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**Association of Advancement
Services Professionals**

Fueling nonprofits. Advancing careers.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) for Advancement Services

BEST PRACTICES FOR TODAY'S SUCCESS

Editor: Vered Siegel, CFRE

Introduction

As chair of the **DEI in Advancement Data Task Force**, I want to introduce you to our work and invite you in. Our task force has spent the past year documenting, writing, and iterating on recommendations for you on the topic of DEI in advancement data. One might wonder why we are wading in on this topic given the many voices already in the sector.

After all, the topic of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is everywhere you look, and most people have opinions on it. I'm inspired by the words of Tracy M. Sweet, who helped create guidelines for Phillips Academy (Andover, MA) on making statements about current events. With gratitude for her framework, I share these questions about whether we choose to join the public discourse:

> **>** Is the matter relevant to our field or our members?
> **>** Does it directly affect our members?
> **>** Is the aasp positioned to advance the conversation? Who benefits from understanding the association's viewpoint?

These questions guided our decision to form our task force and write this document.

The answer we can give you is that our profession – Advancement Services – owns and is responsible for biographical constituent data on an Advancement team. No matter your opinions on DEI, the fact is that our constituents and their identities are our responsibility as Advancement Services practitioners, and we are charged with responsible acquisition, storage, and usage of their biographical data, whether we understand it or not. Our work is intrinsically linked to the promotion of human dignity, *who someone is*, as described by the data we find, hold, and use. Our foray into documenting current practices and guidelines is wholly apolitical and consistent with our values as an organization.

These recommendations capture a moment in time, and may change in the future. We welcome your feedback.

I'd like to thank the aasp Board of Directors, the members who have joined us in meetings, discussions, and brainstorming, and especially the members of the **DEI in Advancement Data Task Force**, whose names are listed by content area.

As I'm apt to say, when it comes to engaging with DEI content and practice, you can choose to get on the bus or you can choose to get dragged behind the bus, but the bus is moving. We hope you'll join us on the bus; we're saving a seat for you.

Vered Siegel

Vered Siegel, CFRE
Chair, 2023 DEI in Advancement Data Task Force

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Acknowledgements

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Forward

I t is with a profound sense of pride and a deep feeling of responsibility that I contemplate this document, a testament to aasp's ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). We are committed not just to the idea of DEI but to the full practical knowledge and everyday realities of how to work thorough DEI complexities.

This project started with ideas from a few folks from various associations talking about how to manage DEI data and what were the real best practices. Terry Callaghan, board member of aasp, pulled me into a conversation with this group as the Director of DEI & Ethics for aasp. It was clear from the start that we were going to need volunteers ready to roll up their sleeves, answer hard questions, and challenge the status quo. I recruited Vered Siegel, CFRE and she was more than ready for this task. Vered has often said to me that she sees her role in the DEI space as a co-conspirator, using her skills to challenge the status quo.

After several fits and starts working with other associations, we had the idea that aasp could convene a special task force of willing volunteers who were up to the challenge and had a passion for this topic. In January of 2022, aasp officially formed the task force and the hard work behind this wonderful document began. The task force was broken into three sub-categories: data acquisition, data storage, and data usage. Within these pages, the reader will learn data points to consider, rational for collecting DEI data, best practices for sourcing, storing and maintaining DEI data and much more.

I commend the task force chair and committee co-chairs for their hard work pulling together this document with their respective committees and convening together to create this finalized work. For the better part of a year, the **DEI in Advancement Data Task Force** has worked on this document. The team represents a wide spectrum of institutions, and various backgrounds and they have worked diligently to bring you a comprehensive document.

DEI data and subject matter is ever evolving and we, the aasp DEI & Ethics committee, vow to stay on topic in our ever changing culture and will continue to address issues that are important to our constituency.

Sincerely,

Necie Liggeons

Necie Liggeons
Director of DEI & Ethics

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Letter from the President

As the President of aasp, I am pleased to share with you an important and transformative artifact that has been developed within our organization. Over the past year, a task force has been dedicated to crafting a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Best Practices document that reflects our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable community for each of our member organizations.

At aasp, we recognize the immense value that diversity brings to our organization as well as to each of your organizations and the communities they serve. Our commitment to inclusivity and equity is not only a reflection of our core values, but also an acknowledgment of the diverse perspectives, experiences, and talents that make us stronger as a collective force for positive change.

I am thrilled to introduce our new DEI Best Practices, which will serve as a guiding framework for not only aasp's practices and culture, but also for the practices and culture of each of our member organizations. These Best Practices underscore our high regard for all our constituents, regardless of their background, so that they feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their unique skills and perspectives. It is a testament to our unwavering belief in the power of diversity to drive innovation and creativity.

We believe that these Best Practices are not just a document, but a living commitment that will guide our actions and decisions. We invite you to join us in embracing these practices and contributing to the realization of a more inclusive and equitable future.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership. We look forward to making strides together as we work towards a more just and equitable society.

Sincerely,

Jessica LaBorde
President, aasp

Table of Contents

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DEI Data Acquisition

Rationale and methodology

Alignment with mission, vision, and values

Collecting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) data in the realms of fundraising and advancement should be an integral part of any nonprofit organization's mission, vision, and values.

This data fulfills multiple objectives:

> It evaluates the success of current fundraising endeavors within diverse segments of the donor base

> It identifies opportunities for increasing inclusivity and equity in outreach and engagement efforts

By understanding the demographics and lived experiences of constituents and stakeholders, organizations are better positioned to make data informed decisions that fully resonate with the communities they serve.

Defining purpose and goals

Before initiating the process of DEI data collection, it is essential to clearly define its purpose and objectives. The goals might include, but are not limited to:

> Enhancing community engagement

> Identifying and addressing gaps in fundraising outreach

> Promoting a culture of inclusivity within the organization

> Supporting equitable distribution of resources

By defining these aims, data collection strategies can be designed to be as relevant and effective as possible, ensuring that the outcomes and reports generated provide actionable insights.

Transparency and privacy

Trust is a cornerstone of any successful data collection initiative. To build and maintain this trust, it is advisable that organizations are transparent about why they are collecting DEI data and how it will be used.

It is recommended that organizations collecting DEI data:

> Clearly communicate the purpose and goals of the data collection to all participants

> Explain the measures in place to protect data security and confidentiality

> Limit the data collected to only what is necessary to achieve the defined objectives

Implementing best practices

To ensure that DEI data collection practices are ethical and fall within the constraints of any organizational DEI policy frameworks, consider the following strategies:

> Conduct periodic DEI training and refresher sessions for staff responsible for data collection and analysis

> Consult with external DEI experts to validate DEI data collection methods

> Regularly review and update DEI data collection procedures to ensure they remain effective and aligned with organizational mission and values

> Establish a DEI Data Governance Committee to periodically assess the availability, usability, integrity, and ethical considerations behind any DEI data collection practices at the organization

By taking these steps, non-profit organizations will be able to create a DEI data collection process that serves broader organizational goals while also respecting and uplifting the diverse communities they serve.

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Data points to consider tracking

Tracking diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) data points in a database is an essential practice for organizations committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected world, it is imperative to measure, analyze, and act upon data that reflects the composition of the workforce, as well as the degree to which employees from all backgrounds are provided with equal opportunities and treated fairly. Understanding the importance of DEI data tracking, this introduction explores the methods, tools, and principles that underpin the effective collection and management of such data, highlighting its critical role in promoting a workplace culture that values diversity and works towards achieving true equity and inclusion. In this digital age, harnessing the power of data-driven insights is key to building a stronger, more inclusive, and socially responsible organization.

Tracking DEI data points in a database can help organizations monitor their progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability in their efforts. Here are some important DEI data points to consider tracking:

Demographic information
> Gender identity
> Race & Ethnicity
> Age
> Sexual orientation
> Ability status
> Veteran status
> Religious beliefs
> National origin
> Language proficiency
> Educational background
> Intersectionality
> Cultural/Heritage affiliation
> Marital status

Hiring and recruitment
> Demographics of applicants, interviewees, and hires
> Source of applicants (e.g., job boards, referrals)
> Time-to-fill positions for different groups
> Applicant-to-interview ratio by demographics

Promotions and advancements
> Demographics of employees considered for promotions
> Promotions and advancement rates by demographic groups
> Average time to promotion for different groups

Pay equity
> Compensation by job role and demographic group
> Gender and ethnicity pay gaps
> Bonuses and incentives by demographic group

Representation
> Workforce demographics compared to national/regional demographics
> Representation in leadership and decision-making roles
> Representation in different departments and teams

Retention and turnover
> Turnover rates by demographic group
> Reasons for leaving (exit interviews, surveys)
> Retention rates based on different demographics

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Employee satisfaction and engagement

> Survey data on workplace satisfaction by demographic group

> Participation rates in company-wide activities

> Inclusion and belonging sentiment in surveys

Training and development

> Participation in training programs by demographic group

> Skill development opportunities accessed by different groups

> Feedback on the effectiveness of training programs

Mentorship and sponsorship

> Participation in mentorship programs by demographic group

> Representation in sponsorship relationships

> Longevity and success of mentorship/sponsorship relationships

Workplace environment

> Diversity of teams and projects

> Inclusion in decision-making processes

> Incidents of discrimination, harassment, or bias reported

Supplier and vendor diversity

> Demographics of suppliers and vendors

> Spend with diverse-owned businesses

> Efforts to promote supplier diversity

Community engagement

> Contributions to local communities and social causes

> Partnerships with diverse organizations

> Employee involvement in community programs

Perceptions of DEI efforts

> Employee feedback on the organization's DEI initiatives

> Perception of progress in creating an inclusive workplace

> Suggestions for improvement

What to avoid when ethically collecting DEI data

Conducting ethical Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) data collection is critical to building trust and promoting a more inclusive workplace. To ensure that DEI data collection is ethical, there are several pitfalls and potential issues to avoid:

> Involuntary or Mandatory Disclosure
> Stigmatization
> Overcollection
> Data Misuse
> Lack of Transparency
> Bias in Data Analysis
> Lack of Continual Assessment
> Tokenization
> Ignoring Intersectionality

To navigate the complexities of DEI data collection, it's essential to have clear policies and procedures, maintain transparency, and regularly assess and adapt your DEI initiatives. This will help ensure that your organization uses DEI data to drive positive change and create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all employees.

