WHY INCLUSIVENESS?

Inclusiveness and its Benefits for Nonprofit Organizations

THE DENVER FOUNDATION
Dr. Dean Prina, former Board Chair for The Denver Foundation is also a practicing pediatrician who has served on over 30 boards and in countless volunteer capacities throughout Metro Denver.

Since 2001, The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project has provided guidance and resources for Metro Denver nonprofit organizations who strive for greater inclusiveness. Two of the Inclusiveness Project’s champions, Dr. Dean Prina, the first chair of the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative (now the Inclusiveness Project), and Dr. María Guajardo, chair of the Inclusiveness Project Committee at the time of this publication, answer the question “Why Inclusiveness?” from their perspectives.

Dean, you were one of the earliest champions for inclusiveness at The Denver Foundation. Why inclusiveness?

A good bit of my own interest in inclusiveness came from my observations on boards of nonprofits on which I have served: there was a clear paucity of people from communities of color among their boards, their staff, their donors, and the volunteer pool as well.

Inclusiveness has always been a passion of mine, and when I served on the board of The Denver Foundation, I was presented with an opportunity to provide leadership for what was then called the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative. We began in 2001 with the expectation that it would be a relatively short-lived project. Little did we know that this would morph into an ongoing program at The Denver Foundation.

María, how does the Inclusiveness Project serve as a resource for the community?

We offer training tools, guidelines, and workbook components that describe strategies, and the Inclusiveness Project also offers access to an array of individuals—consultants, coaches, and guides—who can provide technical assistance. Another gem is the opportunity for peer exchange and engagement. Executive directors and senior leaders from throughout the nonprofit arena come together and use each other to learn, extrapolating wisdom, and experiences through the sharing of their unique journeys toward inclusiveness.

Dean, what does an inclusive organization look like to you?

An inclusive organization has many wonderful features. And I think that in Denver, particularly, many are working hard to get there. As they approach that goal of becoming more inclusive, it is clear to me that these organizations accomplish their missions with greater power and greater success than in any other fashion. A one-size-fits-all approach, whether it is in fundraising or programmatically, doesn't work. Inclusive organizations pay attention to whom they have on their boards, and to whom and how they hire, and to their clients. And very importantly, they tailor their programs specifically to the needs of those clients, and thus accomplish their missions through that much more focused approach.
Organizations care about INCLUSIVENESS because...

... Business, Mission, Demographics, and Social Equity drive the need for inclusiveness.

Most of us are familiar with the suggestion that being more inclusive is simply the “right thing to do.” It is equally important to recognize that building inclusiveness will:

- Help achieve your organization’s mission;
- Affect your organization’s bottom line;
- Adapt to the changing community in which you operate; and
- Address disparities in society that impact nearly all nonprofits, their work, and their constituents.

The following pages outline each one of these imperatives in detail, providing impetus and opportunity for discussion about the importance of inclusiveness on a variety of fronts and for a variety of reasons.

Definitions

While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project defines Diversity and Inclusiveness in different ways.

Diversity is the face of an organization—who is involved as board, staff, volunteers, donors, and clients.

Inclusiveness describes how people from all backgrounds are involved in the organization, how their perspectives are valued, and how their needs are understood.
INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS have a grasp of:

- How to connect with and serve diverse groups of constituents;
- How to motivate a wider range of people to take action to achieve their mission; and
- How to encourage people from all backgrounds to consider supporting your cause.

Supporting Data

- Research conducted for The Denver Foundation by OMNI Institute shows that inclusiveness is a strategic tool for increasing programmatic effectiveness and community collaboration. The report can be accessed at http://nonprofitinclusiveness.org/learn-more-about-inclusiveness.

- OMNI Institute also found that nonprofit organizations engaged in an inclusiveness initiative report that they now provide more effective client services. Some even report increased success in the areas of public relations and board governance. These are all critical components of advancing an organizational mission.

