was already wearing a mask. The flight attendant would instruct passengers that in the event of an aircraft emergency, masks would deploy, and they would then instruct you to put on your own mask first prior to assisting others.

I think this analogy exemplifies that if we're going to strive to be agents of change in our communities and within our organizations, we must prepare to take care of ourselves first. This can be an often-challenging concept for social justice advocates, as they tend to put the needs of the collective before their own.

Over the last year, a lot has happened that has challenged our bodies, hearts and minds. We're living in a time of racial injustice and unrest, a pandemic, political and ideological divides, and that's just the tip of a melting iceberg. Some of us are feeling stresses that we've never experienced before.



While others are feeling this trauma on top of a lifetime of racial trauma that has been compounded by generations of historical trauma. We must recognize that trauma can impact group membership identities differently because of varying lived experiences and lead to burnout.

For many folks, they continually experience microaggressions, bias, prejudices and a series of isms that lead to and exasperate burnout. At times, we experience burnout and fatigue because of multiple competing priorities, a perceived lack of control or impact, a lack of support structures, backlash and opposition, work-life balance, guilt, privilege, self-doubt and much more. These reasons can have a huge impact on how we thrive and survive.

Burnout can manifest itself in ways that challenge our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. For myself, when I begin to experience burnout, I notice that I'm not the best husband. I'm irritable. I lack sleep. I make more mistakes, and I carry the weight of stress throughout my body. These reactions impact all aspects of my life.

As you experience burnout personally and within your organizations, I encourage you and others to pause, take a deep breath and begin to make meaning of your body's response. This can start your strategy for self-care. This can be a powerful tool to further understanding your "why" and develop strategies to move through your current experience.

Take notice about what you are currently feeling, believing and experiencing. I recommend a journaling exercise that can help you explore this further.

Ask yourself: How is my body responding?

What has led to this moment?

What historical healing or trauma is compounding these moments?

What do I need for myself and others for a healing process to commence?

How can I shift my inner dialogue to be more compassionate or brave?

And last, what does grace look like for me and others?

Understanding how our body responds helps us prepare for future challenging moments. At times, you may determine you need the support of trusted friends. So I encourage you to seek out friends and colleagues who are committed to social justice work, who will listen and relate into shared experiences as needed.

There can be a healing power that comes from both personal and group reflections. Affinity groups, or identity like groups, can provide a shared experience to move through experiences. If your organization does not have spaces and places for affinity groups to gather, explore it. If there's a need, if there's a staff need and desire, create that space for shared learning, healing and fellowship.

Self-care looks different for everyone. You may need to consider rest, reflection, reprioritizing or setting boundaries. As you reflect on your experiences, I encourage you to take time to develop intentional action steps individually or as a group to further your commitment to advancing equity in your communities and organizations. Create a plan that includes your aspirations, measurable goals, opportunities for enhanced knowledge and new exposures to difference.

And most importantly, continue to challenge yourself. Start with: What does an equitable and just world look like for me, and what is my role? Create those series of action steps that are specific. For example, I will speak up and address micro-aggressive cut statements. I will interrupt oppressive systems. When I'm burned out, I will make time for self-care by reprioritizing my commitments.

These meaning-making moments and declarative action plans can recenter and reaffirm our passion to be agents of change to advance equity within our workplaces while creating a roadmap for this lifelong journey in this work.

Two resources that I have found to be exponentially helpful throughout my journey of self-worth as a White, cisgender, gay male are "Be Antiracist: A Journal for Awareness, Reflection and Action" by Ibram X. Kendi, which is a workbook companion for the bestseller "How to Be an Antiracist," as well as the book "In It For the Long Haul" by Kathy Obear. Both resources were used to help develop some of these recommendations, and I really encourage you to explore them yourself.

Thanks so much, Emily. Back to you.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you, Steven, and I love what you and Je'Nai are raising today: Check on your teams and check on yourself, because we can't lead these efforts at the level that we need to if we're not paying attention to how we're feeling and how the stress is impacting us. And so, I appreciate all of the tips and tools for that piece that you've brought forward. Really important stuff.

We have arrived at number one, and I am really excited to have our culture guru here at Nonprofit HR, who is our founding CEO, Lisa Brown Alexander. She is also our executive sponsor for our internal DEI Advisory Team here to talk about how it's important to keep a pulse on your culture to stay intentional about inclusion.

Lisa, turning it to you.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Thanks so much, Emily, and thanks to each of my staff who participated in today's session. Particularly to you, Emily, for leading this effort around increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in social impact organizations across the country.