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Best Practices for sourcing, storing, and maintaining DEI data on nonprofit fundraising prospects

I. Introduction

The Advancement Services community, the backbone of the nonprofit sector, plays a pivotal role in ensuring that fundraising efforts align with the principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). As the guardians of data, we bear the responsibility to source, store, and maintain this data with utmost precision, sensitivity, and respect. This guide offers industry best practices to ensure that DEI data remains accurate, safe, and reflective of our commitments to these principles.

II. Sourcing DEI data

Database administrators should be sure to code DEI data according to how it was sourced and the purpose for which it will be used. Ask yourself and your team: What specifically will it be used for? For example, is the information collected an interest code related to social media use (a proxy for identity), data collected through a third-party vendor, or is it a self-disclosed label collected through a survey? In addition to the DEI data or interest code itself, the database should incorporate a method or field to identify the source of the information collected.

Self-Identification: Always prioritize the principle that individuals should self-identify their DEI data. Unsolicited profiling or making assumptions can lead to inaccuracies and mistrust.

    A. Surveys and Forms: When collecting data, use surveys or forms that allow individuals to self-identify across a spectrum of categories. Ensure that there is an option for "prefer not to say" or "other."

    B. Training: Train your staff on the importance of not making assumptions and the correct ways to gather self-identified information.

Using Proxies or Interest Codes: Information about a donor's interests may be collected which is a proxy for identity. For example, you may collect data on a donor who is a member of a social media group related to an identity, or who is a board member or volunteer at an organization related to an identity. These interest codes should not be conflated with self-identified DEI data. The database should be designed to clearly delineate self-identified DEI data from interest codes, through having separate fields for each.

Use Verified Third-Party Vendors: If you need to supplement your data, ensure the vendors stand by the accuracy and ethical collection of their information.

Transparency: Inform donors and prospects about the reasons for collecting DEI data, how it will be used, and the steps taken to protect their privacy.

III. Maintaining DEI data

DEI data should be handled as sensitive personal data. DEI data may change over time as both people's personal identities change and understanding of DEI categories continues to evolve.

Regular Audits:

    A. Data Accuracy: Regularly verify the accuracy of DEI data. Make it easy for individuals to update their details or preferences.

    B. Security Measures: Regularly review and update security protocols, ensuring they remain up to date with technological advancements and potential threats.

    C. Stamps: The data infrastructure should include the ability to identify when the DEI data or interests codes were last updated, as DEI data may change over time.

Anonymization: When using DEI data for reporting or analytics, ensure data is aggregated or anonymized to prevent identification of individual donors.

Feedback Loop: Establish mechanisms for donors and prospects to provide feedback or raise concerns about their DEI data handling.

Continuous Training:

A. Staff Training: Provide regular training to staff on the importance of DEI, handling sensitive data, and any software or systems in use.

B. Stay Updated: As DEI considerations evolve, so should your practices. Engage with industry forums, webinars, and trainings to stay informed.

IV. Ethical considerations with artificial intelligence

As a rapidly evolving tool, AI provides database administrators with many potential opportunities but also challenges and risk. When using AI in relation to DEI data it is important to be careful and attentive.

Informed AI Usage: Understand that while AI can process vast amounts of data, it's not infallible. AI models, if not trained on diverse data, can inherit biases present in the data they were trained on.

A. Bias Checks: Regularly evaluate AI algorithms for biases. This is especially pertinent when using AI to enhance DEI efforts.

B. Transparency: When utilizing AI-driven insights, be open about the algorithms used, the source of the data, and the potential limitations of these insights.

Managerial Expectations: Ensure that managerial teams understand the limitations of AI.

A. Education: Educate management about the realities of AI, emphasizing that while it can provide vast insights, it cannot conjure information from thin air or beyond its training.

B. Balancing AI and Human Judgement: Always use AI as a tool to aid human judgement, not replace it. Especially with sensitive topics like DEI, human discretion and ethics should take precedence.

V. Conclusion

The conscientious handling of DEI data goes beyond mere compliance. It's an embodiment of the principles of respect, integrity, and fairness that underlie diversity, equity, and inclusion. As stewards of this information, the Advancement Services community is entrusted with upholding these values in every facet of our work.

Development/Advancement staff responsibilities

It is important for development staff to first and foremost champion and be committed to DEI in our industry. Be the voice to help others understand and acknowledge the importance and role of DEI data in philanthropy. Specific responsibilities can vary based on role, and the organization's size and structure. Additionally, this project cannot be siloed and the responsibility of the "data people" only. Engaging stakeholders in the process will garner buy-in across the organization and create a more positive and effective dialogue/exchange. Be transparent with stakeholders and constituents regarding the reasons why and how the data will be used.

Understand and be knowledgeable about a myriad of topics across the spectrum of data layered with a DEI lens. Create and formalize a data management plan with input from key staff from across the organization/department. Seek and provide opportunities for input and feedback from fundraisers.

Approach the task of collecting DEI from the viewpoint of wanting to know more and are we ready as an organization/team. Be open and committed to change. Seek input to ask and answer the tough questions. Today, DEI is part of many organizational strategic initiatives and when woven into the core of an organization/department/division will make the project successful.

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Things to consider are:

> What and why are we collecting this data

> Implications of privacy and confidentiality

> How are we acquiring this data?

> What are the insights we hope to glean?

Providing training to frontline fundraisers, staff, and

volunteers on ethical data collection practices, obtaining informed consent from those who will be tracked in the database ensures responsible and respectful data collection. The training should include a comprehensive overview of data usage, privacy, and security.

Routinely updating constituent data

Maintaining accurate and up-to-date DEI data is essential for several reasons. It allows an organization to:

> Create more inclusive outreach and engagement strategies

> Ensure marketing communications are respectful of individual identities and preferences

> Build stronger, more meaningful relationships with constituents

Offering multiple ways for constituents to update their DEI data ensures that you reach a broader audience. These methods include:

> Online forms are a quick and convenient way for constituents to update their information at any time, and on their own schedule, making it a hassle-free experience.

> Surveys enable more in-depth data collection, including questions that prompt constituents to provide additional context, and allow organizations to gain a deeper understanding of individual identities and preferences, leading to more personalized interactions with constituents.

> Personal interactions recorded as "Notes" and "Actions" in the fundraising CRM demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and can foster stronger donor relationships, helping to build trust with the communities served by the organization.

DEI data is dynamic, and individual identities and preferences can change over time. Advancement Services departments must also anticipate and adapt to changing language and terminology to ensure that their database remains sensitive to constituents' identities. To accommodate these changes, organizations should ensure that their "database of record" is also agile and flexible. It is recommended that organizations:

> Configure CRMs to allow for the addition or modification of new DEI categories and data tables as needed.

> Use custom fields that can be added or edited to capture evolving data points.

> Create a system for tagging constituents based on DEI attributes to help segment the pool for targeted outreach campaigns with groups based on specific demographic categories, preferences, or identities.

To maintain data accuracy and completeness, implement regular audits and quality assurance measures. Periodically review the data to identify and rectify any inaccuracies and develop a schedule for data cleaning and maintenance to ensure the information remains reliable.

Routinely updating DEI data is not just a one-time task; it's an ongoing commitment to inclusivity and can help advancement teams maintain a more inclusive and responsive approach as they build a base of support, while respecting the evolving identities and preferences of constituents.

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Ethical considerations and security concerns in DEI data collection

Introduction

Sharing personal information with institutions requires the trust of constituents, and institutions need to earn that trust. Some organizations have histories of harm and exclusion, and there is a lack of trust with specific affinity groups, making constituents disinclined to share information about themselves. At the point of the request, you have an opportunity to clearly communicate your commitment to equity and inclusion, and to share how collecting affinity information will contribute to your goal of welcome and belonging.

Requesting affinity and demographic data from constituents in and of itself can be one step towards earning trust; requesting the data may demonstrate that the institution recognizes specific affinities are an important part of the broader constituent base, and it shows that the organization cares about its relationships with those groups and individuals. However, requesting and acquiring the information is only one step. What you do with that information once it is acquired is important, so have a plan for what you will do with the information you acquire.

1. Transparency, confidentiality, and data security

Constituents will be more comfortable providing information if you explain how you will use it, how they can benefit from it, and how you will protect the data that they provide. Transparency will help earn trust.

> **Example 1:** "*The following demographic questions are intended to assess how members of various communities are participating in our programming. The responses, which will be kept fully confidential, will help us make decisions about our outreach, engagement and programming efforts to ensure we are effectively serving our diverse membership.*"

> **Example 2:** *"The primary purposes of the DEI survey is to collect more detailed information*

about who we are as a community and exploring how identity and affinity shape the experiences of our community members."

Once you obtain the information, institutions must be ready with a plan of what to do with that information. If you don't have a plan, you may risk making missteps that will create further distrust. For example, if you are requesting pronouns, gender identity, and names of gender non-conforming constituents, those constituents will have the expectation that they will be addressed by their correct name and gender. At an educational institution, the alumni database may be maintained separately from the database of the registrar's office; make sure you have a plan to share this information across the institution to ensure that constituents will not be deadnamed[1] or misgendered.

Consider carefully who in your organization will have access to the data when granting end user rights. Only grant access to the data to individuals who need it to do their job.

