

# Keys to Integrating DEI: Transparency, Power-Sharing and Accountability

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

# KEYS TO INTEGRATING DEI: TRANSPARENCY, POWER- SHARING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Do your organization's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts align with its overarching strategic plan? As DEI takes center stage, bridging the gap by integrating DEI throughout all your organizational systems is essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of DEI efforts. Bridging the gap, however, requires an integrated DEI strategy that is grounded in transparency, encourages power-sharing and supports accountability. In this webinar, you will hear from an esteemed panel of Nonprofit CEOs as they share how they have implemented these integral elements to transform the culture of their organizations. Successful implementation of these critical components foster a climate where your organization's people are seen, valued, heard, respected and empowered to flourish in their roles. Join us for an authentic and engaging conversation on the realities of bringing DEI to life in a meaning way.

## Hear about:

- What transparency means and where to start when communicating transparently with staff
- Why power sharing is a critical component of integrating DEI
- The scope of accountability and how to measure progress toward goals

## PANELISTS



**Andrea Lovanhill**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Committee for Children



**Bertram L. Lawson II**  
President & CEO,  
YMCA of Central New  
York



**William Schimmel**  
Executive Director & CEO,  
PTCB



**Shalimar Gonzales**  
CEO, Solid Ground

## MODERATOR



**Emily Holthaus**  
Former Managing  
Director,  
Diversity, Equity &  
Inclusion



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**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hello, and welcome, everyone, to today's Nonprofit HR Virtual Learning Educational Event. Today's session is entitled the Keys to Integrating DEI: Transparency, Power-Sharing and Accountability. My name is Atokatha Ashmond Brew, Managing Director for Marketing & Strategic Communication for Nonprofit HR. We have a lot of great content to cover. You're going to walk away with a solid understanding of the concepts regarding transparency, power-sharing and accountability as they pertain to DEI. Before we get started, though, I would like to go over a few items, so you know how to participate in today's event.

You have joined the presentation listening using your computer's speaker system by default. If you would prefer to join over the phone, simply select "telephone" in the audio pane and the dial-in information will be displayed. You will have the opportunity to submit text questions to today's presenters by typing your questions into the questions pane of the control panel. You may send your questions in at any time during the Q&A session at the end of today's presentation as well. Today's event is being recorded and you will receive a follow-up email within a few days with a link to view the recording. Along with those assets, live attendees will also receive codes for recertification with SHRM and HRCI.

Now for some brief information about Nonprofit HR. Since 2000 Nonprofit HR has held the premier spot as a full services talent management firm focused exclusively on strengthening the talent management capacity of social impact organizations. Services we focus on include Outsourcing, Strategy & Advisory, Total Rewards, Search, and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. We partner with leaders and human resources professionals in nonprofits, associations, foundations and social enterprises. To learn more about our services, visit [nonprofithr.com](http://nonprofithr.com).

Now, let's learn more about today's conversation host, Emily Holthaus, who leads our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion practice.

Emily is known for collaborating with organizations to design organizational strategy and implement leadership development solutions toward the outcomes of greater equity, inclusion and human capital engagement, in both physical and virtual environments. Prior to serving as Nonprofit HR's lead DEI consultant, Emily served as Director of Multicultural Leadership Development for YMCA of the USA (Y-USA), where she worked to identify, engage, inspire, develop and retain multicultural staff to ensure that the leadership of YMCAs reflects the diverse communities they serve. Emily was also a key member of Y-USA's Talent & Knowledge Management senior team that led the development of strategy and implementation of training solutions to support a nationwide workforce of more than 250,000 employees. Prior to that role, Emily served in several senior leadership positions in various nonprofits including Vice President of Operations, Executive Director and National Director of Social Responsibility roles.

And now I'll hand the conversation over to you, Emily.

### **Keys to Integrating DEI: Transparency, Power-Sharing and Accountability**

**Emily Holthaus:** Atokatha, thank you so much. We are excited to jump in with this conversation today. And I just want to give us a little bit of setup to the topic.

We work with lots of organizations all across the country and across the world to figure out how to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into their work, into their organizations and get to that point of avoiding that checkbox experience.

And so, today during this call, we're going to dive into three of the areas specifically that are important. So you'll see here, we have all five. The idea of transparency is critical. Power-sharing: Where is power concentrated in the organization? Who has it and who doesn't? And how do we distribute power differently in our organization? Then, operational accountability, and if the work is everyone's job, then it's no one's job. And so, it's important for us to understand where the accountability measures are for DEI and how we are going to ensure operationally that it's getting done. And then, people in culture. It's very important to understand, how it feels to be in an organization, how we make decisions together, if team members show up as their authentic selves in our environment. The people and culture aspect is an important piece of the puzzle. And then lastly and foundationally, systems change. So, we can do all of these other things, but if we're not willing to address inequities that exist in systems, it makes it really hard for us to sustain DEI as a part of who we are over the course of time. I do want to share that we have a brand new blog post that we just released that is about this very topic and it goes into some additional detail related to it.

But today, what I'm really excited about is the opportunity to have some incredible guests here, to have a real conversation about how they've been able to look at transparency, power-sharing and accountability related to DEI, and, how they, from the top of an organization that serves the community, have been able to think about centering this work and really helping it to be integrated throughout.

I'm excited to have this panel conversation. We're going to be really conversational today. We're going to have some real talk as it relates to this topic. And just note, as Atokatha said, as the panel is going and as you're listening, please put your questions into the chat for us because we are going to definitely pause and take some time to address as many questions from the group as possible.

So, I'm excited to introduce my four superstar CEOs that are joining us today. All of these leaders lead amazing nonprofits from coast to coast here in the United States. Andrea Lovanhill is here, she is the Chief Executive Officer for the Committee for Children; Bertram L. Lawson II is the President & CEO of the YMCA of Central New York; William Schimmel is here, I'm going to call you Bill today, and he is the Executive Director & CEO of the Pharmacy Technicians Certification Board; and Shalimar Gonzales is here as well, she is the CEO of an organization called Solid Ground out on the West Coast.

I want to welcome my panel with us here today and I'm going to actually stop sharing my screen, so we can just see each other's faces and start the conversation.

And so, I have several questions today that I want to ask, but as we jump in and get started, I want folks to get to know each of you just a little bit. Tell us a little bit about how all of you have been invited here because you have made the decision that you are going to make DEI an integral part of the work that you do and from that top leadership seat in the organization. So, I'd love to hear, why is providing leadership to equity and justice and inclusion work important to you personally? And, Andrea, I'm going to start with you.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** Well, thank you for having me. I'm Andrea Lovanhill of Committee for Children. And for a little bit of context about why this work is important, Committee for Children is a global nonprofit that is focused on improving child safety and helping children thrive emotionally, socially and academically. So, I want to say, right off the bat, I don't know how we do that work without rooting ourselves in equity.

Personally, simply put it's the right thing to do. I believe in the innate dignity and value of each human, and the loss of dignity, opportunity or life to unjust systems, beliefs and practices is absolutely unacceptable. I believe it's my responsibility, as a leader, in particular as a White leader, to do the work necessary to make justice and equity a reality.

**Emily Holthaus:** Shalimar, I would love to hear from you. Same question, why do you do this work?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Thanks, Emily. Thanks for having me today.

