



Published on National Council of Nonprofits (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org>)

Original URL: <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/articles/strengthening-your-nonprofit-through-more-equitable-and-inclusive-hiring-practices>

Strengthening your nonprofit through more equitable and inclusive hiring practices

By: Rick Cohen

Equitable and inclusive hiring is not just a moral imperative; it's a strategic effort that strengthens your organization by bringing varied perspectives, experiences, and skills to your nonprofit. Simple changes to your hiring processes can help make your team more diverse—and help fill job vacancies in this era of significant workforce shortages in our sector. Even if your nonprofit is located in a state with recent policies that discourage or even ban overt efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), there are easy steps your nonprofit can take to make your hiring practices more equitable and inclusive.

Remove barriers



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If your organization has struggled in the past to attract a diverse pool of candidates, the first place to start is asking if you are setting up unintended barriers. For example, if you list an educational requirement on your job postings, is it truly necessary? In some cases, the answer will be yes. In others, lived experience or on-the-job experience can be even more valuable than a college degree. Review the items you list as requirements closely to see what needs to be required and what doesn't. Don't have highly-qualified potential applicants move on to the next job post because yours included a barrier that didn't need to be there.

Develop inclusive job descriptions

Avoiding gendered language, emphasizing your organization's commitment to diversity, and clearly stating the organization's values can signal to potential applicants that the nonprofit is dedicated to equitable practices.

Lead with your values

We covered this in [another article in this series](#), but it bears repeating here: People aren't just looking for a job, they are looking for a place to work that is authentic and values them. As we have experienced first-hand here at NCN, you get a broader applicant pool when people can get a feel for your organization from the job post and the information your job post links to.

Expand your networks

You can't go wrong by posting your job in common places like Monster, Idealist, or the [NCN Nonprofit Career Center](#). But that's not enough if you are seeking to expand the diversity of your pool of applicants, so consider posting your job on more specialized boards. Check to see if your [local state association of nonprofits](#) has its own job board. Also, look for additional job boards focused on diverse candidates, such as [AbilityLinks](#), the [Association of Latino Professionals for America](#), and [Native People's Recruit](#), to name a few.

Examine your processes for unconscious biases

Unconscious biases can creep into the recruitment process at various stages. Among the tactics you can use to try to minimize these are [blind resume reviews](#) and standardized interview questions. It is also important to train staff involved in the hiring process on recognizing and mitigating biases.

Create a culture of inclusion

Equitable hiring doesn't end once a candidate is hired; it extends to the workplace culture. Honoring your organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion is correct on its own, plus it strengthens retention when staff members see your nonprofit living its professed values. Nonprofits should foster an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and heard. Make sure you are also providing equal access to professional development opportunities, as well as advancement opportunities within the organization.

Review progress and make adjustments

The potential changes listed above aren't an end point for creating inclusive processes. Just as your organization likely looks back after the giving season to assess what worked and what didn't in your year-end giving campaign, you also need to look back at the end of a hiring process. What worked? What didn't? What can you adjust for the next job search to be even better? Good practices evolve over time and improvement is always possible.

Additional resources

- [Creative Approaches to the Nonprofit Workforce Shortage Crisis](#) (Series from the National Council of Nonprofits)
 - [Inclusive Hiring Toolkit](#) (Idealist)
 - [Ten Ways to Improve Equity & Increase the Effectiveness of Your Hiring Process](#) (Blue Avocado)
 - [A Guide to Equitable Practices in Foundation Hiring](#) (First Nations Development Institute)
 - [6 Best Practices for Creating an Inclusive and Equitable Interview Process](#) (Harvard Business School)
 - [Notice, Name, Navigate](#) (Team Dynamics)
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