2. Self-identification and self-disclosure

Self-identification and disclosure of demographic data is the only way to ensure that we honor each individual as they see themselves. It is a show of autonomy, promoting inclusivity and fairness throughout the organization. This will demonstrate that your institution makes no assumptions about constituents' identity.

If you choose to use proxies as a way to collect DEI information, keep in mind that this method is not a way to confirm how someone identifies. For example, you may find through public sources that a constituent is a member of a local NAACP chapter; from this alone, you cannot assume anything about their ethnicity. Instead, consider using interest codes in your database to capture this data. With this example, you can codify that the constituent has an interest in civil rights, rather than assuming this defines their identity.

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3. Individual choice and consent

There are many reasons why individuals may choose not to disclose their personal information with you, and it's important to respect that choice, and not make any assumptions about their choices. In some cases, the choice of whether or not to disclose information may be a question of personal safety. For example, in the current cultural climate, LGBTQIA+ constituents may live in regions where their civil rights are under attack, and therefore they may not feel safe disclosing their identity anywhere. Additionally, when constituents choose not to disclose personal information, it is important that we do not assume or infer anything about their identity.

4. Opt-in/Opt-out

It is important to give constituents the choice to opt in or opt out on surveys that request personal information. Do not require a response for any question on a demographic survey, and communicate clearly that their answers are not required for all questions.

> **Example 1:** *"We only collect personal information when you voluntarily provide it. This may include ethnicity, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We acknowledge that personal information is sensitive; we are grateful for what you choose to share with us, and we respect your decision if you choose not to do so."*

When designing surveys, consider offering respondents the flexibility of not answering every question. This can be achieved by clearly marking certain questions as optional, or by providing an opt-out option, such as adding a response choice labeled "Prefer not to answer."

5. Track how the DEI data was sourced

Investigating the source of data allows organizations to assess the reliability and accuracy of existing data and identify any potential biases or gaps in knowledge.

6. Be respectful of hesitation due to past trauma

Some constituents may have experienced harm that resulted from past institutional policies. This history may make constituents feel distrust for the institution overall, and may influence their decision of whether or not to share such personal information. The act of requesting the information may show that the institution is taking steps to be more equitable and inclusive, but reparations for past harms may take more time and effort.

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DEI Data Storage

Purpose

Just because you can, does it mean you should?

Collecting DEI data is going to happen for a variety of reasons, but it should not always be stored permanently. To ensure safekeeping: ask a series of questions to ensure that maintaining the data in your CRM is appropriate, can be handled safely, and will be stored for the right amount of time.

Each section is broken down into the roles and responsibilities for the people involved, the recommended process, and how technology can support DEI storage.

Questions for consideration

Each organization should consider outlining the role of the People, the necessary Processes, and the Technology needed.

> **Why do you need this data?**

> **Where did the data come from?**

> **Where will this data live?**

> **How long will you keep the data?**

> **How will you delete the data?**

> **Do you have to change the way you work with vendors?**

Why do you need this data?

Data sometimes comes to Advancement Services with good intentions. Storing information can be done - but *should* it?

Business needs & business changes

What are best practices for inputting your data?

Consider the needs of your institution ten years in advance, and use common words instead of acronyms. Industry-specific terms for data that is accessible to inter-level and inter-department staff members is ideal.

People

Once it is determined that the DEI data furthers your organization's mission, vision, and values, or it improves your relationship with your constituent base, the data fits your business needs. Establish data governance roles outlining who will maintain, update, and implement data governances specific to DEI data. This includes the roles and responsibilities for when business needs change.

Process

Determine whether the Advancement Office has the appropriate technology, people, security, and culling process prior to accepting the data.

All systems, processes, and data input must be created with clear and concise language and steps to ensure relevance in the future and accessibility to other users. Consider the data ten years from now. Use full descriptions while writing procedures, limit workarounds, and consider staff support, comprehension of data/language, and the constituent's consent for data retention.

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Store your data in a simple location: The fields provided by the database. If the database does not have the necessary fields, create tables that have basic names, have limited steps to access, do not use acronyms, and can be used by staff with limited experience. DEI data is varied on its level of sensitivity. Some data is very secure, while some data is necessary to interact with your constituents on a personal level during day-to-day interactions, such as pronouns. Consider this while issuing permissions and entering data.

Technology

Data must be in a secure and safe database, managed in a secure environment. If the environment is hosted by a vendor, ensure the vendor has been appropriately vetted by your IT, and that they fit your mission, vision, and values, for DEI data integrity.

Do not use workarounds or temporary fields that will make the data difficult to locate or extract at a later date.

Account for your organization's future - In a world where technology is changing rapidly, you want to ensure data is stored in a manner that it can be leveraged by future tools and services such as AI, ML, and other sophisticated technologies. This requires data to be formatted appropriately, cleaned and consistently stored, and there to be clear definitions for the origins and purposes of the data. Timestamps are another critical component for being able to perform longitudinal analysis on how your data is changing over time.

Where did the data come from?

Organizations collect constituent data through various mechanisms, and the data management team must be aware of how the information was collected prior to storing the information so that they can have insight on the levels of constituent awareness and consent regarding data use.

Self-identified data vs. collected data

This table describes the different ways data is collected.

Term	Definition
Self-identified data	Data collected from the individual directly through online forms, surveys, in-person interactions, or direct communication from the individual.
Consenting data	Ensuring the person whose data is collected understands they may receive fundraising communications or other solicitations.
Inferred data	Data collected from third parties such as vendors, staff members, or in other methods, but the constituent did not directly provide the data.

People

For demographic data regarding people's identities, engage with your governance committee or director for guidance to understand safety and/or cultural protocols.

> Acknowledge the roles of all individuals involved in managing, acquiring, and working with DEI data. Those who process DEI data should take DEI training and data management on an annual basis to ensure that their DEI knowledge is up to date, as is your CRM and reporting.

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> Find current and active resources for the database management team to partner with to keep the database up to date and maintain a DEI ecosystem for your organization's own policies and practices. You might consider some of the following ideas: your Human Resources department, a campus Gender & Sexuality Resource Center or similar, your institution's established governance committees, consultants, peer institutions' policies, and professional associations such as the aasp, CASE, or APRA.

Process

DEI data is sensitive, and the owner of this data must be aware that it is in use. If this information came from a trusted source, and is self selected or the constituent has consented, the data can be put into the database. Some questions to consider for the origin of the data:

Verify how the data was collected and any questions you have regarding consent by contacting the source of your information. Contact the colleague who sent you the information or verify with the vendor.

> If the information came from a vendor, are they compliant with your organization's privacy and DEI policies?

> If you are receiving data from an institutional partner such as a campus unit, was this information approved by other organizations across campus who have better insight on this data? Also confirm that the spreadsheets or data did not infer or determine the "likelihood" of constituent identity.

  – For example: Is Athletics declaring the genders of participants of one sport, and is that the policy of the gender wellness center/student engagement center at your institution?

  – Was this part of a spreadsheet or "shadow database" and did the campus partner delete this database after submitting the information to your office?

Allow constituents to opt out of fundraising communications at time of service or while they are filling out your surveys and forms.

> For DEI collection initiated by institutional partners, such as an Admissions department at a college or at a registration desk at a recreation center, the constituent may not have an option to opt out of some data collection, or the system collecting that data may not be built to receive an opt-out. When this data is received by Advancement, account for limitations to other systems of record in choosing whether to use DEI data coming from these sources.

As data comes in from free-form fields on surveys and forms ensure that the incoming content is reviewed during frequent quality control reports. Users should review the Fundraiser Bill of Rights to ensure that staff members are protected from constituents' language. Donors must abide by the bill of rights and cannot input offensive language or data.

> Offensive language: Language that is racist, sexist, or targets any group based on their identity will be removed from the database.

> Any person who expresses this language in the form will also be reviewed and brought to the attention of the gift officers, or advancement team, to ensure the fundraisers are comfortable working with the donor. If they are not, the donor will be marked with solicit codes.

> Create quality control queries or data staging tables to mass review data and ensure language follows DEI data integrity standards.

Technology

Allowing constituents to provide their own information allows for the most up-to-date and accurate data. Enable free-form fields to capture this information if possible.

Require code tables that keep up with rapidly changing language and appropriate mappings.

> Automated integrations become more challenging if any kind of translation or transformation needs to occur and could lead to a greater need for manual review.

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> Downstream analysis can be more difficult and require increased maintenance when having to account for many versions of what could be a similar input.

Ensure there are processes and identifiers for identifying the sourcing application or process that is bringing data into your system.

> From an auditing standpoint it is helpful to have date and time stamps available for when fields or records were added and modified.

> Leveraging fields that identify the source of information are valuable for identifying origins as well as source of consent.

Where will this data live?

Once it is determined that data will be accepted into the database, it must have an appropriate place to be stored. Set fields and tables within a database determine where the new data will be imported, and restrictions ensure that the data is only accessed by the appropriate personnel.

People
Assign a person to make decisions on where the data will be stored, and who will set guidelines to restrict permissions. This person is the database manager.

Process
Consider your database's capabilities while building permissions and sharing structures. Data should be shared on a need-to-know basis, and information that is used to work with constituents on a day-to-day basis, such as Preferred Name, or Pronouns, should

be accessible to the most basic user, while more sensitive information, such as Religion, might be more secure, as those might be used for more integrated work, such as culturally sensitive messaging.

Technology
Set fields and tables within a database determine where the new data will be imported, and restrictions ensure that the data is only accessed by the appropriate personnel.

Technology & DEI data storage
This table describes the different ways data is collected.

Storage option	Impacts/Handling	Recommended action
Data lake	Enable multiple users on different systems to access data more fluidly. While this is beneficial for constituents because their information may be updated more quickly between departments, data the constituent thought belonged to one department might be shared with another.	> Inform your constituents you are sharing data that was previously kept within one department. Allow them to opt-out of sharing > Ensure that for new records/data, there is an indicator whether the record has opted in to the new storage system > Create an MOU with other users to ensure that DEI data that has a larger business use is shared, but not in a harmful way. For example: Other departments on campus might benefit and have permission to use a constituent's pronouns. Ensure that the users with access to this have the proper storage on their local databases and systems.