I don't know how we as leaders can lead organizations where we don't do this work. I think that's actually my answer, that as the CEO of Solid Ground, which is a nonprofit in Seattle, Washington, our mission and our core focus is really focused on eradicating poverty in our region. And we can't do that work unless we are in lockstep and fully leaning into diversity, inclusion and equity work, and our own journey as an organization and as individuals to be anti-racist. And when we're talking about systems change, we're talking about systems of oppression, we're talking about really helping people in real time. We can't do that without first acknowledging the history that nonprofits have when it comes to racist practices. And oftentimes, we have found value at different points in time in the work that we have done, which has been at the detriment of personal individuals. I think as we continue to lean into this, there continues to be more opportunities for us to really, I think, break down what it means to be a nonprofit, what it means to be a social impact organization and really look to a better future. For me, that's why I embrace this wholeheartedly, and it's why it will continue to do it.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Shalimar. Bill, I'd love to hear from you. Same question.

**William Schimmel:** Yes, thank you for having me as well here. I'm Bill Schimmel, my pronouns are he, him, his. I am the CEO of the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board. As you can tell from the name, we work with pharmacy technicians who are a very small slice of our vast healthcare system. But at the end of the day, there are helping to prepare over five billion prescriptions every year in the United States.

And as we know, the health outcomes for people of color, people of lower income, there's a disparity there, and they're not just preparing those prescriptions, they're interacting with those patients. In some cases, they are interacting with them frequently because their patients are seeing those technicians a lot, so there's a lot we can do there.

And then just for me, personally, at some point, when I became grown-up, I realized that the privilege that I had growing up and just being me, being a White male. And I was really proud of myself, I can acknowledge my privilege. That's great. Then, it occurred to me that if I'm going to be a leader, and in my community or at this organization, it's a lot more than that. I have to actually lead and be part of the hard work for equity and justice.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, Bill, and Bertram, I definitely want to hear from you as well. Why do you lean in here?

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** Well, thanks for having me, Emily, for this afternoon's session.

I lean into this particular work because, working for the YMCA, we are for all, and all includes exactly that—for all. Unfortunately, that's not always the reality. And as a President & CEO of YMCA in New York State, I think what is very important in this position is that I elevate and support, as a part of my trajectory as a leader in the wild for the last 15 years, and really lean in to this work, because it's essential to who we serve and who we're not serving. So, from a mission standpoint, and from a business standpoint, there are numerous groups of people that we're underserving, historically, and we need to do better at that. And also, from who we are hiring into high-level positions, not just the general positions that exist within our organization. For me, I'm the first African American in this role for the YMCA of Central New York. Now, for me, who comes behind me? Do they look like me? Will they look like me, as well? So, I think it's very important that this work is continuing to be elevated from a mission standpoint for the Y, but also from a business standpoint because we lose a lot of opportunity to impact when we don't focus on it.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you so much, and I am so excited that all of you said yes to this opportunity to really share the knowledge with everyone today. And I want to start, Shalimar, I'm going to come back to you because, I think, you all have been leading and doing this work for a while. I wanted to start with this idea of when you are first thinking about doing this and leaning into this work, what challenges did you encounter as you started leading this work and getting into this? And how did you then move to overcome some of the barriers that might have existed for you to really, fully integrate DEI? So, Shalimar, I'd love to hear from you first on that one.

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Yeah. There's been quite a few barriers, unfortunately, to really I think, step into this work.

I would say, first and foremost, one of the initial challenges, particularly for myself and for Solid Ground, is this ability for leaders to show up as their authentic selves. And that was a huge milestone. I not only am multi-racial, I also identify as a member of the LGBTQ community, and this is a piece that I show up every day—as a leader and as a community member. And so, really making sure that our staff understand and our volunteer understands that at various levels of the organization, there are people that are representational, just like Bertram said, and that is very important in this work.

I think the other piece is, Solid Ground is a union shop. It's a little bit unusual for nonprofits and so, there are some pieces related to diversity, inclusion and equity work that sometimes we're able to, in other organizations, mandate certain trainings or really make it this heavy-handed approach.

And we had to find this right balance of wanting to make sure that we are equitable in our approach to this work, that we're equitable in our approach to our trainings, but that we're also working hand-in-hand with our shop stewards and our union reps to make sure that we're not out of compliance with our collective bargaining agreements and things like that. And so, a lot of this has been around an organization that has come side-by-side and said, "What is it that we're missing as we're doing this work?" And then, as a management team, really asking those deep, thoughtful questions, really being vulnerable and transparent, when we don't get it right. So, that way, we can move forward together.

And so, that has been, I think, some of those barriers and also, some of those learnings, as we continue to, like I said, work our way towards being an anti-racist organization.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thanks, Shalimar, and I love how you called out transparency as a way to move through some of those barriers. I'd love to hear from any other of the team members. Anyone else have any barriers that you experienced when you're getting started? And then, any advice on how to move through?

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I can jump in quickly.

When I think about systems change in particular, and some of the barriers that come up there, systems always seek to return to status quo. Really understanding the complexity of legacy systems and, to Shalimar's point, the history of those systems and how they have really impacted organization and the people who work there and the communities we serve, that's pretty challenging work for our organization that I think is pretty new in our journey. So, I think that it's complex and it takes a lot of time, and thought, and intentional conversation, and exploration, and awareness building and capacity building. And so, I think there's a challenge in really reckoning with the past and the structures that have been created. And I think there's a challenge in really framing the work, so it's part of your daily work, so it's part of the core work and not separate. And then, really getting the commitment and investment, whether that be financial, whether it be staff time, whether it be belief in what you're doing. So, all of those things, I think, are challenging in their own way and require a lot of very intentional communications, change management and real investment that is seen as sort of a lifelong process, an organization-wide sustainability initiative. You're really taking it on as, this is forevermore part of this organization.

And that's pretty big work that I think it creates this system of, there are subtle resistances and challenges that come up every single day. And so, balancing and removing the more subtle or implicit resistance that may come up as behavior or it may come up as a lack of knowledge with this bigger systemic approach where you're really trying to take on some of the big questions of the history and the legacy systems in the organization.

**Emily Holthaus:** And Andrea, as you were talking, you were saying this idea that we have to resource this work too, and treat it as seriously as we would treat other things that we invest in. And whether that's human capital, or its financial resources and that commitment, it's a big piece to come over. And I think, we've seen a lot over the last year of organizations that are in that performative space. They are saying all these things, putting statements out there, but really, they're just going to do the bare minimum pieces and not really put the resources and accountability behind it.

And Bertram, I'd love to hear from you. How do organizations avoid being in that performative space where their work gets into that checkbox, and it really doesn't ever amount to anything? I'd love to hear your thoughts there.



**Bertram L. Lawson II:** Well, I would say for organizations to ensure that they don't get stuck in that space is that there has to be a higher level of intentionality—from the leadership, but also if it's a nonprofit, from the board, and even if it's a for-profit, from the board. That intentionality is really what has to happen and the willingness to have the uncomfortable, necessary conversations. I say uncomfortable and unnecessary because they are exactly that, uncomfortable and necessary, in order for the organization actually to embrace systemic racism or oppression that might exist in that organization, and also, currently what they might be facing in order to really hit the nail on the head to really drive their mission forward. If they're not doing that, like you said, they're performing, and if you're performing, you're acting. In this particular space, acting is not what is needed. What is needed is an intentional approach to change the issues, make people feel valued regardless of who they are, what they represent or what they look like—that they feel valued in the space that they are working or the space that they are attending as a participant.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thanks. Bill, any thoughts on that one, as well? I know that you're in the middle of getting that strategy in place, so you can start to embed everything. What are your thoughts on how to avoid being performative in this space?