Culture is an area of strong passion for me, and to me, it serves as the underpinning of the strength of any nonprofit organization. And so, I just wanted to re-emphasize some of the wonderful tactics and tip that my colleagues have shared with you today to help your organization be more inclusive.

There are some questions that I think you should ask yourself as you're thinking about moving toward or advancing your equity journey, your inclusion journey, as an organization.

I think the first thing to recognize is that DEI is not a destination. It's not a place to arrive to or a one-stop shop. Diversity, equity inclusion is an effort, and it is a movement toward a better world and a better organization for your organization. But in order for that to be advanced in your organization, there are a couple of questions that I think are important for you to ask yourself.

The first is, what is your what?

The second is, what is your "why"?

Let's break those down quickly.

When we talk about, "what is your what," can you answer the question of what being more inclusive will do for your organization's culture? How will it change the employee experience? How will it help you realize great results for the communities that you serve?

We also want to encourage you to consider what success looks like. We know that DEI is not a destination, but we do know that it's important for you to achieve success along the journey because there will be times when you become fatigued. My colleagues talked about that today when things may need to slow down. But ultimately, what does success look like for your organization's culture when you become a more inclusive organization?

We also want to help you explore whether or not you, as a leader, and now I'm talking CEO to CEO, executive to executive, what are you willing to do as an executive director in your nonprofit organization? Are you prepared to be courageous and persistent and give the time and the resources needed to advance the work in your organization? It's okay to say no. If you're not there yet, then be honest; first, with yourself, and then with your colleagues in your organization. Because

if we're not honest and we're not transparent, it tends to backfire on those from an organizational culture perspective.

We saw so many organizations last year rushed to declare their position when it came to being diverse, equitable and inclusive, only to be uncovered and exposed by the people in their organizations that they, in fact, weren't as diverse and equitable and inclusive as their hashtags would suggest. I often say this, I've been saying this most of this year and much of last: Let your hashtag be your truth. In other words, what you say about your culture needs to be true. And if you're at the beginning of your DEI journey, it's important to say that. These are some of the questions that I want you to contemplate of leaders in your organization as you move through and reward being a more inclusive organization.

Equally important is asking yourself the question: What is your "why"? Why do you want to do this work? Why will it make a difference? What is your leadership's readiness work and commitment to DEI? Why does the leadership team want to move this work forward? Is it because of external pressure from stakeholders? Or is it because you really recognize that being more diverse, more inclusive and more equitable will allow your mission to advance? These are all really critical questions for you to consider.

I also want to speak a little bit about building a culture of accountability and action. We talked a lot about accountability today. And in order to be accountable, you have to want to do this work. You have to be purposeful, intentional, actionable and, most importantly, transparent. Being actionable and transparent are two ways to build trust with your organization's culture.

By showing that you're taking measurable steps toward being more inclusive, more equitable and more diverse, you're building the trust of your staff and your leaders to believe that you're serious, that you've articulated your what, you've defined your "why" and now you're on a path to make those things happen.

I think there are a couple of other things that you can also do to adjust your culture in your organization. Consider moving beyond training. Many times when organizations reach out to us at Nonprofit HR, they want to go straight to training. How can we train to be anti-racist? How can we train away bias? All important questions. But training alone will not shift your culture.

It's important to also look at and examine your systems, your policies and your practices to understand what elements of those things are impacting being an inclusive organization and having an inclusive culture.

Particularly important for those of you who sit in the CEO seat, align inclusion and equity with your organization's strategy. What is it you're trying to achieve in the communities where you serve? And how will being a more inclusive organization help you get there?

When you do that, you anchor the two areas together, strategy and culture. There are actually three: strategy, culture and inclusion. And if you can web those three elements together, you really have a recipe for success. If you can make the argument and make the case to all of your stakeholders, including your staff, that by being more inclusive, you're going to achieve your goals, you're going to be able to attract high performing talent and therefore, move your mission forward. If you can make that case, really advance and tie it to the strategy of your organization, you will see success.

And then finally, practice inclusive leadership. What does that mean? That means look around your leadership table, who's sitting there? Whose voice is heard? Who has the opportunity to contribute to the success of your organization? We can't practice inclusion and equity as leaders until we do it with the people that we're closest to in our organization. And many times, that's the leaders themselves.

So with that, I hope that this entire session today has been helpful to you, I hope that it's giving you some tools to advance the work in your organization. Remember that DEI is not a destination, it's a journey, and we wish you well on yours.