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Storage option	Impacts/Handling	Recommended action
External cloud based data storage	Allow organizations to have all of their users on the same version of a single database. It also enables an organization to have their database managed by a vendor, so it does not take up space on their local devices. This creates an efficient, anytime, anywhere, CRM. Control over the version of software is now managed by the vendor, and it is open to attacks on the hosted environment. Data no longer is held by the organization, and they might have to pay to ask for it back. Database and data warehouse permissions may be set separately by the database manager, but warehouse permissions may be less accessible for the manager.	> Encrypt the most sensitive DEI fields for average users and allow for the database administrators to access that information for reporting and segmentation purposes as requested by restricted users. > DEI data that enables communication with constituents should be accessible. (Names, preferred pronouns, or other information that may affect a day to day conversation between any level staff and the constituent.) > Permissions: Who are you providing access to, and what information are you giving them?
Locally hosted data storage	Provide total control for an organization's IT to manage the update rollout. The data manager is fully responsible for the data, and it never is held "hostage" by a third party. This leaves room for slow updates of update rollouts, occasional people with outdated versions, and slow servers depending on the organization's budget.	> Create an update rollout schedule so the team will be logged out and can have refreshed updates > Create plan with IT for faster servers and computers for high use seasons and users

Restrictions for sharing data across units

Sharing this data across the different departments within Advancement and across the institution must be done judiciously. Consider the reason for having this data in the first place - share on a needs basis only.

People

> Establish external agreements with defined and documented business rules and confidentiality agreements for third party vendors accessing data. Examples of third parties could include cloudloud storage hosts, CRM companies, online event platforms, etc. This may be IT, council, the manager of the data, the alumni office, or the director.

> Establish the internal agreements with defined and documented business rules and confidentiality agreements for staff, volunteers, board members, etc. This could be the manager of the data, director, or IT.

> The person who should be responsible for drafting and obtaining approvals for clearly defined data governance is the person who manages or is the data owner at your institution.

> Divide users by security roles based upon responsibilities. An overarching confidentiality agreement may suffice to cover all staff. Security roles should be as limited as possible, and on a need-to-know basis.

Process

> Language we use today might become offensive or painful tomorrow. Create a process for stored DEI data to be reviewed and updated with new terminology, if needed. If language in fields or tables are updated, outgoing reports must be updated as well.

  – If the historic terminology used by your organization is outdated, review historic reports, tables, fields, and exported data to update or remove old language.

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> Run audits to prevent offensive text from being stored during acquisition, as well as ensure the data is being entered and stored appropriately. Create reporting systems or use a tool to assist in reviewing data for this language, including flagging high traffic negative words, or words that are commonly used as pranks within your organization to prevent entry. Ensure the Donor Bill of Rights and Fundraiser Bill of Rights are being followed when storing this data.

> Free-form fields may be used to enable constituents to provide their preferred identity data. However, some systems or processes may not allow for this. Review best practices for inclusive DEI data to allow for a variety of options when constituents make their selection.

Technology

> If your organization is going to acquire its DEI data using free-form fields, the database manager might need to partner with IT to ensure the database can accept, accommodate, and properly flag free-form fields to sufficiently report on, purge of, and clean up data.

> Websites have technology that can review offensive or unwanted words. Determine if there is a tool that enables your database to process this information for you.

> Populate existing fields to store data, this best manages data for reports, and the data is less likely to be lost. Repurpose existing fields if necessary, note that some CRMs may maintain the original field during query or export functions, and new staff may inadvertently export the wrong information. Include this knowledge in database training.

How long will you keep the data?

Data retention

The data collected and stored within your CRM should not be considered permanent. It should be routinely reviewed for relevance and retention.

People

Decide who will govern the data and how long each data set should remain in the database. For data removal or updates, there must be a designated person(s) trained in the software and data best practices, as well as DEI data management.

Long-term stored data must follow updated best practices. The person(s) managing the data should continuously and proactively be educated on up-to-date trends in DEI data management, language and best practices, as well as data security. This can be through consultants, webinars, conferences, etc.

Process

Database Administrators should conduct annual reviews of demographic and DEI data maintenance best practices, language updates, and security. They should create and implement quality control processes to manage the DEI data as it is processed, while existing data, data fields, reports and sources be reviewed for cleanliness, quality, relevancy, and appropriateness.

Administrators should evaluate longevity of data storage based on systems, resource capacity, and following data governance by confirming the data's necessity, relevance, or recency. If none of these are true, remove the data, and ensure proper deletion protocols are completed.

Technology

Decide who will govern the data and how long administrators should leverage the CRM's tools and functions to create audit reports to assess the age and location of the data and proper storage and hardware requirements in the system. They should also evaluate the system's functions, capabilities and cost to carry out the above processes that will allow for the appropriate actions based on the data retention policies.

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How will you delete the data?

Removal & reconciliation

For various reasons, data can become irrelevant, outdated or inappropriate to maintain within the database. Routine auditing of the data is important for the health and efficiency of the database and its functionality. When removing data from the database, it is imperative to establish processes for review, removal and reconciliation.

People

Organizations should establish a Data Governance staff or committee, who will govern the data and the roles, responsibilities, and accessibility within your organization. They will determine when and what data can be purged, and who needs to be informed. The Data Governance staff or committee will establish guidelines defining modifications, time limits and removal for sensitive data. *Removing data within a specific field and removing the field itself doesn't guarantee complete removal.*

Process

The Data Governance staff or committee will create a process where the database, reports, and exports for historic DEI data are deleted/destroyed in accordance with the data governance policies and procedures. Consider deleting DEI data when it is no longer relevant, up to date, safe for the constituent, or when it is offensive to have.

Data removal should be done in a clear and systematic process. Administrators should start by informing users of the timeline and expectations of the removal process with explicit instructions, data locations and affected areas. New reports and exports should be created if necessary to replace those affected, as well as a plan for recording the preferences and historic activity around sensitive data objects that should not be recreated or reloaded.

Technology

Configuring your systems (if possible) to automatically update/purge records after certain periods of time could offset the need for human review and action. Consider using tools that implement Global Changes and/or Data Append services or tools that can update or add records. Otherwise, establish a schedule with automated reminders of the entire process to keep all relevant participants informed.

Do you have to change the way you work with vendors?

Vendors

Inevitably, data administration will involve third-party vendors for database, electronic outreach, prospect research, etc. In these cases, it is important to clarify the vendors' responsibilities versus the data recipients' responsibilities.

All vendors must be vetted using best practices to ensure all sensitive data will be stored securely and the vendor fits your organization's mission, vision, and values. Some vendors provide demographic information to support nonprofits as they create more inclusive fundraising and communication plans. If possible, review these vendors' client lists to ensure that other clients are not causing harm to marginalized groups.

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New term	Definition
DRP	Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) is a formal document created by an organization that contains detailed instructions on how to respond to unplanned incidents such as cyber attacks, security and data breaches, and any other disruptive events.
VPAT	A Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT®) is a document that explains how information and communication technology (ICT) products such as software, hardware, electronic content, and support documentation meet (conform to) the Revised 508 Standards for IT accessibility.

People

For vendor review, an internal committee should be composed of staff from database administrations, legal, human resources, information technology, purchasing and any other departments that may have involvement or control over the data. The committee should establish a vetting process for vendors, and define and assign security roles and responsibilities accordingly both internally and externally. This should include which vendor staff has access to the organization's data both in-house and remotely. They will review business agreements between your organization and the vendor to confirm they meet the standards as suggested in the *Restrictions for Sharing Data Across Units* section.

Vendors should confirm they have a dedicated Information Security staff, and if they conduct training and awareness activities to validate its employees' understanding of their roles and responsibilities as it pertains to data security. They should confirm whether or not data will be shared with or hosted by any third parties. (e.g. any entity not wholly-owned by the vendor is considered a third-party). Ask for a list of vendor partners. When possible, review the vendors' ethics policies for alignment with your mission, and what your options are if they do not align. Inquire about any data breaches the vendor or its third-party partners have experienced.

Process

The organization should obtain and review the vendors' materials confirming compliance with all the required legal, technical and security requirements and regulations (e.g. FERPA, HIPAA, EU GDPR, SOC II, NIST Cybersecurity Framework, Cloud Security Alliance STAR certification, etc.). Most importantly, confirm data is returned to the organization and wiped from the vendors' systems at the time of contract termination. This includes back-up data storage. *For DEI-specific data, ask vendors for their policies on the collection, storage, use and access of DEI-specific information. If none exist, ask the vendor to agree on signing one.*

Additionally, the organization should obtain and review the vendors' Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP), and descriptions of their security and communication assessment processes both internally and with third party partners. When possible, ask for vendors' change management process so you can assess the impact of any software and/or product upgrades/changes.

Technology

The vendors should provide you with an overall system and/or application architecture diagrams including data communications. This information should include how and where data will be stored on any devices/servers and IP addresses, and operating system(s) leveraged by the system(s)/application(s) that will have access to the institution's data. Additionally, confirm data is encrypted in transport and storage, and what system(s) and level(s) the vendors employ for encryption. This should include mobile applications if applicable. Ask if the vended product hosts/supports a mobile application. If so, which ones and purposes.