**William Schimmel:** Yeah, I think for us early on as we decided that we wanted to go down this path and noting that we felt like we were late. And I don't like reacting. As leaders we're supposed to be looking ahead, and I'm like, I'm definitely reacting here, but we acknowledge that. We acknowledge that to the staff. We tried to acknowledge it a little bit in a public statement, but most importantly, as we put an outcome measure into our strategic plan. It's something that was vague at first because we were just getting started. But putting it in our strategic plan planted a flag that everybody could see in terms of the staff, in terms of our board, in terms of our volunteers, so that if some months later it hasn't moved and become more concrete, they can call us out of that. And I think our staff feels comfortable enough that, this does take time, as Andrea and Shalimar both noted, the staff isn't afraid to say, what about this thing? And what about that thing? Because we have a lot that we're trying to do, and that definitely helps.

**Emily Holthaus:** Bill, I do love that you are really challenging your staff and saying, “Hold us accountable.” And that's an important piece. I've been doing this work for 20 plus years, potentially, and I've never seen the level of accountability that the community keeps for us too now. And I think all of us can reflect back to this time last year, and all these organizations are putting these big, bold statements out saying, we do this, we do that, and then their team members and their people that their serving said, “Wait a minute, that's not how we're experiencing your organization. We're not going to let you save that and let you publicly do that.” And so, that balance between what you put out there and where you actually are and then, allowing your staff to hold you accountable is incredibly important.

And Andrea, I just want to point to you for a minute and give you a shout out because one of the things I love about your organization's DEI statement is you do just that. You have that whole piece in there about, "We know we're not perfect, and we're on the path." I would love to hear how you all came to putting that into what you put out publicly to support your statement.

Oh no, I can't hear you. I might have to come back to her because I can't hear her for some reason.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** You're back. You're back.

**Emily Holthaus:** OK.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I heard accountability, and I'm sorry. The audio glitched.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, so Andrea, what I was talking about is the delta between who we currently are, what our statement says and the fact that your organization really called out, "Hey, we know we're going to make mistakes. We know we're not there yet." And you have that really nice piece to your statement that helps people to understand that you acknowledge you haven't been perfect in the past.

And I was just curious, could you tell the group a little bit about why you all decided to make that acknowledgment as part of your statement? Because I think it's really important.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** Well, I think, I would say equity statements in general are tricky. A very close consultant and advisor recently said, "I've been doing equity work for a very long time and I've never had a statement." And so, statements can so easily be performative. In taking on the creation of that statement, I'll say first that it's very centered in strategies that we were already working to develop, and it was co-created with our board, so that we could have a top-down commitment. We gathered lots of feedback from staff and external stakeholders on that statement. And we said, "Where are our gaps here? How far away from realizing these aspirational pieces are we? Can you see us getting there? What things help us get there?"

And we felt like we needed to put that piece of asking to be held accountable. We know we're going to do things wrong. We know we're not always going to live up to the aspirations in this statement. But we want to be a learning organization, and we want to co-create the environment with our communities. And I think that saying that and saying that we're going to also be very transparent about what we're doing, so that you know we're not going to hide missteps, mistakes or learning.

It's really important that we're being very transparent externally and internally about that because again, forevermore, we're learning. We're growing. That should be the state of the organization because the needs of people change over time, people's understanding changes over time, so the organization has to be able to learn and adapt, and create an environment that is promoting that psychological safety. So, we put it out externally too because we felt like that was such a key component of being able to commit to and do this work over time in a way that we'd actually see progress in realizing those aspirational goals.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you, and this is such an important one. Shalimar, I want to hear what you have to say as well. How do organizations avoid getting stuck in that performative cycle for this work?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Yeah, we definitely saw it in 2020 and 2021. I think if everybody remembers, at least back to all the black boxes that littered Instagram for 24 hours. And without the action behind it, it was definitely seen by a lot of folks as being a performative gesture by individuals and organizations. The same thing can be said about various statements that have been made when there isn't the commitment at all levels of the organization that we heard from Andrea and from Bill, and saying that that's important to have that buy-in from the board level all the way through as well as being able to provide those resources, whether it's the people resources, financial resources, whatever, at that time that people need to do this work and to do it really well. And so, for us, for Solid Ground, we actually started to see ourselves leaning a little bit towards that performative space and that wasn't a space that we want it to be in. We were looking around and saw everybody else was doing it, and we don't want to be the organization that's not doing it so, we'll just put out a statement too.

We really had to slow down and say that when we're thinking about the communities that we serve, the work that we do and the impact that we're trying to have, we don't need to put out a statement about every single social issue that is happening. We need to be very crystal clear with ourselves, with our community, with our stakeholders and our board about who it is that we're serving and why we're choosing as an organization to make those investments to serve that community or those communities. And that, for us, was that critical point of us being able to create, essentially, a strategy screen, a strategy filter, to run different things that are happening in the world, and unfortunately, in the world that we live in there is something happening every single day that we, as individuals, as humans, want to respond to.

And so, being able to have a filter that is transparent, that is published, that our board knows about, that our staff knows about as we are deciding whether or not we are going to take an action—and that action could be writing a blog post speaking to a legislation related to something—means we're very clear about the process, how it went through that filter and how we got to the decision we did to either say yes, or to say no, or potentially just to leverage and lift up the work that is happening with our community partners. And so, that has been, I think, really instrumental in how we've continued to approach these social issues that, like I said, are coming at us every single day. I think our continued work around how we develop systems that allows for that level of accountability and transparency in across the organization. That is, I think, for us, how we really started to manage that work.

We also have the Community Advisory Council. It essentially is made up of community members, for us, that have that lived experience in the work that we're doing: people that are either currently in poverty or have transitioned out of poverty through variety of resources and their own work and efforts. And so, really utilizing that group of folks as stakeholders to ask, “Are we getting this right? Are we getting this right in our programs? Are we getting this right in our mission, our statements and everything?” So, we route a lot of things through this group, and they push back. I saw an email this morning that came through that said, “No, we don't like this.” So, being able to have a dialogue with them is really critical. Again, we're matching our actions with the resources and the tools that we have at our disposal as a mid-size nonprofit in our community.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, and Shalimar, what you just talked about is so critical, the example of power-sharing that you just gave. For a lot of nonprofits, this is not unique. A lot of nonprofits struggle with being representative in the places where power is concentrated in their organization. So, oftentimes at the very top of the organization, it might be more homogenous on certain dimensions, that could be racial dimensions, gender dimensions, whatever it is—and also, boards. Where power is concentrated in our boards, oftentimes, we struggle with representation there. And what I love that you just shared was a really tangible way to say if we know that where power is concentrated in our organizations may not have the vantage points we need, how do we go and get those? You just gave us a really great, tangible example around power-sharing there.

So, I would love to hear from the rest of the group here. How else have you really left leaned into power-sharing, knowing that the long game is representation and we're not going to get there like that. But what do we do in the meantime to distribute power differently and bring different voices to the table?

