



Meaningful Impacts: Addressing Social/Racial Issues in Grant Applications

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Focus

1. Equality v Equity (*bike graphic*)

Equality – evenly distributed tools and assistance

Equity – Custom tools that identify and address inequality

Equity is more impactful

2. Funders are beginning to put more of a lens/focus on DEI

Foundations are asking questions in grant applications about DEI in your organization and your programs. At one point this may have been a simple yes/no answer to a question that asked if there was diversity among your board/staff/clients. Now you need to go deeper with what that diversity actually looks like within your organization.

Sample questions from actual applications:

Are the racial/ethnic groups you serve represented “at the table”/

How does your focus/program affect the racial/ethnic groups served?

How is your focus/program perceived by the racial/ethnic groups served?

Does your focus/program ignore, worsen or improve existing disparities? Are there unintended consequences

Feedback from a declined LOI where the client aligned with the foundation’s giving focus:

“In the last few months, we've begun to find other ways to have an impact. We now seek, in our grantmaking, to promote People of Color, represented by leadership of organizations, majority of staff and board, and majority of community served; therefore, we are now recommending that as part of your one-page grant request, you include how you work with People of Color.”

Some funders are now requiring that 50% or more of your staff leadership, board, and/or clients served be BIPOC.

- Some require 1 of 3 (Chick-fil-A True Inspiration Award)
- Some require 2 of 3 (Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta General Operating Grant)

3. How can you address this?

- Advisory committees that include former clients?
- Client feedback mechanism? Note that feedback should be acknowledged and addressed.
- Form a DEI Committee that consists of board, staff and perhaps a few clients. Consider using an outside consultant to manage this process (this will involve fees)
- Change your bylaws to provide for the addition of more board members to allow more diversity among your board.
- Recategorize staff – Review your org chart - perhaps some program directors are actually executive leadership positions
- Think creatively about how you can bring equity to your clients and share that with your constituency and funders
 - One client went all-virtual due to COVID and their required money management classes and coaching sessions were a challenge for some families bc of lack of technology – hardware and/or software. Client performed a needs assessment of the 30 families in this program and secured “technology equity funding” to purchase laptops/software for those who needed it
 - One client did a “pop-up” emergency financial assistance site for in-person applications at a church located in a high-need area of Atlanta. This addressed technology barriers and also provided an element of trust because the services were provided at a place that was trusted in their neighborhood.
 - One client who provides books to children at well care visits at the pediatrician makes sure to provide books where the main characters align with the racial/ethnicity of the children who are receiving them.
- Most Important – this is not about “checking a box” to meet a funding guideline – that does more harm to all involved.
 - This is important work and must be a thoughtful process
 - This process occurs over a significant period of time. It is not a “quick fix” so don’t rush it or it won’t create meaningful impact or change. But do show that you are taking active steps for more DEI in your organization.
 - Analogy – We are all on the same highway – some are going above the speed limit, some are going the speed limit, some are traveling under the speed limit, some are getting onto the “on” ramp and others are on the exit ramp.