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Recommended questions for vendors

Category	Questions to consider
Security and data breach	> Was your application developed using secure coding techniques? > Will you comply with applicable breach notification laws? > Do you have an information security awareness program? Is security awareness training mandatory for all employees? > Describe or provide a reference to how you monitor for and protect against common web application security vulnerabilities (e.g. SQL injection, XSS, XSRF, etc.).
Organization related	> Can you share the organization chart, mission statement, policies, and overall system/application architecture diagrams? > Do you perform background screenings or multi-state background checks on all employees prior to their first day of work? Do you require new employees to fill out agreements and review policies?
Vendor processes and procedures	> Do you have software testing processes (dynamic or static) that are established and followed? > Do you have a formal incident response plan? > Do you have process and procedure(s) documented, and currently followed, that require a review and update of the access-list(s) for privileged accounts? > Do you have documented, and currently implemented, internal audit processes and procedures? > SSO (Single Sign On): Does [vendor name] offer login through SSO?
Vendor policies	> Do they have a DEI mission/policy? > Will you comply with the Institution's IT policies with regards to user privacy and data protection? > Do you have a VPAT from the company?
Contract related	> Are you in a position to cancel/walk away from the vendor? > Can you request your own data back, or delete the data permanently from the vendor's end?

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DEI Data Usage

Ethical considerations when using DEI data

It is crucial to adhere to ethical principles and put into place best practices to protect the morality, rights, and welfare of our constituents. Ensuring proper data usage means avoiding the fabrication or falsification of data collection as well as reporting research results without biases.

There is a feeling of distrust among respondents/research participants due to the lack of confidentiality and transparency when collecting data. These concerns are valid and need to be addressed when conducting research. It is our responsibility as an organization to make the willing participant feel protected and included. We can do that by creating and adhering to a code of ethics and to create that code we need to understand the why, how, and what.

First, start with why organizations collect data.

Is it being used to increase representation and engagement? Is it being used to segment a solicitation to a target audience based on race or affinity? Is it being used to see what generation has the propensity to give? Or is data being collected without a goal in mind?

The "Why" needs to bring about positive change within the organization, not further segregate. The purpose behind collecting DEI data should be to become more inclusive. Some examples of the "Why" should be to increase representation, bring about important changes that foster belonging, and create a benchmark for organizational DEI initiatives. Be transparent about the data collection and the purposes for doing so.

How is the organization collecting data?

Data collection can be completed/fulfilled through vendors, questionnaires, surveys, AI, focus groups, and so on. All of these methods are fine as long as data ethics are considered. One key consideration:

Was the data collected with biased methods or methods that would perpetuate stereotypes?

For instance, the use of vendors. Vendors collect data based on research that can be sold or rented by other organizations. This third-party data does not have a connection to any specific organization. *Examples of third-party data collected are emails, interests, political affiliations, and so on.* The data could also be biased, or misinterpreted, and there is a lack of transparency regarding the source of this information as well as how the information itself is gathered. The same with AI technology, which is a growing form of data collection.

Similar to using vendors, AI technology may perpetuate existing biases or stereotypes if the AI itself is not properly designed. The use of AI technology can lead to a reduction in human involvement due to a lack of confidence and mistrust in the data. Both methods can also increase objectivity in decision-making processes, which are often influenced by conscious or unconscious biases.

What data is being collected?

It depends on the organization's needs and what the goals are. Gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, veteran, and education level are a small sampling of demographics that can be collected and used in gathering metrics about dimensions of identity.

When collecting data points, make sure to avoid or minimize anything that will cause physical or emotional harm to participants. Remember you cannot force people into boxes you think they belong in or you need them to belong in for your own reasons. Forcing people into checkboxes and binary choices can artificially and unnecessarily constrain the data, something which can be avoided by using qualitative or descriptive data to capture a unique individual's unique life experience. Being an impartial

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gatherer of information, choosing people for the right reasons, and treating participants fairly and reasonably when collecting data are all extremely important.

How will the data and the participants be protected?

One way to protect participants is to follow and understand relevant laws which include but are not limited to HIPAA, FERPA, CCPA, GDPR, and state privacy laws.

Be wary of the source of data. Companies/vendors who sell DEI data should be treated cautiously as the data they provide lacks transparency regarding source and collection methods.

Use careful consideration when collecting data. For example, use free-form text when using surveys and try to keep the data broad to avoid identification of individual respondents. We do not want to marginalize the data.

Most importantly, the data should be self-identified/

self-reported. An individual's race, ethnicity, etc. should not be inferred based on social media, yearbooks, photos, or other third-party sources. DEI information should not be assumed or reported without the participant's consent. Lastly, do not tokenize the individual or organization by looking at only one aspect of their identity.

Assure the individual that their data will be protected and that the organization will collect data through voluntary participation, utilize informed consent, maintain anonymity, confidentiality, and share transparency about the "why, how, and what" of the entire process.

There are many barriers to collecting DEI data, including cultural barriers, accessibility issues, institutional/organizational distrust, misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the final data set, and the possibility of a data leak. Organizations can break through those barriers by ensuring the protection of participants and being mindful of ethical considerations when collecting that data.

Foundational considerations that should be addressed before engaging in DEI data usage

DEI data is exciting to have and can be very beneficial in achieving organizational goals. Many organizations gather DEI data and are tempted to "jump right in" with this new treasure trove of information. However, before moving forward to usage, organizations must ask themselves some important questions. Questions like what type of considerations are in place? What safeguards are in place to make sure DEI data is used ethically, responsibly, and safely? How was the data sourced, where did it come from, and who is and isn't included in the data? Consider these questions as a checklist, of sorts, which will be examined further below.

Get to know the data

Asking questions about the data affects other users of it down the road. For example, depending on where the data is sourced, will your stakeholders be able to

trust the quality of your data? Will your data reflect the community of people that you seek to serve? Will it be an accurate image of that community? Once the source of the acquired data has been determined to be accurate and dependable, then consider your organization's reasons for using the data. Be transparent and honest about organizational usage and intention regarding DEI data. For example, will the data be used to inform operational or programmatic decision making? Who will be most affected by the collection of this information and why?

Being honest about the data

DEI data does not always present an organization in the best light. It is important that data practitioners hold organizations accountable for findings that its data reveals and for the organizational picture that the data paints. After gathering the DEI data, it may be

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time for organizational self-reflection. Self-reflection, in turn, could present an opportunity to establish or improve upon goals surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Regarding stakeholders, the adage of "hope for the best and prepare for the worst" may be the best advice. Many teams experience and expect pushback when making changes. Organizational changes involving DEI data are no different. One key component is to be transparent with your stakeholders and take the opportunity to challenge presumptions about your stakeholders surrounding the changes.

DEI data risks

As with any new endeavor, being aware of risks surrounding DEI data is crucial. Having that clear picture that DEI data presents also creates the potential to highlight certain groups of people while ostracizing or marginalizing others. Recognize that DEI data points the spotlight on pieces or components of an individual's identity. It does not inform absolutely about any one person or any one group of people. Many people identify with different groups, and those identities intersect. Ensure your organization is mindful of how it highlights those intersecting identities. Also, be mindful that the data itself, or how your organization seeks to use it, doesn't create inaccurate or incomplete data. Incomplete or inaccurate second-hand data can skew the information an organization seeks to put forth.

Understand the personal risk that exists for individuals

to have their identities tracked. For example, maintaining a list of all the alumni and current students in the Pacific Islanders heritage club at your university may be beneficial for new students and for planning events during Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage month. However, such a comprehensive list can be used to target such individuals if misused.

DEI data governance and security

Protecting DEI data is just as important as protecting any other type of sensitive, identifying information. Data security and privacy should be one of the key components to consider before using DEI data. Your organization should have guidelines in place that detail a strong security and privacy infrastructure for the information stored within as well as governance surrounding the data coming out.

DEI data terminology and index

Finally, for better comprehension of the DEI data received, stored, and accessed, a terminology index should be established. An index of the most commonly used words and phrases as well as definitional and operational usage of said words and phrases may create cohesion amongst the different users of the DEI data and will help outside parties understand what they will receive when they request DEI data.

Using DEI data to identify additional research needs (quantitative vs. qualitative)

Working towards more diverse, equitable, and inclusive philanthropy and engagement within nonprofit organizations requires both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a full picture of an organization's compositional makeup as well as the lived experiences of constituents that reveal disparities, inequality, and the degree to which a sense of belonging exists for groups that have been historically minoritized.

The APRA Data Guide notes that collection methods themselves can perpetuate inequality, bias, and stereotypes or promote inclusion and equity. The Guide suggests considering why the data is needed, how it will be used, and whether organizational goals can be accomplished without the data, while being transparent with constituents and collecting only the data necessary for the business purpose (APRA, 2021). Given the sensitive and personal nature of DEI data, thoughtful and careful collection, storage, and

usage are imperative. At the same time, there is also danger in failing to collect and understand DEI data.

Different organizations will have different needs and context for DEI data. A university, for example, may hold as part of its history discrimination that limited access and negatively influenced graduates' experiences with the school. Arts, health, and social service organizations will have other histories as it relates to access and engagement of diverse patrons and constituents. With this context in mind, understanding the identities of who makes up an organization's constituency today is a baseline metric to advance equity in the present.

Self-reported quantitative data provides a starting point for the basic question of who makes up a community of donors, alumni, patrons, and clients. With a baseline understanding in place, additional research needs are prompted. Beyond who, organizations might want to understand how different members of its constituency are engaging and how they are not; how experiences past and present influence their engagement; and to what degree the organization is fostering a sense of belonging.

Advancement practitioners can learn from the body of work on DEI metrics developed in the human resources and organizational management fields. Writing about the DEI data employers collect on their employees, Thomas-Hunt and Roberts (2022) suggest starting by identifying gaps in existing data, giving thought to what questions the organization is asking about diversity, equity, and inclusion, evaluating what response categories have been offered to respondents and why, considering how outreach occurs to members of groups with small numerical representation, and being mindful of how the organization accounts for smaller response sets among underrepresented minorities.