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** It may not be more centric to this particular topic for DEI, what I've done is, when it comes to information and the decision-making process, I've included a number of different layers of the organization; not just what we would classify as a senior team or executive operation, but I'm including on that level of general staff as well to seek feedback before a message may go out to the membership in the world that I work in and getting their insight and input, so I can understand from them how the decision that's being presented may affect them on a daily basis. I think that allows for opportunity for dialogue and it allows an opportunity for them to weigh in, knowing and understanding ultimately, I'll make the decision on what we will do—good, bad or indifferent. If it's great that we celebrate, universally. If it's bad, I'll take ownership of it, but that's the path that I've been working on last four months in this role and really including others in decision making and ultimately, in making the decision.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thanks. Bill or Andrea, either of you want to jump in on this one?

**William Schimmel:** Sure. I think, first off, we're still relatively early in our efforts, honestly. We haven't really shifted, but I think we're really open to it from a power sharing perspective. And sometimes, I think it would be great to make fewer decisions. But then, there's that discomfort, what if we shift responsibility to someone and I don't like what they do? And I have to get comfortable with that, and my board will have to get comfortable with that. And so, I think we're ready for that.

But most importantly, I think, is that the volunteers that power so much of what we do are not diverse enough, and it's easy to see that and we know that. And the technicians that we credential, there's 280,000 of them, so there's not a shortage of really, really good people with all different types of backgrounds. So, we have to go find them, and that's the work. We have to get them interested. We have to acknowledge that it's volunteer work and so, it's not always easy to find the person who might be in this job. But maybe it doesn't pay as much or there something we can do differently to get them to come, and maybe they're not a volunteer anymore, but at least we get their voice, so there could be other ways. There is a lot of thinking we have to do. Then, if we fast forward 9 or 12 months, and you invite me to another panel, and I don't have something to say, then we have a problem, and you should probably disinvite me.

**Emily Holthaus:** I would never disinvite you, Bill, but I appreciate that. I think the other thing that is really important too is, and just because I know the work that you've been doing, even as you're designing strategy, as you're doing that now, your staff have all had voice in that. Every single one of them on your team has been invited to that table to help you decide how to move that path forward. So, I'm just going to pat you on the back because I know that you've demonstrated that power sharing, even though you're just getting going on this journey as well.

And so, Andrea, anything else you want to add? And then, I've got a really great question that just came in from the audience as well.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I think I'll just add, it's really important for us to name what's true for the organization, and, again, that transparency piece. And we have a lot of work to do to bring more lived experiences and diverse voices into positional power in our organization. I think, just being clear that we know that and having, in that, as you said, representation over a multi-year strategy makes sense. But also, right now, we're really thinking about how we're assessing the equity of our talent management system, what things we can prioritize to support growth of the organization in that way, as well as staff development and career pathways. All of those things we're planning for.

As far as power sharing and making sure that folks are more at the table, one of the most immediate things that we did was really start to shift toward consistent feedback loops and opportunities to be involved in decision making and strategic planning. And we've redeveloped our planning process. Again, it's not perfect. But there are more voices at the table from different levels of the organization, with different experiences, to add into that planning process and that goal setting, than there have been in my memory of being with this organization. And so, I think there's progress there. But it's really those feedback loops creating the feeling that you can contribute, we want you to contribute, and also, I really appreciate adaptive leadership models, where you push the decision making close to the work. Everything could be flatter than it is, typically in organizations. Hierarchies are sometimes barriers to the work, and sometimes you need to get some of those structures out of the way. So, I think, where you can push power and decision making closest to the work, that's one strategy that, over time, we hope to realize within the organization.

**Emily Holthaus:** I have this question that just came in from the audience here. So, this person asks: As leaders, you all seem to be very committed to DEI work. However, not every leader and board is where you are. How do you get leaders who aren't in that commitment space yet to commit and participate in the efforts? Anyone want to grab that one?

Go ahead, Bertram.

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** Prior to this role, I worked for another YMCA association as a VP and oversaw DEI as we were going through a transition. So, you have to identify a champion within the organization that can partner with you, that's one way. But also, have some offline conversations with some of those who are going to be uncomfortable to really understand where they're coming from and to allow them to know that, no one is trying to change you as a person, but trying to get you to understand the aspects that may be negatively affecting those others in our organization and those that we are supposed to be serving. It's an opportunity for education. I want to be educated on you while you're being educated on others, so we can understand how to connect.

Oftentimes, I think what happens is people may be offput if you don't talk to them because they don't have the same idea or perspective that will never help move this forward. It will only alienate more people as you bring them in, they have to be brought into the equation. And part of it is understanding where you are to help them get beyond the barrier that may exist, for whatever reason, and some of it may be rooted in their upbringing or tradition.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Other thoughts?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Yeah. We've implemented something, and I know lots of organizations have done this, where they've added diversity, inclusion and equity questions as part of their interview process and have been very clear in their job postings about the type of organization that they are.

Recently, we made the decision that how someone answers our questions related to diversity, inclusion and equity is just as important as how someone answers a question that is specifically based on their role, in terms of their skill sets and the functions of the job that they need to perform. So, we have not necessarily took our diversity, inclusion and equity questions or anti-racism questions and put them on the side as, "It'd be great if they had this." It was, "They also need to have this because we need to be able to move together." It doesn't mean that we don't meet people where they're at. And I think, Bertram had that idea around building those relationships, building that trust, pulling folks aside, having those conversations to say, "This is where we're going. I get that you may not be there yet, but this is the direction," is really critical.

At the same time, being able to hold people accountable, which is what we heard Bill talk about. Those accountability pieces that are built into the operationalizing of diversity, inclusion and equity work across an organization. And so that really is, I think, the fine balance of meeting people where they're at, setting them on a path around the direction that the organization is going, they can opt-in or opt-out, and we'd have plenty of people opt out. And that's fine. They've gone on to other organizations that are a better fit for them. But it also means that we're able to free up some space to allow for more of those voices that are really pushing us as an organization. I would say our staff team, well, they would describe themselves this way, they are definitely more on the activist side, a lot of our staff members, so they are constantly pushing the pace in terms of the work that we're doing as an organization. And it's my job, the board's job, and everybody else's job to try to match that pace and that's what we're seeing right now.

**Emily Holthaus:** I love that, and I think you, in a very nice way, said, "We're going to say what we need, we're going to hold people accountable and then, if it's not for you, it's not for you, and that's OK." At the end of the day, sometimes, we have to just be OK with that.

And Andrea and Bill, any other thoughts? Because this is important, and everybody is all along that continuum of their journey related to DEI in organizations. And so, we'd love to hear if y'all have any other advice, because I'm sure this person wrote that, but a lot of people experience that challenge that they're talking about.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** This person was talking about a lack of commitment and I think that can show up in a few different ways. The performative piece that we're talking about for organizations, that can also be true for individuals or leaders within organizations. And so, I think we need to be very clear about what commitment means. I was recently having a good conversation with one of the directors in our organization about this. He brought up that when he practiced law, they had what was called the Advocacy Test. Can you see a person demonstrating advocacy for the organization or client that they're working with? What are you seeing behavior wise? What are you seeing that shows commitment and advocacy because you won't know ever know everything that's in someone's head or everyone's motivations, right? And so, if you just sort of ask, what shows us clearly that folks are getting what they need to live up to the aspirations that we set, the values that we set and that they are committed to the work that we've taken on?