With that, Emily, I turn it back to you.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Lisa, for giving us the number one piece related to culture in our time today. And so, I am going to invite all of our contributors to turn their cameras back on, and now it is the Q&A portion of our time together. And so, we had some really great questions coming in. And Lisa, there's actually one for you right away, to dive back into what you were just talking about here.

Someone is saying that they've done a really great job with creating an inclusive culture before the pandemic. But now that everyone's remote, all the things they used to do to enhance that outside of the training that you're talking about just isn't able to happen anymore. So, any tips or thoughts for how to make that happen in the new reality of how we can't be together in-person at this time?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Yeah, great question.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

One of the things that we did at Nonprofit HR when we found ourselves thrown into COVID like everyone else and then geographically dispersed around the country, is we immediately went to regular communication. We met weekly by phone. We answered questions of staff. We were deliberate about communicating our plans and our attention not just related to COVID, but also related to DEI.

After the murder of George Floyd, we called it out. We named it, we met, we talked, we cried, we were angry, we let our emotions live. We addressed our mental health and we gave space for people to recognize that mental health challenges at that particular time of real and intense.

So, I would say communicate. Be honest. Be open. If you're at the beginning of your journey, say so. It's okay to be at the beginning. And when you do that, you give everyone permission to be where they are when they are learning together.

So I would say, communicate, communicate, communicate. Very long-winded answer, but that's mine.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. And I would love for our contributors to chime in, any other thoughts on that? Ideas for advancing inclusion remotely? Any other things that you've been working with clients on that have worked well that you'd love to share here?

**Tracye Weeks:** I think it's also important to know that inclusion means multiple things. And what being virtual has given us is additional opportunities to see what those things mean to our employees. When we are inside of an organization, we tend to have tunnel vision and we forget about all the other things people are dealing with outside.

Also, think about the things that you've learned about your employees since you've been remote. Utilize those because those are all of the things that are now shaping their experiences. And it also challenges us, because we have to address that as we move into this new environment that's not going anywhere anytime soon.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, thank you, Tracye. And we have another one coming in here, too. This is a hard one.

Someone says, they heard us when we said it's okay to slow down and give yourself permission, but they're asking: Can you offer some tips about how to slow down efforts when your employers are saying they want results right now? And seeing that push and pull? I don't know if anyone wants to jump in on that one, to give some perspective.



**Grace Hochheimer:** I can jump in, this is kind of my area.

I think I really would echo what Lisa shared, communication is really key; let your employees know that these are the steps that we'd like to take, but this is where we are right now. Or, this is the capacity that we have right now. And also, putting out that call to them maybe if they feel like they have more capacity to lead something, or put something together for the organization. If folks feel like they're able to step up and provide that opportunity, then support that in any way that you can.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah. I think putting another emphasis on, this is a marathon, not a sprint, and making sure that employees know that we're not just dropping it forever. That we might have a depressive pause, but it doesn't mean that we're not committed to restarting. I always tell people, communicate your stated intention, and just help people understand why something may be slower than before, but that doesn't mean we still don't have a commitment to it. I love it how it goes back to, Alex, how you were talking about being honest about what's happening and then helping people understand the "why" behind it.

I've got a couple of other ones here, too. I can't remember who talked about the affinity spaces, I think it was you, Steven. And they were asking about either employee resource groups or affinity spaces, if they don't have them, is it okay to try to start them in a virtual environment? That is what someone is asking.

**Steven Krzanowski:** Yes, and I think the answer is yes. Go ahead. If your employees are hungry for those types of interactions and they need the space to move through experiences as an organization, to lean into those values of diversity, equity and inclusion, create those opportunities. And I would let the staff experience drive the process.

It may be that it's designed for only staff with disabilities or folks of color or the African American experience or White folks that are committed to social justice work. If they are needing that space, create it. And these groups tend to meet regularly or irregularly based on need. But having that as a staple opportunity and a resource can, I think, create a stronger sense of inclusion and sense of belonging for your staff because it creates that opportunity where they're seen, valued, heard and respected.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, Steven, and that just made me think of an example where we worked with a CEO who convened some affinity groups, so that he could hear and listen to how people were experiencing his organization of varying dimensions of diversity and took this opportunity even though it was a virtual space to say, "I'm okay coming in being the only White person in the room, and I'm going to listen," And to what you were talking about, Lisa, the pandemic crushes culture, in some ways, because of everything that's happening. And so, he utilized affinity spaces to really help

understand how different dimensions of diversity were experiencing his organization, and to be able to help chart the path forward from that. So that's an incredibly important piece.