Further, Thomas-Hunt and Roberts (2022) caution against over-reliance on quantitative data. Qualitative data is important for understanding people's experiences in context. The authors write that interviews, focus groups, and case studies can help organizations understand how underrepresentation and exclusion have developed over time, why these issues persist, and how they manifest.

Also writing about workforce diversity, Williams and Dolkas (2022) distinguish between "outcome metrics" –the counts of underrepresented groups— and "process metrics"—such as the speed at which people of color are promoted. Both are necessary, yet the authors note that while outcome metrics can illuminate a problem, they do not provide insight into the problem at a process level nor guide an organization in fixing the problem. The authors provide the example of process metrics in the hiring process where problems can arise in recruitment, applicant review, interviewing, and negotiating compensation package offers. Problems in each area of the process require their own solution. The authors recommend incorporating both outcome and process metrics into an action plan. Advancement practitioners might consider existing channels of engagement as process metrics to help illuminate experiences of exclusion and marginalization and provide valuable information for change.

The Florida International University Foundation Office of Inclusive Philanthropy (FOIP) (see comment below) used a university-wide study on diversity, equity, and inclusion as a launching point to understand gaps in their data and to gain insight into the experiences of their students (A. McGill, personal communication, June 21, 2023). As part of their process, FOIP invited each of the 12 development units to provide unit-level data on key metrics and to form focus groups with constituents to gain a deeper understanding of the data. In one example, a focus group was formed to gain insight that could be used to support the goal of increasing the number of Black males enrolling and graduating from FIU. Through the focus group, staff learned that scholarships were a positive factor supporting enrollment, but mentorship was an unmet need. In this way, the focus group served as a vital tool in understanding a process metric–the number of Black males graduating from FIU- and uncovering a potential solution.

With a defined and appropriate business purpose, collecting DEI data and understanding aggregate information about the identities of non-profit constituencies is an important step toward inclusive philanthropy. Quantitative self-reported data provides a starting point that is made actionable when combined with additional methods of data collection and analysis.

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Using DEI data to identify excluded constituent groups

Commonly held ideas about what constitutes philanthropy, misperceptions about who makes up the US donor base, and bias within fundraising practices have led to the exclusion of groups of constituents as donors and engaged participants. Nonprofit organizations face a moral and existential imperative to understand who has been excluded from engagement with our organizations or overlooked as donors, to enact inclusive and culturally aware practices, and to develop compelling strategies for meaningful engagement.

The census bureau projects significant demographic shifts for the US over the next 20 years, including the estimation that non-Hispanic Whites will no longer make up the majority of the US population by 2045 (US Census Bureau, 2021). As the US experiences significant shifts in racial, ethnic, and age demographics, other changes on the philanthropic landscape are also in play. For example, research has found that giving to LGBTQ+ organizations has grown in recent years, at a rate twice as high as non-LGBTQ organizations (IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy News, 2023). Also notable, women's wealth is on the rise: today women hold approximately 40 percent of global wealth, and women are more likely to give, and give more, than male counterparts (Research Is at the Core of WPI's Mission, n.d.).

As the philanthropic landscape changes, we must also acknowledge that some deeply held perceptions about who gives and how they give are inaccurate. An article by faculty of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy outlines several myths that persist about philanthropy in the US noting that these fictions and generalizations hold back fundraising practice. These myths include the assumption that women are less philanthropic than men, the perception that immigrant populations take from charity but are not supporters, the idea that African Americans are a new and emergent demographic in philanthropy, and the fiction that small gifts don't matter (Benjamin et al., 2019). Further, the unconscious bias held by gift officers engaging with prospects and bias in donor identification processes and practices may mean that some constituencies are underrepresented or excluded from donor ranks.

Jensen-Ives asserts that even in the face of changes in student demographics, the tactics employed for fundraising have focused on the types of donors who have historically been engaged and "stereotyped as generous." The author cites the pressure to raise money and close gifts quickly as a contributing factor that has led to a focus on White donors and to practices that "overlook significant and growing populations of potential donors."

A study by McNamee and Drezner using data from a predominantly White, private research university found that alumni who were involved in cultural clubs, as well as Black and multicultural alumni, were more likely to give their first gifts sooner after graduation than other alumni, while gender, income, and alumni activity did not bear significance on the model. By considering who gives and when, instead of simply who gives the most, the authors' study takes an inclusive view of philanthropy. The authors argue that while there is a need to raise large sums, it is also important for institutions to expand conceptions about who may be potential donors. The authors assert that if Black and multi-racial alumni give sooner than their White peers, advancement professionals "must do better to create alumni engagement programs that truly serve all who graduate from their institutions" (McNamee and Drezner, 2022, p.24).

As a starting point in developing inclusive philanthropy practices, it is important for organizations to have visibility into identities that are excluded or overlooked within their own constituency. DEI data can be examined in the aggregate to understand who is represented among your donors and engaged constituency and what groups have been excluded.

When examining demographic data, look at who is engaging and in what ways. How does activity among various groups compare to the overall population for your organization? Consider asking:

> Who is giving to our organization?

> What populations are assigned as prospects?

> What populations have served as volunteers?

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> Who has participated in events?

> What populations engage in interactive communications such as responding to social media or submitting class notes?

What does this information reveal about various groups in your constituency and their level of or lack of engagement? How does the data point to existing and historical practices, policies, and procedures that have contributed to the exclusion of certain populations?

Writing about the exclusion of Latinos from donor ranks in higher education, Armando Zumaya, reflected on the personal experience of frequently being the first development officer to approach Latino major gift prospects, writing, "Many attended major universities, have started and sold companies, risen to CEO positions–all of this information is publicly available. Yet, their phones aren't ringing. One Mexican-American philanthropist shared his theory: 'I owe my university, I love my university, but I am not sure I fit its demographic for a donor.'" (Zumaya, 2017).

To remedy the exclusion of Latinos, Zumaya urges fundraising professionals to be aware of cultural bias, research trends and capacity, employ focus groups

and surveys, and tap organizations that facilitate Latino outreach such as Hispanics in Philanthropy (Zumaya, 2017). This advice can be applied to the engagement of diverse identities broadly.

Traditional prospect research, which relies heavily on real estate values for wealth screening, may overlook some diverse constituencies. Florida International University's Office of Inclusive Philanthropy is using focus groups and networking strategies to identify new prospects and understand circles of influence (A. McGill, personal communication, June 21, 2023). Putting more emphasis on consumer data and job title research, as well as researching connections between constituents and social organizations associated with racial, ethnic, and other identity groups are ways of prospecting to identify a more diverse donor pool.

To build towards inclusive philanthropy, organizations must understand who is engaging as supporters of their organizations, what groups are missing, and what groups may be participating but overlooked for deeper engagement. Examination of organizational practices as well as the personal biases and cultural competency of fundraising staff is necessary to engage historically excluded groups.

Using DEI data to identify needs of constituents

Introduction

In today's increasingly diverse world, it is more important than ever for organizations to understand the needs of their constituents. By collecting and analyzing data with DEI in mind, institutions can gain valuable insights into the experiences of different groups of people, which can then be used to develop more effective advancement strategies.

One of the most important ways to identify the needs of constituents is to provide them with opportunities to engage with the institution. This can be done through a variety of channels, such as surveys, focus groups, and events. By listening to constituents' feedback, institutions can learn about their priorities and how they can best support them.

In addition to traditional data points, such as job title, and geographic location, organizations should also consider other factors when identifying potential donors. These factors may include things like a donor's interests, values, and connection to the institution. By taking a holistic approach to donor prospecting, institutions can increase their understanding of what initiatives are important to their constituents.

It's important to note that creating relationships and building trust with constituents can lead to them being more likely to support the institute's mission and willing to engage with the organization. This is a key piece in ensuring that feedback is received when solicited.

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What does the research say?

Engagement

"Meaningful volunteer opportunities can strengthen the donor relationship with an organization. Time and time again, we see that individuals who donate their time to nonprofit organizations are more likely to donate their money as well." If we can collect reasons for why prospects are not giving, we may be able to better recognize areas for engagement efforts. This information can be used to identify areas for improvement and to develop targeted engagement strategies. For example, if you find that many prospects are not giving because they do not know about your organization, you can develop a communications plan to increase awareness.

Volunteering allows donors to connect with the organization on a deeper level and feel more invested in its mission, which can make them more likely to support the organization financially. In addition to strengthening donor relationships, volunteer opportunities can also help organizations to identify and meet the needs of their constituents. When donors are engaged in volunteer work, they are more likely to share their thoughts and ideas with the organization. This feedback can be invaluable in helping the organization to improve its programs and services.

"Providing both virtual and in-person engagement options ensures that organizations meet the needs and preferences of donors across different backgrounds and levels of access." Understanding how engagement, communication, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship fit in with the needs of constituents while aligning with the organization's goals and priorities is important.

Surveying constituents

Surveying your constituents is the most direct way to understand their needs. Asking the right questions allows you to collect the data you need to make decisions about engagement and philanthropic goals. Seek the demographic information of the individuals, students, and donors on campus, in the community, and nationally, in addition to what engagement offerings they prefer.

Every Day Donors of Color says that the major motivations that drive donors of color to give are:

1. Faith: Philanthropy is often linked closely with the donor's religious beliefs, and has deep roots in religious traditions.

2. Self-help: Philanthropy can be seen as an economic weapon to fight against racial oppression of the donor's racial or ethnic group.

3. Reciprocity: Because they often feel excluded from mainstream culture, minority groups form their own communities to share economic reciprocity with one another.

4. "Level the playing field": Donors feel they want to provide better pathways to success for younger generations, especially in terms of education.

These motivations can be used to drive engagement efforts and goals.

Part of identifying the needs of constituents is to understand how they prefer to interact with your organization. These interactions can include receiving communications, delivering communications, making donations, and signing up to volunteer. Beyond email and mail, constituents may want to see stories on social media and comment on them. "Donors of color have been increasingly using new channels of giving including giving circles, social media, and crowdfunding platforms, which allow for many to donate to a cause in exchange for small rewards such as pictures or personal notes."