And I think, also, make sure that if you're talking about it in a leadership position, that there is the right kind of, I would say, surrounding context for that person to really understand what their lack of commitment may be doing to their organization and to the communities that they're serving because there's a lot of data and there's a lot of research. People can educate themselves and really understand their lack of commitment and the downstream effects on their staff and the communities that they're interacting with. If they're not willing to do that, I would say that's incredibly problematic and that person is not a leader.

**Emily Holthaus:** Andrea, you talked about the data piece of it, too. That's one of the things that I talk about a lot. When we have folks in organizations that aren't buying in, oftentimes, when we show data and trends, it helps people to go, "Oh my gosh," and to start seeing, potentially, what they haven't seen before.

I was working with an organization where they were talking about diversification and about interrupting bias in the hiring process. When we looked at their data, 95% of the people in their organization came from the same two universities. And when we showed them that data, they were like, "No," and we're like, "Yes." Again, it was that data that helped them to see how potential biases were creeping into their organization.



To me, it's about understanding, what are your trends telling you? Who's leaving your organization? Who's being promoted in your organization? What does that data tell you about potential things that you need to do? And, because we're not always paying attention to the data that's in our own organization or external data that could be around us to support urgency, sometimes putting some of that in front of folks helps to drive that urgency as well. So, Bill, I don't know if there's anything else you wanted to add to this part, but it's an important part.

**William Schimmel:** Yeah, I think piggybacking on what both Bertram and Andrea said, engage in those conversations. For me, I think, I try to pay really close attention, all the way down to body language. It can be hard to publicly say, "I'm really not into this," but sometimes you can see it in other ways. And you can try to engage with those people after, even virtually. Sometimes, it's nice, you can see 25 people at once, and if you're paying attention, you might be able to see something. But then, if you're going to engage with them. For me, it's, "OK, these things are important to us and this is why." And that's that data, but specifically in our case it's, how does this relate to our mission? Because if it's relating to the mission, it's hard to argue against that—even if it's hard, if it's annoying, if it's too woke for that person or something like that.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. There are lots of really great questions coming in I want to touch on, and this is related to one of the questions that came in, personal accountability. This is the idea around, what have you personally done to address your own biases or become more intentional in holding yourself accountable to being an equity leader? And specifically, this person is asking if you have any great books, blogs, podcasts or thought leaders you've been listening to that help inspire you to be accountable and to continue to grow in this area?

I'd love to see if anybody would love to jump in on that one. I don't know, Bertram, if you're ready. We haven't heard from you in a minute.

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** Sure. From a book perspective, "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success" by Carol S. Dweck is a book that I've used for a variety of different reasons. But from a personal standpoint, to address my own biases, what I have done is try to immerse myself in that community, to learn more about that community and understand also why I have a bias. Where did it come from? Addressing if it came from my upbringing, if it came from some education or something. Where did it come from? So that I can understand why I have these thoughts or feelings. But then, embracing a community that I might not truly understand to understand what's happening in their community, how there are similarities and differences, which I've come to understand are at minimum. How do I become more of an advocate to support in that effort?

But really, truly, digging deep to understand myself, what is causing me not to be embracing of a different group of people and understanding of what they may be facing, and how similar it may be to things that I face as a Black man in America?

**Emily Holthaus:** Yes. Other thoughts on this one?

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I'm a podcast fan, and I have a lot. But I'll say if you are, in particular, someone who's leading an organization who identifies as White, that Scene on Radio's Seeing White series, is a very good podcast that unpacks the historical underpinnings of race in our country, so I would recommend that. And also, "So You Want to Talk About Race," which is on every bestseller list, so I'm sure everyone has seen that. Both of those I really appreciated. As a member of LGBTQ+ community, I really appreciate the education materials from GLSEN, and they have a lot of great materials also for talking to children about the LGBTQ community and identity. Those are just a couple, and I can turn it over to Bill.

**William Schimmel:** This probably isn't too helpful because I'm going to recommend something that I don't know is on the internet anymore, but before he was famous and before he was a MacArthur genius, Ta-Nehisi Coates was blogging for The Atlantic monthly. And he had a group of commenters that he called the "horg." They would engage on a topic, and he would come to them and say, "Talk to me like I'm stupid." And they would go into it on a topic, and I would just go in there as a lurker because I didn't feel like I could really get in there. But what it taught me more than anything else is that I know very little, about anything. This idea of intellectual humility and I might have a view now, but I need to be open to that view changing, and my views started to change really, really quick. And again, I don't think it's still there anymore. Now, after this, I'm going to go check and see if some of those blog posts are still there.

**Emily Holthaus:** It's always there. If it's on the Internet, it's out there somewhere. So that's a good call out. Now everybody's going to be searching it up, so it'll come back up to the top of the Google.

And, Shalimar, I want to hear from you on this one as well. What are some ways that you personally keep yourself accountable to growth in this area?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Emily, I appreciate that you called it the Google. I would say, and laugh if you want, Twitter is right now my go-to, it's where I could get a lot of my information. But the thing that I love about it is it allows me the ability to interact with folks that aren't necessarily in my traditional circle of folks and friends. It's people from all over the world sharing all sorts of different perspectives that I would have never considered, but it allows me the space and the time to really be reflective.

And so, oftentimes I'm engaged in conversations with strangers on Twitter, on a topic that I'm learning more about, and I'm asking some questions about, and it's a space—for all its flaws—in which people can engage and be honest about who they are and where they're at in their journey. It's a social platform, so it's less on the academic side and more of just, “Hey, we're just some folks that are engaging.” There's a really, really great hashtag. So, if you're on Twitter, just search the hashtag #SaturdaySchool. It's a group of DEI professionals, leaders and community members, and every Saturday there's a topic. Last Saturday was about disability justice, which is something that I'm learning more about myself. There are links to research, articles, resources, podcasts and all sorts of other things. And so, that's usually my go-to on a Saturday morning, as I start my morning cup of coffee. And then, I just follow that hashtag and chime in where I feel like maybe I have something to say, or just something to learn by asking questions. So that's my go-to.

And then, behind me, I got a bunch of books that I enjoy reading. I keep them there because it's important for me to reference them oftentimes in meetings, so they're just an arm's length away.

**Emily Holthaus:** Excellent. And Shalimar, someone is touching back to your comment earlier about how you engaged and put very specific questions into your interview process. Would you mind sharing, what are some of the types of things you ask this person? Can you tell us some of those tips of what we ask in interview processes to help gauge people's competency around DEI?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Yeah, so we have a bank of questions. I probably haven't seen all the questions, but I've seen at least 15 of them. Those questions were developed by our anti-racist program manager, as well as with input from our staff team, HR and then our community advisory council. And those questions range, and it's up to the interview panel to decide which questions they are going to ask. But it's a minimum that they ask two of those questions, and they range anywhere from, “Tell us a little bit more about your understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity work for us.” We lean very closely around anti-racism practices, so we're asking very specific questions when it comes to anti-racism practices and how that has shown up in people's lives. There is a question around what sort of personal work are people doing to educate themselves on this and how they really hold themselves accountable. So, those are some of the highlights of some of the questions that we typically ask. What we're trying to suss out is, does someone have an understanding of what diversity, inclusion and equity work is, and how it interplays with the work we do as an organization? Because they go hand in hand, and we can't actually separate the two at all. And so, it doesn't matter what role you're in. In our organization, we're asking you diversity, inclusion and equity questions. And like I said before, we hold those answers just as high as we do someone being able to do the specific skills needed for their role.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah, thank you. We've touched a lot on the accountability and the power sharing, I want us to just spend a little bit more time before we run out of time today to talk about the transparency part of this conversation.