WE'RE MORE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION WHEN WE'RE WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND ADDRESSING EQUITY ISSUES.
Community Resource Center, Denver

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE PROGRAMS WITH SOCIAL RELEVANCE. YOU CAN'T "DO" SOCIAL RELEVANCE WITHOUT ADDRESSING INCLUSIVENESS.
Curious Theatre, Denver
At the end of 2006, our organization’s financials showed that we were $200K in the red. There were those who thought that inclusiveness work should possibly be put on hold until we corrected the financial outlook. But there were others who thought the work of being inclusive would actually improve our financial situation. We moved ahead on that work and put in place several changes to our organizational effectiveness, including a concentrated focus on Development and Programs, specifically how these two areas needed to come together to further our mission, and at the same time, provide a healthy financial picture. At the end of 2007, our financial picture reflected $190K in the black. Project PAVE, Denver

Supporting Data

• “More diverse workplaces have higher revenues, more customers, larger market shares, and greater relative profits,” according to Cedric Herring, a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, as reported in “Diversity Brings the Dollars,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2009. “Diversity allows companies to think outside the box by bringing previously excluded groups inside the box. Although the mixing of demographics might initially inspire some conflict and inefficiencies, they’re often worth it to get new ideas, better ways of thinking, and more productive practices.”

• Our research indicates that organizations engaging in an inclusiveness initiative feel they have become more effective and more inclusive in their fundraising efforts. Some development staff now write grants and conduct fundraising activities that match the inclusiveness mission and vision of the organization. The report can be accessed at http://nonprofitinalclusiveness.org/learn-more-about-inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness is SMART BUSINESS.

INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS:

• Communicate more effectively with diverse constituent groups and the public
• Better understand changing markets
• Have the potential to tap new donor pools and expand client pools for fees-for-service
• Take advantage of improved problem-solving, increased creativity, and innovation, improved teamwork, and increased flexibility and ability to learn from people at all levels
• Experience less staff turnover
• More effectively attract and retain qualified staff and board members
Having enough time to do all that you need or want to do is always a challenge, but the most important thing is to keep moving forward at the pace that seems right for the organization’s staff and board. As director, I continue to remind myself and my staff that this is a journey, and I take comfort in that, as we move forward slowly but steadfastly. From a nonprofit executive director

To be a healthy, well-rounded, and vital business that provides really good services, an organization has to be willing to look at who it will be potentially interacting with, to find out what they perceive and where they are coming from. From a nonprofit executive director

If we continue to improve ourselves as an inclusive organization, we will be able to work better with our clients, donors, and community. We will be modeling what we think we stand for in terms of being a good community partner. From a nonprofit staff member

Our clients talk about how important our diversity is to them and it has touched the board to know how valuable it is to the clients. From a nonprofit board member

AN INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION:
- Is a learning organization that strives to take into account the different needs and strengths of individuals from diverse backgrounds
- Develops an organizational culture that is welcoming and cooperative
- Has a diverse board and staff
- Develops programs and services based on clients’ stated needs and priorities
- Develops fundraising strategies that recognize that people of color have wealth, wisdom, and commitment
We have found that the single most important thing to do (around inclusiveness) is to do something. If you feel that your organization doesn’t have the time and resources to do a large inclusiveness plan, then start with something smaller. Once you have that first step and you see the results from it, you will be encouraged to move on and do more.

From a government agency:

Our diversity and inclusiveness strategy has strengthened our ability to work well with a range of customers, because we approach them all with a higher level of sensitivity. Diversity and inclusiveness also make us more competitive by increasing our ability to innovate and solve problems. An internal climate of diversity and inclusiveness also strengthens our ability to develop the talent we already have. In an inclusive environment, people of diverse backgrounds feel more empowered to speak up, which creates more opportunities for them to grow and develop. We have found that in a diverse group, where everyone feels comfortable and all ideas are heard, we are more likely to challenge established norms and get the best ideas on the table. From a corporate CEO

Please note: These quotes were collected through various research projects conducted by and with the Inclusiveness Project. Visit nonprofitinclusiveness.org for more stories and testimonials.

- Enacts policies that institutionalize inclusiveness practices
- Creates opportunities for ongoing personal and professional transformation
- Communicates its commitment to inclusiveness through its marketing and outreach activities
- Recognizes that inclusiveness is a process and an approach to doing business, rather than a set goal

These characteristics were articulated by organizations that have gone through in-depth work to build inclusiveness.

For more information on the work of inclusive organizations visit nonprofitinclusiveness.org/inclusiveness-collaborative
INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS:
• Recognize that communities throughout the U.S. are changing rapidly and becoming more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and language
• Understand how the demographic changes in their communities affect their work
• Are more able to project how to shape their programs, services, and outreach to meet the needs of their changing communities
• Are more nimble in responding to the opportunities offered by new audiences, funding partners, and potential sources of clients

Supporting Data
• One in 10 U.S. counties was “majority minority” as of the year 2007.
• Over 50 percent of residents in the City and County of Denver are people of color.
• By 2038, one in four people living in the U.S. will be Latino.
• By 2050, Asian populations in the U.S. will triple.
• By 2050, approximately half of the U.S. population will be people of color.