By coupling surveys with national data trends, organizations can gain a deeper understanding of their constituents and their needs. This information can then be used to inform more effective benchmarking and analysis, which can lead to improved fundraising and program outcomes. Additionally, coupling internal surveys with national data trends can help to overcome myths and stereotypes. For example, EAB has done a deep dive on diverse donor segments which may align with survey results at your organization:

FIGURE ONE	Dollars and participation today	Primetime dollars for tomorrow's campaign
Women Alumni	**Example** Young alumnae giving circles increases **participation rates**	**Leadership giving** component cultivates high-capacity donors
Alumni of Color	**Example** Engage alumni of color throuh **peer-to-peer solicitations**	Enfranchise older alumni of color through **leadership opportunities** and celebration programs
LGBT Alumni	**Example** Connect LGBT alumni with LGBT students **to increase participation**	Sustained commitment to LGBT causes encourages **larger giving trends**

Annual benchmarking that tracks and analyzes philanthropic behaviors, trends, and patterns of various donor segments is crucial to understanding constituents, identifying their needs, and informing organizational strategy.

Building trust

Historically, distrust of American philanthropy institutions has led marginalized groups, such as Black and Hispanic communities, to give directly to those in need without paying nonprofit overhead costs and to give to people they know. Philanthropic traditions of self-help exist among many communities of color and were activated during the pandemic. Aligning organizational goals with the efforts of the surrounding community can help build trust and potentially establish more donors with the organization.

Conclusion

By using DEI data, organizations can better understand the needs of their constituents and engage them in a more meaningful way. This can help to build trust, strengthen relationships, and achieve the organization's mission.

In conclusion, organizations that want to understand the needs of their constituents must collect and analyze data with DEI in mind. They must also provide opportunities for constituents to engage with the institution and listen to their feedback. In addition to traditional data points, organizations should consider other factors when identifying potential donors, such as interests, values, and connection to the institution. By taking a holistic approach to donor prospecting, organizations can increase their understanding of what initiatives are important to their constituents. Finally, organizations must build trust with constituents by providing meaningful volunteer opportunities and engaging with them in a variety of ways. By following these steps, organizations can better understand the needs of their constituents and develop more effective advancement strategies.

Using DEI data to develop mirroring techniques

Data points on diversity, equity, and inclusion help to categorize different aspects of constituents' identities. This information allows data analysts to make decisions about how to best relate their constituent pools to their organization. Mirroring techniques use DEI data points to "match" constituents with an organization. When matching DEI data, most data analysts typically try to use community or employee demographic information. Noah D. Drezner suggests looking beyond demographic information when considering DEI data. While demographic information such as race, gender, and sexual orientation are important aspects of an individual's identity, it can also limit an institution's insight on building relationships with its surrounding community or constituents. By establishing hobbies, interests, and activities as DEI data points, data analysts can broaden an institution's ability to match constituents to relevant events and activities at the institution which can lead to giving.

Relevant intersections of identity

Establishing DEI data points beyond demographics allows institutions to represent people who are not

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traditionally represented in the organization (Drezner, 2018). Matching institutions to constituents through mirroring techniques can also increase engagement from underrepresented groups. Drezner (2018) states that scholars who have found a way to engage constituent's social identities have managed to increase giving at their institutions.

Case study

Drezner's research provided subjects solicitations that would benefit need-based marginalized students versus solicitations to benefit meritorious based marginalized students. Findings suggested that those subjects who shared marginalized identities with the student profiles in the solicitation letter assigned more importance to the cause described in the request for support. In other words, when respondents read about a student who was similar to them in one or more characteristics, they tended to be more engaged with the cause (Drezner, 2018). Therefore, evoking a sense of identity between those

in the solicitation and the donors is a way to allow constituents to feel more represented within the organization.

Conclusion

Establishing a sense of identity between organization and constituents, or "matching", allows the organization to broaden its representation among its constituent base. When collecting DEI data, collecting beyond demographic information allows organizations to touch a broad range of individuals in more than one category. Individuals have complex matrices of identities and touching base with those identities on several layers will allow organizations to advance their goals beyond typical DEI categories such as race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Whether it's matching donors to the community or an organization with its employees, leveraging the complexity of one's social identity can help establish more of an identity with the organization and can increase philanthropic giving.

Using DEI data to develop engagement strategy

Introduction

Using diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) data to inform engagement strategy is a crucial element for organizations in becoming welcoming, inclusive and diverse organizations. Using this data to inform decisions and strategies creates pathways for current and future engagement opportunities for organizations.

The ability to define and measure engagement allows organizations to create successful engagement strategies - strategies that benefit the organization's mission while aligned with its values. There are many ways an organization can activate its engagement planning using DEI data. *APRA's Ethics and Compliance Committee DEI Data Guide* outlines a handful of purposes for using DEI data including:[1]

> Diversifying boards, committees, and councils

> Creating affinity groups that mirror the population of your organization's constituent groups

> Establishing meaningful volunteer experiences, such as mentoring and coaching

> Staff recruitment and talent management

Today's organizations must recognize their constituents' unique stories and paths. Ignoring the diverse philanthropic landscape will cost organizations not only in dollars, but in relationships.

Theoretical research

Organizations that use data and metrics to drive their strategy have a higher chance of success than those who are not integrating such tools. "A better diversity climate leads to better retention of employees… and higher employee satisfaction with better problem solving and creativity…."[2] Using constituent and customer data in decision making increases success even more. In nonprofit work, using DEI data to inform strategy is one of the keys to success.

In the private-sector, companies in the top-quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 21% more likely to outperform on profitability and 27% more likely to have "superior outcomes." Companies in the top-quartile for ethnic diversity on executive teams were 33% more likely to have industry-leading profitability.[3] With this in mind, volunteer recruitment for councils and boards is a space to implement DEI data to inform engagement strategies.

Set a goal

This is where you will set the boundaries of your stakeholders. As recommended by APRA, it is important to have a goal and set responsibilities of partners, and establish procedures. This ensures trust and builds confidence in the process.[4]

Examine data

Organizational assessment and introspection is a process that can look different from organization to organization depending on time and financial investments available, as well as the access to data sets. Setting a strategic engagement direction entails understanding where you are coming from and where you want to go, as well as a cultural willingness to embrace an examination of your state. The ALG study recommended that leaders should use data to create awareness—for themselves, and for their colleagues. With the increase in DEI awareness, there's a parallel increase in the access of DEI research and data.[5] Consider the following steps:

> Board and volunteer leadership

– Assess the race/ethnicity/gender makeup of board and volunteer leadership

> Review of DEI constituent group landscape

– Assess the organization's ability to reflect the of the constituent group (e.g., donors, alumni, patients, parents, current student body)

– Demographics of constituent group compared to the current donors

– Who are our current donors? What data do we have about them?

– What subsets and segments of data do we have the most/the least information about?

> Existing affinity groups;

– Who are the members? How have we engaged them?

– Emerging opportunities based on the demographics data

> Volunteer engagement opportunities

– What are the data showing?

– Are there experiences that align with segments and constituents that are not meaningfully engaged?

Accountability

CASE's Alumni Engagement Metrics (AEM) has standardized the definition of alumni engagement empowering institutions to measure engagement consistently and comprehensively. It encompasses four categories: volunteerism, experiential, philanthropic, and communication.[6] This can be expanded to any constituent and should be used to inform segmentation strategies to achieve successful engagement. Using CASE's AEM scores alongside other measures to understand effectiveness of using DEI data to inform engagement strategies is a good tactic to implement for strategic accountability.

Re-examine existing strategies

Organizations seek to retain current donors as a strategy, often to the detriment of acquiring new donors. Current donors may not have the diversity that is representative of the current constituent base of the organization. This is an opportunity to use DEI data to inform engagement strategies using a DEI lens. The best way to collect demographic data is to allow your constituents to self-identify. You will center community voices, understand who is engaging with your organization, and increase collaboration and trust with your organization.[7]

Affinity groups

According to EAB's *The Changing Face of the 21st Century Donor*, "…diverse alumni share in the common

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experience that their time on college and university campuses was shaped, in part, by their affinity group. …" To effectively engage diverse alumni, advancement leaders must create meaningful channels for them to engage with the institution and other diverse alumni as well as current students.[8] Depending on the type of the organization, translate this observation to diverse constituent experience and whether there was an opportunity to engage with an affinity group. This assessment, analysis, and strategy setting will require accessing DEI data.

Challenge assumptions

The motivations around philanthropy have been generalized among all donors for a very long time. Using interviews and focus group studies that help us learn more benefits us all as professionals. Recognizing that motivations vary by race and ethnicity challenges the false assumption that diverse donors are "new and emerging," and not philanthropic.[9]

"… For nonprofits to attract donations from diverse donors, organizations need to deepen awareness and engagement of changing ethnic identities and to be aware of the needs and motivations of the communities from which they are seeking funds. …"[10]

Specific tactics to increase opportunities for meaningful diverse engagement:[11]

> Create meaningful engagement opportunities: Nonprofit organizations should emphasize authentic and meaningful ways to collaborate and to engage with donors of color as trusted advisors on programmatic impact and strategic steps for the organization.

> Establish identity-based giving opportunities: Build leadership opportunities into identity-based giving mechanisms, such as giving circles, can provide leadership opportunities for donors of color.

> Consider expanding board and volunteer member influence: Democratize the philanthropic process by creating space for donors to be directly involved in decision-making for the organization.

> Examine the definition of donor and giving: Expand the definition of giving to include: volunteering and in-kind contributions, as well as the concept of mutual aid.

> Expand the fundraising cycle to be more inclusive: The fundraising cycle—from cultivation to stewardship practices—should be inclusive of all these forms of generosity.