Because I think that, oftentimes, inequities in organizations do come because we're holding onto things, and not allowing for the transparency for those in our organization to see and understand how things are working, the rationale behind decisions, et cetera.

And Bertram, I'd love to hear from you. How do you, as the top leader of the organization, lean into transparency as a way to advance DEI in the organization?

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** The way I choose to lean in is by elevating the biases that I have worked through myself, so being the example. Not only talking about my own biases and the learnings that I've had, but also ensuring that the staff understand that their voices matter and that I don't want to just hear them. I don't want them to just sit at the table. I want them to utilize their voice in a way that allows for a transparent conversation that we can work through where there's understanding on both sides of the table. So, I've been working on creating that environment where transparency is at the highest level. When it comes to this, more specifically, I'm not held back on where we're going, what we need to address and how it needs to be addressed. We're addressing those who have chosen to be, at some level, combative when I'm making statements around diversity and inclusion for this organization publicly. Then, calling those people out, not by name, but calling them out publicly, and saying that we won't stand for that intolerance and we won't stand for the continuation of marginalizing people.

So, that's the way you lead by example. And I charge my staff team and board members to do the same.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Others that want to comment on the importance of transparency?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** Yeah, I'll just jump in real quick. I had attended a nonprofit conference a month ago. And one of the presenters had said something in that space during their keynote that really stuck with me as a leader. And it continues to stick with me. And what she had said was in her work, at the time she was working in politics and doing efficacy work, when she was getting emails from constituents and responding on behalf of elected officials, the one thing that she was told is under no circumstances do we ever apologize.

And I thought to myself, "Huh?"

Like when is the last time that I stood in front of an organization and apologized if I made a mistake? I couldn't actually remember a time where I had done that. And so, we had an opportunity last couple weeks ago to do an all staff meeting, and in this period of time, as a new leader in this organization, I've gone to listening sessions and have heard directly from staff. There's a lot of trauma, there's a lot of harm, there's a lot of frustration. Some of it is related to the pace of our diversity, inclusion and equity work. Some of it is related to the pace of who we are externally versus what people think internally, and we talked about that a little bit earlier today.

And so, to be able to, in that all staff meeting, apologize on behalf of the organization as the leader of the organization saying, "I'm sorry that you felt this way. I'm sorry that you had this experience," allowed for us, as an entire organization, in one moment to have a reset, to have a space where people heard the thing that they likely were looking for that had never before it gotten it in the way that maybe they were wanting it to.

And then, being able to move forward into, here's the future, here's the direction we're going and here's how you can hold me as a leader accountable to this space and this work that we're trying to do. Here's the plan, and it's published. Here are the timelines, and if we don't hit these timelines, feel free to send an email or whatever you want to do. But that's really what it's about. It's about acknowledging the past, presenting the plan and then moving forward and allowing folks to have that space where it is OK to challenge, it's OK to push back, it is OK to encourage dialogue and all those other things that sometimes we're afraid of, as leaders.

**Emily Holthaus:** Wow, so much in there that you just dropped for us with knowledge. And I think the one thing I want to get back to a little bit is this idea of how it is really hard to chart a path forward if we haven't acknowledged what's been happening in the past. And especially, if you're a new leader coming into an organization and you have to recognize that team members had a certain experience before you got there. That doesn't go away magically just because you showed up and have a different mindset. So, I think that's really important.

But externally, as well. This is an important conversation. And I like what you said, Shalimar, about sometimes we just have to acknowledge and apologize on behalf of the organization. I was working with an org who was really challenged. They knew they had a large Hispanic and Latinx community right near their organization, but that group was not interfacing or connecting with them at all, and they couldn't figure it out. They were trying a bunch of different things, and they just weren't able to engage with that community. And, finally, when the CEO went out and was talking to some key leaders, they referenced something that had happened 15 years ago. A big misstep where that organization had really harmed that community and never acknowledged it. And this was two or three leaders later, and no one had ever acknowledged it, so that community 15 years later would not interface with that organization.

So, Bill, how about you? Any thoughts on transparency? I think that's one of the things you do really well, so I'd love to hear your approach to that.

**William Schimmel:** I appreciate that. I wasn't even going to actually offer anything because I was going to say something similar to what Bertram and Andrea said, which is acknowledging mistakes, especially my own. And a lot of times that is, "I haven't gotten this thing done, but I haven't forgotten about it." And sometimes, it's really just trying to explain the thinking and inviting comment. This thing that I think we should do might not make sense in the short term, but in the long term, it might make sense for X, Y and Z. Also, acknowledge that sometimes it's politics too. Its politics and influence. And if you do some certain things, some other things could go better for us in the long run and just being open about that. Again, I think being a small organization helps there and having a team that you trust that they're going to maybe come back at you with their own ideas when they have them.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I'd like to jump in really quickly. And first, I'd like to thank Shalimar for offering that example because I really believe what you demonstrated there is true vulnerability, also. I think vulnerability is really critical to transparency.

Transparency comes with risk, and you need to accept that risk as the leader of the organization because without true transparency, you also can't have accountability. You have to be able to share things widely and openly. And I think one thing that has really benefited us in the transparency piece is that we have such an incredible communications team. And we really thought, and I have a communications background so maybe I'm bent that way, but we really thought about how it is so hard from a communications perspective to not be transparent. That makes your life really difficult.

How can we act in ways and create materials that actually are open materials that can work internally, externally, with the board and with staff? It's the same kind of data, the same sort of information, the same key messaging because there shouldn't be anything to hide. Right? And so, I think that was where we leaned in and created very intentional communications planning, and ways to monitor how that was performing; in other words, understanding what was resonating with staff—were there things that didn't feel transparent enough?—and being able to track channels and formats, so it's more accessible. Are people actually taking in information they need to engage with our work and to hold us accountable when we are not delivering on the things that we, as an organization, have committed to?

So, I guess it was twofold. I really appreciated that display vulnerability, because I think it's critical to transparency, and I also think a real intentional approach to transparency and communication is absolutely necessary for accountability.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you, and Andrea, the audience is asking for you to shout out the podcast that you referenced earlier.

I think you said two of them, they want to know which ones that was.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** It's actually, the podcast itself is called Scene on Radio. Scene, like a movie scene, and it has various seasons that are really great. There's one on gender. There's one on democracy and the development of our democracy that is also, I would say, a really good one to invest time in. And then, the one that is particular about race is called Seeing White. It's really about an ability, as a White person, to see whiteness and its effect. And, I think it helped me as a White leader to have gotten through that podcast.

**Emily Holthaus:** And that's actually a great segue to, I have one more question that I have for you, and then we've got several that have come in. But I want to sort of talk about this here, too.

For organizations that are predominantly White led, and that could be at the CEO level or it could be at the board level, what additional advice do you provide to organizations who are predominantly White led that really want to lean in differently to DEI? Bertram, I want to take that one to you first. What do you think? What advice do you have?

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** Be intentional. Educate yourself, personally. Don't lean in and expect staff of color or Black people or women to give you those tidbits. They aren't your teachers. Educate yourself. Gather questions that can be helpful to those audiences that can help you navigate your path, but the intentionality perspective is very much needed. There has to be a succession plan of what that looks like when it includes Black people, people of color, those who identify as being LGBTQIA+ and women. How are they involved? What are you doing? What are you going to do?