U.S. Census and Pew Hispanic Center

RAPID DEMOGRAPHIC, CULTURAL, AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES ARE EVIDENT THROUGHOUT OUR COMMUNITY. THE DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE’S FUTURE DEPENDS NOT ONLY ON A SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE TO THIS DIVERSE AND EVER-CHANGING MARKET, BUT ALSO ON OUR ABILITY TO TAP INTO THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND GOODWILL OF OUR VARIED AUDIENCES.
George Sparks, CEO
Denver Museum of Nature and Science

INCLUSIVENESS IS DRIVEN BY DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES.
INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS:

• Acknowledge that disparities persist in educational achievement, health outcomes, and economic stability for diverse populations

• Are able to address how these disparities relate to their mission and work to overcome them

• Recognize that people of color often have a different experience in the workplace, and work to mitigate experiences and perceptions of inequity

Colorado Women’s Agenda’s largest success has been the way we approach our work. We are beginning to see ourselves as an anti-racist women’s organization that advocates for social justice issues through a gender lens, rather than a women’s organization working on an anti-racism initiative or project. We have changed our mission statement to reflect this paradigm shift, and we now constantly question ourselves to make sure that anti-racism is at the forefront of everything we do. Colorado Women’s Agenda

Supporting Data for an EQUITY imperative regarding staff

• 26 percent of people of color believed that people of color must work harder than their white counterparts for their contributions to be recognized, as compared to 3 percent of white people who believed the same thing.

• 19 percent of people of color said that they have witnessed overt discrimination related to race in the workplace, as compared to 4 percent of white people.

• 40 percent of people of color said that they have witnessed subtle discrimination related to race in the workplace, as compared to 19 percent of white people.

(From: “Job Satisfaction ad Race-related Discrimination and Conflict in the Workplace,” Katherine Pease, 2007)

Supporting Data for an EQUITY imperative regarding programs

Health Care Even when they have insurance and are of the same social class, people of color often receive a lower quality of care than do their white counterparts. Alliance for Health Reform

Education The percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are high school dropouts is higher among Hispanics than among Blacks, Whites, and Asian/Pacific Islanders, and higher among Blacks and American Indian/Alaska Natives than among Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders. National Center for Education Statistics

Criminal Justice African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites. Latinos are incarcerated at nearly double the rate of whites. The Sentencing Project

Home Ownership About 51 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander households, 46 percent of Black households, and 45 percent of Hispanic households were homeowners, compared with 74 percent of White non-Hispanic households. U.S. Census Bureau
Lessons Learned from Working on Inclusiveness

by David Miller, President of The Denver Foundation

When I was young, I used to watch my grandmother bake cookies. Many of her recipes, including my favorite (chocolate-dipped vanilla-cream sugar cookies) had dozens of ingredients, dozens of steps, and took many hours to complete. Working on inclusiveness reminds me of being in my grandmother's kitchen. The processes of both baking and inclusiveness work are challenging and enjoyable, but they require patience and perseverance to reap the big rewards.

The Denver Foundation has been promoting and supporting inclusiveness for most of the past decade, both in the nonprofit sector and within our own organization. For us, inclusiveness refers to examining every aspect of a nonprofit organization, including its organizational culture, mission, board, staff, donors, volunteers, and programs.

The demographic changes in our society are profound, ranging from the aging of baby boomers to many states becoming majority minority. Inclusiveness makes good business sense and is a way for organizations to prepare for the future.

When we first began this initiative, one of the business leaders on our board said, “It’s about time! Many businesses have been doing this for years.” Indeed, the business sector is generally way ahead of the nonprofit sector regarding inclusiveness, and with good reason. Here are a few for some lessons I've learned about inclusiveness.

Hire people who are different. When interviewing people for a job, I used to ask what magazines they read regularly or what books they had read most recently. Consciously or subconsciously, I was attracted to those who share my love for reading, particularly those with eclectic tastes. I have come to realize that many people learn in ways other than reading books and magazines. The workplace is richer when we hire people whose skills and experiences complement rather than reinforce ours.