Case studies

Florida International University Foundation (FIUF) created the Office of Inclusive Philanthropy to "bring together development professionals, alumni, and community partners from diverse backgrounds to inform, implement, and evaluate philanthropic strategies and programming to advance system change."[12] Among the several targeted equity outcomes are diversity in giving, accessible communities, and DEI philanthropic leadership. These outcomes center understanding the diversity of communities and using that data to inform strategies and tactics. (*https://issuu.com/fiupublications/docs/ adv_foip_case_statement_060122_1*)

Indiana University Alumni Association (IUAA) aims to cultivate belonging among their community, deepen alumni loyalty, and strengthen alumni relations. Each of these goals include a data-informed strategy that will track the progress and share out measurable outcomes against customized goals. IUAA is using a combination of metrics, trainings, and internal examinations to achieve their goals, all of which need access to DEI analysis to achieve richer engagement outcomes. (*https://alumni.iu.edu/about/mission/org- plan.html*)

The University of Utah Healthcare System shares governance and decision-making demographics data for their influential campus councils for transparent and open engagement. The Utah Healthcare System understands the changing diversity of the community and "recognizes the strong and positive impact a diverse collective of faculty, staff, students, and alumni can have on issues of health equity and the valuable role our College can play in reducing health disparities for all populations. …" As a result, this organization

is removing systemic barriers to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging by building transparency is philanthropy and aligning DEI fundraising teams within their key healthcare units. https://uofuhealth.utah.edu/inclusion

The Urban Institute, a healthcare nonprofit organization, used DEI and experience-based data to address their issues centering on a lack of diversity, inclusion and belonging. They created *a roadmap* to guide their work in transforming Urban, and holding themselves accountable. This included an internal census of race and ethnicity, hence the need for access to DEI data both internal and external. The roadmap included a recruitment and hiring strategy to target outreach and engagement to groups that have been historically under-represented at Urban and in the non-profit field.

(*https://www.urban.org/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/dei-journey-and-data*)

Conclusion

Be in an active conversation when it comes to DEI data, engagement and philanthropic outcomes. Knowing your constituents means understanding their pathways to and through your organization. Understanding who your constituents are, what their stories are, and what's important to them, will help you engage them in a meaningful and important way. Much of this can be done using existing data; some of it can be done through collecting new data. Set up metrics and accountability measures for how DEI data will be used and what it means to effectively use DEI data to inform engagement strategies.

Courageous communication: being thoughtful to respond when traumatic events occur

When traumatic events such as social injustices and terroristic events occur, organizations have a responsibility to address or respond to these events to the public, to their stakeholders and to their employees. Drezner (2018) points out that, "a person's sense of self is tied to their social identity group, both affronts and moments of pride to members of that group are often viewed as affront to or pride for oneself." Sensitive situations such as police brutality against Black Americans and shootings in schools require organizations to be thoughtful in their approach and to address these situations with sensitive, tactful, communication. Storing DEI data on employees, stakeholders, donors and the surrounding community will allow organizations to understand their audience and address traumatic situations knowledgeably and respectfully.

Intentional DEI data collection

To do this, DEI data collection must be completed intentionally, using foundational guidelines for

collecting the data, having an organizational mission statement that aligns the data with the organization's goals and values, and considering ethics for proper use of the data. Collecting as much data as possible is tempting and trendy as it allows databases and data warehouses to seem abundant. However, Roberts & Thomas-Hunt (2023) warn against hoarding data for the sake of having it versus collecting purposefully. The meaningful collection of data allows organizations to "paint a picture" of their employee and stakeholder makeup. This picture can help the organization determine what direction it needs to go in moving forward regarding its DEI efforts and to hone in on any necessary changes that need to be made to reach those goals. Even if the data "picture" is a little blurry at first, as organizations continue to collect data intentionally, with their DEI data goals and objectives in mind, the information that the data reveals will eventually become substantial enough for action. Howson (2021) also warns that organizations must not shy away from whatever reality the data reveals. It is tempting for organizations to want to "hide" data or

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obscure the reality that DEI data presents. Doing so thwarts DEI efforts and removes any opportunity for improvement on behalf of the organization. On the contrary, transparency with data collection builds trust "and fosters a belief that the organization is ready to move forward with actions" when social injustices occur (Roberts & Thomas-Hunt, 2023).

Embracing people narratives as DEI data points

To further understand organizational culture, Roberts & Thomas-Hunt suggest taking into account the perspectives of constituents. When trying to understand the social makeup of an organization, employee testimonies and accounts allow a more in depth perspective of how diversity, equity, and inclusion exists (if at all) in the organization. Understanding an organization's current DEI status can inform DEI data points (Roberts & Thomas-

Hunt, 2023). When the data accurately represents the people working in the organization and in the surrounding community, organizations are better aligned to respond when traumatic events occur.

Conclusion

An organization's ability to respond to social injustices and national tragedy is partially dependent upon its capacity to understand where and how it makes a difference in the surrounding community. Understanding how (or if) DEI exists at the organization creates the ability for organizations to appropriately voice concerns shared by the surrounding community and internal stakeholders. Purposefully collecting DEI data points and sharing them transparently allows organizations to establish trust with their employees, and to become more responsible entities in their communities when social injustices take place.

Creating an organization culture and communication style that holds space for historically excluded populations

Recent trends have pushed organizations to collect more employee DEI data. Specifically, organizations want to know what diversity, equity and inclusion looks like for their institution. Howson (2021) points out that the most recent socio economic crises (i.e. the pandemic and police brutality against Black Americans) have created a sense of urgency surrounding DEI data for organizations internally, not just externally. Proper data collection at the forefront allows individual DEI data to be entered and evaluated appropriately and accurately. In other words, establishing clear intentions for DEI data when it's collected will allow organizations to use it in the most effective way for itself. In turn, this information will be able to present a clear and actionable picture of the organization which will allow it to move forward with its DEI goals.

Organizations must learn how to present data in a way that is honest, accurate, and ethical. Foremost, they must learn how to capture the data correctly

(Howson, 2021). Organizations must be clear with their intentions for capturing data and must identify the needs the institution has for collection. Transparency with its internal stakeholders is just as important as transparency with constituents regarding DEI data information and data points. Organizations need to be clear about what is being collected, the purpose for collection,and what impact the collected data will have on the organization and its employees. Being open and honest about the results of analysis of the collected data is key to understanding the current dynamic of the organization as well as setting customized DEI data goals that the organization can reach to achieve once the data is made clear.

Avoiding data gaps

Organizations are discovering that data points surrounding their employees' DEI information is a priority when trying to gauge DEI efforts. Howson

(2021) suggests that data gaps are a critical issue surrounding DEI data metrics. Thus, human resources information and databases are a starting point when gauging DEI data and filling gaps. Working with your organization's Human resource department and legal team will help ensure that employees have the best options for self-selecting their DEI information by informing these entities of how employees prefer to identify. For example, adding options such as "non-binary" or providing write in options for race will allow human resource teams to better tailor DEI information. Considering the sensitive nature of DEI data, employees must be able to trust their organization with their information. Transparency surrounding the purpose and usage of the data collected should be utilized.

Howson (2021) also mentions using innovative ways or "thinking outside of the box" when it comes to discovering data gaps. Howson also suggests using innovative techniques such as "using interviews, focus groups, case studies and other forms of qualitative inquiry" to determine DEI data gaps in the organization. Spotlighting data gaps allows organizations to avoid marginalizing certain groups of people and highlighting others. For example, applications like Teams and Zoom can help you determine the dynamics of certain departments such as "if women are more frequently interrupted during meetings and how much, or who speaks up the most and who stays quiet" (Howson, 2021). Howson provides the examples of "hiring people of color only in low-paying or entry-level roles or only hiring women in departments already heavily skewed toward women, such as HR and marketing." Instances like these are gaps in data that can misrepresent and skew DEI data.

Discovering & remediating data gaps

Queries are a tool that can be used to help discover gaps in DEI data across different roles and across different departments in an organization (Howson, 2021). Querying data by categories allows teams and managers to spot any troubling variations and take steps to address them. For example, querying certain departments, committees, and boards, and other groups that exist within the organization can allow organizations to discover any disproportions related to DEI. Roberts and Thomas-Hunt (2023) suggest

organizing DEI data into intersectional matrices that will allow the organization to "improve the quality and impact of DEI data." Roberts et al. (2023) also suggest that organizations "partner with social scientists who are skilled in examining DEI dynamics and relevant outcomes, guided by a spirit of inquiry and organizational transparency and [are] committed to protecting the vulnerability of those numerical minorities and or others with less positive experiences at work" (Roberts & Thomas-Hunt, 2023).

Risks and data governance

Once DEI data is acquired and stored, there must be checks in place to make sure that only relevant individuals have access to it. There are risks to having identity related information stored centrally, so it is important to have policies and procedures in place to safeguard the data. Security and privacy must be considered when devising these processes and procedures. Organizations need to establish checks and balances that not only include who can see data points and receive it but why an individual is allowed access. Having these systems and policies in place will help create the trust necessary to disclose this sensitive data and prevent any abuse or unnecessary disclosure.

Conclusion

Creating space for historically excluded individuals requires transparency with employees' DEI data regarding the use of collected data, its source and the purpose of collection. Discovering data gaps, identifying risks of storage, and considering privacy, security, and data governance are factors that play a role when collecting sensitive DEI data points. Ultimately, an organization must be committed to its DEI goals and the ethical, honest, and accurate usage of the DEI data points of its employees, as well as its overall constituent pool. When utilized correctly, the information will be able to create space for traditionally marginalized people which will establish a beneficial image for the organization as well as provide historically excluded individuals the same opportunities as traditionally non-marginalized groups.

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References/Appendix

Data Acquisition

Ethical considerations and security concerns in DEI data collection

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