That is very necessary and understand that it is not really, truly about you. That might sound a little weird. It's not really, truly about you, it's about the people that you're supposed to be serving internally and externally and how you can help to heal wounds, collectively, and move the organization forward to do what it is charged to actually do.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Other thoughts? Bill, you're shaking your head, what do you want to jump with?

**William Schimmel:** Bertram said that really well. And, I think the only thing I could add really is that obviously, as a White person who's leading, I still have to lead, I can't use, "Oh, but these things aren't me, didn't happen to me." You can't make excuses that way, obviously, and it can be really easy to say, "Well, our organization is White led, but it's because of X, Y and Z and this thing happened and that happened." And it's like, well, no. Acknowledge it, and let's see if we can make a difference and go from there.

## **Keys to Integrating DEI: Transparency, Power-Sharing and Accountability**

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you. Andrea or Shalimar, any advice?

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I would say in the long run, you need to diversify positional leadership layers in your organization. And that means in many aspects, whatever you need to do to bring more lived experience to the table and really reflect the communities that you're serving, you need to do that. I think that does involve the personal work, modeling and all of those things. And a lot of intentionality. Sometimes that involves getting out of the way. Sometimes, it really means understanding the aspects of White supremacy or White-dominant culture that exists in your organization, and not falling into perpetuating those systems and cultural practices that really hoard power and promote paternalism and a lack of collaboration. All of these things that are quite exclusionary, and I think people often stop at the recruitment phase of trying to add to their organization and add to their culture, and that's not going to cut it. So, it's not about what your organization looks like in a year, it's about what your organization looks like in 10 years.

**Emily Holthaus:** Great. Shalimar, what do you say on this one?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** I think I would say, just start. That's probably the simple answer. But yeah, just start. I oftentimes ask and, in some ways, request that my colleagues in partnering organizations say what they mean and say what it is that they're seeing. Because, for all the reasons that we've already talked about and Andrea said as well around positional power, authority and all these other things, sometimes those voices are some of the most powerful. And so, having those allies, having those folks that are saying, "This isn't right, and we're going to do something about it," is a really great step. It's not about being perfect. I don't think anybody is saying that you have to be perfect in it, and sometimes that's some of that barrier of that vulnerability. And so, being able just to go and say what it is that you're seeing. You may not see everything, and that's fine. That's why there's so many different people around the table, so many different voices in your organization that are all bringing unique perspectives to really shift where organizations are going into the future.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you, and I think perfection can paralyze you. If anything else, here's the thing. It's not if you're going to make a mistake and say something wrong, it's when. It's getting over the uncomfortable nature of being able to move forward through all of that. I tell people all the time, I do this for a living and I say the wrong thing sometimes. It happens, and not letting that need for perfection stop you from getting actionable is really important.

We have a few minutes left. This has been such a great conversation. I want to try to get to a few more of these questions if we can.



And so, one person is asking, specifically, if we're talking about power sharing, and traditionally, nonprofits are very hierarchical in structure. Does anyone have any advice on how do you change that? How do you change and start to flatten the power structure in an organization or distribute power differently? Anyone have any advice for this person who's asking sort of how to switch up what's been happening traditionally?

**Shalimar Gonzales:** I think Andrea mentioned something earlier around adaptive leadership models and really pushing decision making closer to where the action is happening. And that is critical, that is one thing that I, as I stepped into this role into a new organization, have learned is at the center of how decisions are made here at Solid Ground. It is at the heart of where the program, where the impact, is going to be; it is those community members, it is those staff, and it doesn't necessarily matter positions of power or positions of leadership. It is those folks that are making a decision and that they at times, if they need to, might make it a recommendation. And then, I may have to make the decision depending on what sort of level it's at, so there are some interplays there, But that is, I think, really critical.

I think the other piece around this is really setting the standard for where your organization might want to go when it's looking at power dynamics and power sharing. One of the things that I had said in my interview process, and probably on my first, second, third and now six plus months in, is that as an organization, we will move towards community participatory budgeting. And that's a huge lift for an organization that gets 80% of its funding from public sources, to say that we're going to use a process in which our community is going to tell us how we should be investing those resources and how we should be serving them because that is what we're there to do. My hope is that we're on the right path with our approach. But if the community and the folks that we're, again, engaging will tell us differently, then we need to change what it is that we are doing to make sure that we are doing the very best we can to help lift folks out of poverty and work hand-in-hand with them in terms of system change. That is a little bit more upstream for us.

**Emily Holthaus:** Yeah. Oh, my goodness. There are so many good questions coming through. I'm going ask this one. Somebody mentions decolonization, a couple of people are asking about this. For U.S.-based organizations that serve global, and I know that, Andrea, you all are thinking about going into that space. How do we avoid the U.S. construct of what DEI is, and how do we think about DEI a little bit more globally? Especially for organizations that are looking to try to do that. So, anybody want to grab that one?

**Andrea Lovanhill:** We do actually have global reach already. And I'd say it's particularly important that in the context of social emotional learning and supporting child development that you're not imposing systems and frameworks on a community.

And so, to do that work, we actually rely heavily on in-country partners that work to localize, adapt, customize and program. Our ideal is that we also have an entrenched country research partner that's feeding into that process and contributing to a research base that is developed in that country and looking at what has been created and if it is really getting the outcomes for children within that country that that community or country is really hoping for.

It really is asking where we contribute to what is desirable within the context of that country, and not pretending like we have any idea of what they need. It's really them telling us, "Hey, this is how you could help us in our pursuits, and this is how we want to use your program and your evidence base," And transparently, I think we have more way more work to do there. We have to go much further in this in understanding participatory design and really supporting those international partners. And that's something that we're actually considering in our strategic planning now, so more to come on that. But I would say very contextual, localized and dependent on partners within those countries and communities.

**Emily Holthaus:** Agreed, and we work with lots of global clients as well and struggle with that idea of, how do we get cultural humility and not make everything U.S. focused with how we approach everything that we try to do globally. It really is a mind shift there. And some of our clients we work with also are saying, we need to make sure we get country leaders at our senior table that help us to get that voice right there at our table related to strategy. But then, also recognize when things that we do culturally don't translate. Like, even the construct of race doesn't necessarily translate globally.

And in many cases, how do we begin to think about just centering other people's culture as we would center our own and having that become a part of what we do? And then saying, are there things happening in our organization that perpetuate U.S.-dominant culture that aren't healthy for our global partners and our global constituents?

So, whoever asked that, that's a big question that we could probably do a whole segment on. Atokatha, maybe we'll have to actually do that as a whole segment later on.

We are almost to the end, and I just want to ask each of you to respond to this one quickly. If you had advice for somebody who is just getting started, like they haven't done anything really up until this point, they're just getting started. What advice would you give to organizations related to what we've been talking about here, integrating DEI, transparency, power-sharing and accountability. Where do folks begin if they're just getting started? Any advice?

Whoever would like to jump in, I'd like to hear from each of you now quickly to close today.

**Bertram L. Lawson II:** I'll say really quickly, identify about three to five questions that can easily be answered, like through a survey. That can help them get jump started on what's actually happening in their organization or not happening in the organization.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** Go ahead, Bill.

**William Schimmel:** So, this has been mentioned earlier, but I can't imagine trying to go down this path without the self-education process. If you think everything's fine, then it's going to be hard to see how DEI and those types of efforts are going to be a benefit to your own organization.