We have a couple of questions coming through the chat here. Someone is asking: Are there any resources that the group can recommend that have tips for specific to recruitment of staff and board members? Diversification of staff, diversification of board, etc. Any tips that team members would have in that area?

I know my team has some.

**Tracye Weeks:** Well, one thing I would add on the recruiting tip, and it's something that we've had to be diligent about when working in our spaces as well over the pandemic, is that diversity, equity and inclusion reaches every level of your organization down to your policies and how you have acted or now act. And so, what we've seen in recruiting is that there's unconscious bias built into some of our processes not intentionally, but just because of the things that we haven't prioritized, such as where we're posting positions and how those postings are yielding us the type of employees or type of applicants and candidates that we are now screening. And so, we have developed a vast resource of where we should be posting to yield us diverse candidates across the board with the types of experiences we're looking for.

So that's one thing that I would challenge everyone to do. Throw out what you've done in the past; just blow it up. It's a new process and start from scratch. There are so many resources out there to really help you dig down into targets specifically for your DEI initiatives.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, that's great one.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** I think there is also an opportunity to understand who you have and who you need. Don't be afraid to do a census of your organization to understand the demographic makeup of who works in your organization.

Do you have an overabundance or a disproportionate number of people over the age of 50? Or perhaps the majority of your staff are female and you need men. It's okay to say, I'd like to diversify my staff, and I'm going to look and seek out candidates to round out my workforce. But in order to do that, you have to know who you have.

At Nonprofit HR, our staff is incredibly diverse. But what we realized we've recently is that we didn't have anyone on our staff who represented people who served in the armed forces. We had no veterans on staff. And so, we went about the business of seeking out sources where we could find veterans to join our team, and guess what? We now have one.

So it works. You take it one step at a time. But in order to know what you need, you have to know what you have. Don't be afraid to collect data to help you understand that better.

**Emily Holthaus:** And in thinking about the data, think about the strength of your pools too. This is something that we talk a lot about with our clients who are working on this. It's about casting that wide net that you're talking about, being intentional about who you're looking for, who's here and who's not. Then, also paying attention to the strength of those pools. Because if you don't have a diverse pool to begin with, you have no chance to diversify your leadership at any level of your organization. So, be paying close attention to what that data tells you too. Then, if for some reason, you're getting a homogenous pool of applicants, maybe you pause and cast your net again so that you can just understand and know that you're starting with a diverse group as you move through the process to be able to make it happen, get a different result or to round out the team.

**Alexandra Taylor:** I was just going to say the same principles apply for the board. You have to have intentionality. I think sometimes there's been a tendency for nonprofits to say, "Oh, someone volunteered. They want to come and serve. Let's just let's get them in." But then we don't have that intentionality and we're not asking where the gaps are and doing that kind of census and asking those questions, such as what communities are we serving? And, is that represented and reflected on our boards? We've got to do those things. That same kind of pool piece about asking those questions, being very intentional and setting out our intention of who do we need to be a part of this? So, it just takes that same kind of focus.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, thanks Alex, for pointing that out because they were asking about boards too.

That also makes me think about this idea of how boards, oftentimes, are about network connections. And so, think about how you can dismantle that a little bit because if you continue to struggle with diversity on your board, but then, you look at how you're recruiting, and we tend to recruit from people in our own networks. How do you begin to bust out of how you've always gotten board members from, "Oh, I know this person," or, "I went to school with this person," or, "I worked with this person in the past," to begin to be intentional about how you bring volunteers into your organization. Because that affinity bias is a real thing. And we have to sort of say, how do we, with our policies and practices around board recruitment, interrupt that as well to be intentional? So, thank you for that.

And I'm going to have us do one more, I think we have time. I'm looking at the clock here. This one is an interesting one. Someone said: Our DEI Advisory Team is a composition of board members and staff, but it's the board president who is a White male who tends to lead and is very enthusiastic all the time. How do you ask him to step back and allow for additional voices on that team?

It's a great question.

**Valerie Lara:** I think you just take them into a meeting one-on-one and explain that this might be an uncomfortable conversation. But the reason you want to have it is because, one, you want to appreciate him for being enthusiastic and being a spearhead of this initiative. But also, you want to get everyone else involved, so maybe you can try rotating who spearheads that meeting. Having those difficult conversations is really important, even though it might be uncomfortable for you. Come in, give them your reasoning behind why you're asking for more participation, and how they can help in that effort, and you can't go wrong. I don't think that your board member will say no, because it aligns with your goal.

