Board Meeting Structure/Process
The Board has expressed a commitment to ensuring that a broad range of perspectives and voices are included in their meetings, discussions, and decision-making, yet team members have identified some challenges that occasionally prevent some discussions from being fully participatory. The following details some potential strategies for the Board to consider, which will be input into an online survey for individuals to share feedback on.

Meeting Structure
How meetings are designed and even physically set-up can influence the tenor and progression of a discussion. Challenges and strategies noted by Board and staff include:

1. Ensuring as many in-person meetings as possible and reducing phone participation
2. Rearranging tables and chairs so that there is not an inner and outer circle and so that Board members don’t feel like they are ‘facing off’ against one another
3. Creating an expectation that screens (e.g. computers and phones) are only to be used for limited and relevant purposes like note-taking and emergencies

Facilitation
The meeting/discussion facilitator plays a critical role in shaping conversation and decision-making. A facilitator must consider both the content of a conversation (what is discussed) as well as the group process (who speaks, for how long, when to change course, etc.). Facilitation strategies for enhancing meeting inclusivity include:

1. Create a set of ground rules or group expectations about how discussions will be managed. This can include broad principles (i.e. Community Agreements, sample included at page 62 of the Toolkit) as well as specific operating rules for discussion, such as a defined role description for the Board Chair or whomever is overseeing discussion.

2. Identify opportunities for as many participants as possible to take an active role in presenting, facilitating, and priority-setting. For example:
   a. Invite Committee/work group participants report out on their own work and facilitate discussion for their portions of the agenda.
   b. Review and limit Executive Committee functions to specific tasks.
   c. Engage Board and staff in creating meeting agendas. For instance, adding a call for “New Business” items at the end of Board meetings and/or soliciting possible meeting agenda items from everyone that can then inform the Chair’s/Executive Committee’s development of the meeting agenda.
d. Utilize multiple learning methods (e.g. small group discussion, pairs, individual reflection, etc.) to draw out participation in discussion from those less comfortable speaking in a large group setting.

3. Engage in progressive “stacking” and “tracking” techniques. Stacking is keeping a speaking order when multiple people have something to say; tracking helps keep track of different lines of thought and discussion happening at once.
   a. Progressive stacking means equitably trying to decide about who speaks when. For example, if someone has already spoken, they are placed at the ‘back of the line’ the next time around and those who have not yet spoken will go first. Going further, some facilitators monitor who typically holds power in a room and will engage those with the least power (which could be status or even social identity) first.
   b. Careful tracking of conversation threads can also ensure that discussion is not dominated by one strong opinion and that participants’ contributions are recognized. For instance, if the group is stuck on an issue, a facilitator might move that issue to a parking lot for revisiting at another time. When multiple viewpoints or strategies are being raised, the facilitator might help document and rephrase each item before closing discussion to ensure that all ideas and perspectives are captured.

4. Discussing whether to empower one, a few, or all participants to play a role in process facilitation. For instance, can the group hold each other accountable by setting an expectation that any participant can raise an issue (“E.g. Arthur, if you could wait a moment I’d love to hear what Stella has to say.”) or do you want to the main facilitator to own those responsibilities?

**Tracking & Scanning Group Dynamics**

Whether a facilitator or participant, any team member can actively observe group dynamics and consider intervening if exclusionary behaviors emerge. The following is a sample list of questions to consider when participating in a meeting or group conversation. By taking note of these dynamics you can better evaluate whether challenges are isolated incidents or repeated patterns:

1. What are the social identities represented in this group? Which identities are present? Which are missing?
2. Who is talking? (Who talks first? Who initiates topics? Who talks the most?)
3. Who is quiet?
4. What are participants’ nonverbal reactions?
5. Whose ideas get considered, and whose ideas don’t get much discussion?
6. Who interrupts others? Who gets interrupted?
7. Who do people look at when they are talking?
8. Who engages in side conversations?
9. Who brings up issues around diversity and inclusion?
10. If you notice interpersonal dynamics that are not inclusive, who intervenes?

Additional dynamics to ‘scan’ for and suggestions for more productive dialogue and intervention are included in the resources linked below.

**Suggested Next Steps:**

1. Board shares feedback about strategies they are most interested in incorporating into future meetings.
2. Board discusses ‘top ranked’ strategies at an upcoming meeting.

**Resources:**

1. Dr. Kathy Obear [Organizational Change Handbook](#), pages 11-15