But then second, yes, is once you have a little bit of that understanding, because that's an ongoing process, how does it relate to what your mission is, right? You've got to answer that question first.

**Emily Holthaus:** Thank you.

**Andrea Lovanhill:** I think we started from an emerging strategy perspective and so, really to build off Bertram, what do you need to know? What can you learn right now from staff from the data that you have available? And then, to just pull from what Shalimar said earlier, do something. Get started. Don't be so caught up in the analysis that you're not doing some things that make sense. And I think that's something that we really struggled with, because we're really data focused. There's a lot of rigor in what we do. And there were a lot of, I think, missed opportunities to just actually do the work, listen to staff and make some change right away. And so, I would say balancing that is important. Do things. Do things now, and learn from them.

Thank you.

**Shalimar Gonzales:** I think hopefully people wrote that down. I feel like the group just gave a pretty good roadmap of how you get started in this work. Yeah, that idea of getting feedback, however that works for you and your communities or your staff team, that idea, what Bertram said, around just listening sessions or whatever it is, but getting the feedback. Being able to really listen and really listen to learn, not just, "I'm listening for the points in which I want to interject what I want to say or how we're not doing that thing or how we're better than those other organizations." So, really listen, reflecting back what you've heard that has been shared and doing that in a feedback loop. And Andrea mentioned that earlier, that idea of sometimes we hear things and then, we go back behind a curtain, we work on a plan for two years and then, people are wondering, "What is happening? They asked us all these questions and nobody's done anything." So have that immediate feedback loop to say, "This is what you've said. This is what we've heard. And then, here's how we're going to get started."

And don't pick 50 goals that you're going to do in a year. Not to say that you can't do 50 things in a year, but you also have other organizational priorities that you're also trying to balance, right? So, maybe it's one to two things that will really kind of get you going. And sometimes, you might pick one of those two things that might be like a low-hanging fruit, because it allows for you to jump start to the next thing. So, think of it as you're putting together this puzzle and you're gathering all the different pieces, so that way you have a full story of what you're trying to accomplish.

**Emily Holthaus:** All right, this has been so great. And I feel like we have way more questions in here than we can handle and for some of them, we might have to just bring you all back and do another segment.

But, I just want to say, I appreciate all of you. I appreciate the vantage points and the honesty and the authenticity that you all came forward to this conversation today. And I know for a fact, because of how the chat is blowing up with the questions that are coming in, that folks have hung with us and have really gotten a lot out of this conversation.

So, just note that we are going to be sending out the recording of all of this to everyone, and we will also try to, for those of you that entered questions and weren't able to get them answered, we'll try to figure out ways to connect with you to get some of your questions answered.

I just want to put a big thank you to all of you, and I'm going to share my screen really quickly here one more time, just to end with some additional tips for getting started, as well. And so, I want to make sure that you are seeing my screen there, and this is very similar to what the group was just talking about. But as we close and end today, how do we think about getting started? And how can we begin to do that? And really, I think it's getting that grounding. What does equity and inclusion, structural racism, bias and other terms related to this work mean for your organization? And helping everyone, and it to understand and know what we're talking about.

The next thing is, what is your intention? Is DEI work a strategic imperative for your organization? And a lot of you are asking about board buy-in and CEO buy-in, making sure that we have that named as a strategic imperative for what we're going to do internally and externally. And then also, how we talked about how DEI connects to your mission, your vision, your values and strategies. Going back to the beginning of this conversation when we're asking this panel here, why do you do this work? Why do you lean in? Every single person said, we need to. It's an important part of how we're going to do work, and how we're going to amplify our vision, our mission and the community.

And it is true. For those of you that lead nonprofits, you have a responsibility because you're about community, you're about family, you're about kids, you're about adults, you're about connections and humans. And it's even more important for you to understand how you can serve all and be a part of the communities and be reflective of that, so that you're not leaving someone else out of the important work that you're doing.

And so DEI, how is it connected as part of your mission, vision, values and strategy? And then lastly, we talked a little bit about this, having that statement that expresses your commitment, expresses your intention and gives people something to hold you accountable to. And we talked about not having the delta be too big between what you say and where you currently are. Because again, you want to make sure that you're moving towards making sure that that's happening.

And we just released the results from our 2020 Diversity Practices Survey where we surveyed over 600 nonprofits across the country. An interesting data point that came back there: There was a delta between organizations that said, "Yes, we have a statement," and then organizations that said, "We have a strategy." There was a difference there. I'm saying, you need to make sure that you've got your statement, and also getting your strategy ready to move in the direction of getting you towards that statement that you put out there.

Then, the last piece is what this group was starting to talk about, assessing your current state. And that could be the current state of your organization. What is it that's happening? How does it feel to be a part of your organization? Historically, what do we need to wrestle with? How are our systems and processes working in our organization? But also assessing your current state; you, as the individual, as the leader, and, Bill and Bertram talked about this, really understanding what is it about you as a leader that needs to shift and change? What do you need to start doing to lead into DEI? What do you need to stop doing to lead into DEI? And really have some of that assessing as an individual leadership and also as an organization. Then, working from there to say, what does this data tell us? What's important about this? And, as Shalimar talked about, design a strategy, not 50 things that you're going to try to halfway do. But what are the top three or five things that are going to matter to your organization? And then, to work to build that outcome-based strategy to support that movement. And as Andrea said, just get going and start beginning to do the work. Again, don't get paralyzed by sticking in the data and not moving, but getting that strategy and then starting to do the work.

That's just some tips that we have for all of you to get started. And I just appreciate all of you leaning in with the questions and the interactions with us today. This is really fun, and hopefully, the conversation was such where if you didn't get a ton out of every single thing we said, I'm guessing that there were probably some really great, relevant pieces of wisdom that dropped from our conversation today. So, again, thank you to the panel. And Atokatha, I'm going to turn it back to you for our wrap up for today.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Thank you very much, Emily, you did such a great job leading such a rich conversation. Thank you so much to all our panel experts who are CEOs of organizations. You may find out more information about them at [nonprofithr.com](https://nonprofithr.com). We just really want to emphasize that we'll get back to as many questions as we can, either in the form of an upcoming event or some other publications, so please stay tuned for that.

In the chat, you will see that I have shared a link to a webinar for next week, which is focused on sharing the results from our recent Nonprofit Return to Workplace Pulse Survey. Those results are in, and you can see them displayed in a brand new infographic, so you can visit [nonprofithr.com/2021rtws](https://nonprofithr.com/2021rtws).

Also, just know that we have a webinar coming up Tuesday of next week. That webinar will be led by our CEO, Lisa Brown Alexander, and she will be reviewing the survey results. You may see the final link to that webinar in the chat feature as well, and register for that one.

Please be sure to complete the feedback survey that will pop up once the webcast has ended. Your comments help us with our planning and can inform the topics we cover as well. Later this week you'll receive access to codes for SHRM and HRCI for recertification, and also a link to the webinar recording and presentation slides. If you would like any other information about Nonprofit HR available services, or support that we offer, please email us at [info@nonprofithr.com](mailto:info@nonprofithr.com), or visit us online at [nonprofithr.com](https://nonprofithr.com). You can click the Contact button and you can submit a form if you would like to spend some time with our team helping you understand how we can be of support and partnership with you.

Thank you again for tuning in, thank you to Emily Holthaus, who leads our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Practice, and all of our guests. Have a great afternoon.