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Starting a Board Diversity Assessment: Conversation Starter

Overview:

Many organizations want to advance their diversity efforts but aren't sure where to begin or what analogs to use. This session will use the four basic pillars of diversity areas corporate practitioners assess and how they can be applied to museums and non-profits. Attendees will be able to relate as consumers and/or advocates and see how they can begin efforts in their own museums to address these diversity benchmarks. You need an initial baseline and to "know what you don't know", then prioritize into your annual and/or strategic plans. Particular focus will be included towards expanding diversity on boards and volunteer committees.

Foreword:

Thank you for your interest in this session!

I hope we can create a safe, open space to review these issues of diversity and inclusion, where all questions and perspectives are welcome for consideration.

My goal is to create a balance of lecture, audience interjections, and group discussion where everyone can walk away with something they can use back at their work and organizations. It would be great if you also meet some new contacts you can use in the future when questions come up.

As you can see, I believe in simple straightforward content and "one-pagers" (as shown below).

Please feel free to bring some experiences, examples and questions we can all consider to enrich the discussion!

FOUR AREAS OF ASSESSMENT

INTERNAL to your organization's operations

- What are the demographics of your board, leadership, committees, staff, and volunteers?
- How are you recruiting, developing, and creating an inclusive culture?
- Do you have employee or affinity groups, committees or advisory councils?

EXTERNAL view of how your organization looks and acts

- What are the “optics” of your website, collateral materials, marketing/outreach, recruiting, fundraising, and communication channels?
- Who are the people representing the museum or speaking at the museum, and at what types of events?
- What programs, celebrations, or visitor benefits target diverse audiences? (What do you track?)
- With what targeted organizations, associations, etc., do you and your staff belong and participate?

PHILANTHROPIC efforts and community

- What programs/events target specific audiences and facilitate their inclusion? How do you partner with these communities to provide a benefit to their needs?
- How are any scholarships, fellowships, internships and discounts/fees structured? In-kind support?
- How can corporate, community and museum partnerships be structured?

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY: leveraging your purchasing power

- Are you buying products and services from targeted companies, consultants or even other nonprofits?
- What diversity metrics do you request in an RFP response or include in your service requirements?

REFLECTIONS on Board Diversity

The critical success factor for any program in an organization starts at the top, and this is especially true of diversity and inclusion efforts. But what if your board leadership isn't quite where you want it to be? This is not a plug-and-play action but requires reviewing and leveraging your overall environment if long term success is the goal.

WHY do you need to do this?

- Beyond “doing the right thing” and “doing things right”
- Documented business case and ROI for diverse teams (*Forbes, HBR, consulting and recruiting top 4*)
- Demographic population, labor force, customer and donor base trends (*Pew Research and others*)
- Survival in light of global inertia

WHO do you consider

- Community “usual suspects”?
- Solving “world hunger” or your museum’s needs?
- Token representatives or functional subject matter experts
- Perceived level of acculturation versus community ties
- Track record as change agent

WHERE are they now

- Corporate employee affinity groups
- Diverse professional industry/field/community organizations
- Government advisory councils
- Fraternities, sororities, alumni societies, leadership development programs
- In other cultural organizations

WHAT do you need to consider

- Are your Chair, Director and “silent stakeholder” on the same page?
- What is your onboarding and support process?
- Is this a “safe” sandbox

HOW do you start to engage, foster and leverage

- Ad hoc needs, advisory panels, volunteer programs
- Heritage or specialty day/month events
- Relationships and trust earned over time
- Leverage involvement in their communities