**Emily Holthaus:** Other thoughts on that one? That's an interesting one.

**Tracye Weeks:** Yeah. I love the idea that Valerie just shared because it gives you an opportunity without saying, "Hey, I need you to be quiet," to say, "Let's actually give you an opportunity to listen." And so, one of the ways I do that is that I assign roles at the top of each meeting, and that changes every meeting. So essentially, everyone has an opportunity to be in a different space, and sometimes that space means listening, sometimes that space means writing or taking notes, sometimes at space means asking questions. And also, it's a board chair, so it's okay to say, "Hey, this is what our role is and this is why it's important that we give others an opportunity to share and we're going to come back and debrief that together."

**Emily Holthaus:** Also, I think about structurally, too, I recommend whenever you do DEI committees that, yes, you want your board chairs and your CEOs to be involved. But I would say structurally, if you're starting one, allow staff members to be in the leadership roles first. It's that idea of modeling the power-sharing that needs to happen, modeling the transparency, modeling the accountability. One way to do that is just how you set it up. And I know when this person asked the question, it's already set up, so they're in this spot. But it's important at the very beginning also and it will set you up for success, for that power-sharing experience. Then, Tracye, I love what you talked about in rotating those roles to allow for different people in different places to come in.

And I do, also, in the next couple of minutes want to talk about this idea of allyship and moving beyond allyship into ownership, and how sometimes that means, especially for White leaders, ceding power intentionally. And how do you help people grasp that? I would love to see if anyone wanted to weigh in on that because someone else asked the question: How, if we are a primarily White-led organization, should we be doing this? And so, I'd love for us to just touch a little bit on that last question.

**Alexandra Taylor:** When we talk about diversity, we often think about race, but diversity exists even when you're a homogeneous organization from a racial perspective.

The assumption that because you're an all-White organization, you may not have all of the dimensions of diversity may in fact not be true. So explore that a little bit, understand what dimensions of diversity do exist within your organization. Chances are, even among your primarily White staff, you've got differences in age, socioeconomic status, upbringing or education. Bring that to life. Put it on the table. Examine it. Look at it. And then, give voice to those who perhaps haven't had a chance to be vocal in your organization. We're not expecting that you manufacture people of color, or women, or men or whatever your deficit is as it relates to dimensions of diversity. But it is important to make sure that everyone in your organization has voice, regardless of where they sit, regardless of who they are.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thanks. Alex, what were you going to add?

**Alexandra Taylor:** The other thing I was going to say was going back to that original question as well. There may be an educational component as well around the centering of White voices, how that ties in with white supremacy and the roots within institutions around privilege. And so, yes, there may be the relationship there to have that conversation, and I think the shifting roles and responsibilities is really critical. But there's also maybe even that approach of, "Let's all learn together about what it means to decenter White voices." And then that can start to sort of seep in, so it doesn't become just about that one person, but also, as a board, as an organization, how do you move toward this so it feels even more organic and systematic. That you're doing this in an intentional way.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Anyone else want to jump in on this last question before we close today?

**Steven Krzanowski:** Emily, I'll share that I would like to re-iterate Alex's comment around the training and education because there's a lot of powerful insight that can come out of dissecting what power and privilege looks like in our organizations, through decision making, through transparency, etcetera.

And part of that is that conceptualizing what understanding looks like, and making meaning of that work. So I love Alex's comment around education because that self-work can really advance the work that we're trying to achieve in our organizations.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Well, I just want to put a big thank you out to all of you for coming in for this day of top 10 to support this topic, and bringing your insights and your knowledge to the

table for this conversation. I want to thank everyone who stuck with us to listen to our conversation today. For all of you that asked questions, we enjoyed interacting with you, getting a chance to support you and having this great conversation that we hope will continue in your organizations.

And so, really quickly, we just want to leave you with a thank you and say we're always here for you as you need us here at Nonprofit HR, whether that's HR or DEI. We're always here to support you. We also will be following up with the materials from today. Everyone will get a chance to have the materials with the top 10 list. We will be sending out a recording as well, so if you want to share this with colleagues that weren't able to join today, you'll have the opportunity. We also will be sending out a little post-webinar survey to all of you, so you can let us know how this was for you, if it was helpful. And that will help us to shape our future topics.

And then also, if you love podcasts and love learning, check us out on The Switch, and that is a great thing. I think they're going to put it in the chat for us as well, our podcast channel, to continue your learning as it relates to all things HR and diversity, equity and inclusion. We want to just thank everyone for your participation today, and we are always here as you need us. We'll reach out and answer any additional questions we didn't get to as part of the follow-up. We wish everybody a wonderful week, and thank you for joining.