Varied perspectives generally lead to better results. President Lincoln is known for surrounding himself with a Cabinet whose backgrounds and views diverged widely. He listened to and incorporated many different viewpoints before making important decisions. Likewise, we recently conducted a community-wide Listening Campaign that asked hundreds of nonprofit leaders from every corner of the sector for their feedback on the needs of the community, the Foundation’s work, and our grantmaking priorities. In making decisions that affect the community, we value the perspectives of each individual.

The more we learn about inclusiveness, the more we realize we have yet to learn. Working on inclusiveness is like baking cookies for decades. It is a long, rewarding process that requires considerable patience, and it is well worth the effort. Authentic, respectful relationships in personal, professional, and community life aren't easy, but they are tremendously meaningful.

Our similarities as human beings far outweigh our differences. All of us have the same basic needs and desires. We all want food, clothing, shelter, a job, our health, and a better life for our children. We are all in the same boat—planet earth. We are all in this together.
We hope this publication has demonstrated the value of doing inclusiveness work and has motivated you to be part of doing inclusiveness work at your organization. There is no “right time” or “perfect first step” in doing inclusiveness work. Rather, it is critical to start now by answering the question for your organization: “Why is Inclusiveness Important?”

Visit www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org to:
• Learn about doing inclusiveness work—the practical details and the inspirational stories.
• Find content and worksheets to assist your organization in engaging in inclusiveness work.
• Obtain copies of The Denver Foundation’s research reports.
• Check Related Links for more research on racial disparities for “making your case for doing inclusiveness work.”
• Connect with other organizations doing inclusiveness work.
• Share your experiences.
• Connect to a world of research, best practices, and support for your inclusiveness work.

A concerted, organized effort is much more effective than disconnected short-term activities. You will find many of the resources you need for engaging in an inclusiveness initiative at www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org.

CAUTION: STUDIES SHOW THAT A COLOR-BLIND APPROACH IS INEFFECTIVE

Many people believe that the most important contribution they personally can make in creating a more inclusive culture is to be “color-blind.” The implication is that an individual’s race and/or cultural background is irrelevant, and that regarding staffing, people’s contributions should be evaluated solely on how well they can “do the job,” and regarding programming, one-size-fits-all and we treat everybody the same.

While it sounds like a color-blind approach would be compassionate and would value all people equally, it actually doesn’t ... because in a color-blind approach, the different needs, assets, and perspectives of people are disregarded: they are “unseen.”

A recent study, “Is Multiculturalism or Color Blindness Better for Minorities?” (Plaut, Thomas, and Goren, Psychological Science), found that the more color-blind a workplace purported to be, the more racial bias employees experienced. Organizations with a more multicultural approach are more productive and profitable.
HISTORY of The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project

BACK IN 2000 AND 2001, OUR PROGRAM OFFICERS WERE COMING BACK FROM SITE VISITS WITH A COMMON REFRAIN: ORGANIZATIONS WANTED TO BE MORE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE, BUT THEY DIDN’T KNOW HOW. Rich Lopez, 2008 chair of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees

The Inclusiveness Project’s Focus on Race and Ethnicity

While all forms of inclusiveness are essential, The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project focuses on race and ethnicity. Based on community input, The Foundation made this choice in order to facilitate a deeper understanding for itself and others about how race relations and demographic shifts specifically impact nonprofit organizations.

Although focused on race and ethnicity, much of the work and information presented by The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project can be transferred to help organizations become inclusive of other traditionally marginalized groups.

Through its conversations with leaders in Metro Denver’s nonprofit sector, The Denver Foundation discovered a widespread interest in developing a deeper understanding of how diverse voices and experiences enhance and expand the work of nonprofits.

In response, The Denver Foundation's Board of Trustees established the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative in 2001. Six years later, the Trustees made a decision they had made only once before—to turn a time-limited initiative into an ongoing program. Similar to Strengthening Neighborhoods before it, the Expanding Nonprofit Inclusiveness Initiative had unearthed an urgent need in the community for a long-term, committed focus on an issue and strategy. Thus, the Inclusiveness Project was established with dedicated funding to sustain the program over time.

Since 2001, The Denver Foundation has commissioned a number of research projects in order to learn more about the needs of organizations seeking to become more inclusive. The research, in turn, informed the development of a number of practical tools to support organizations in this work. Those tools are compiled and accessible through a robust website (www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org).

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