



Two Ways to Align Talent Development with Your Equity Goals

Many nonprofit leaders agree—now more than ever—that having a culture that reflects their organizations' values of equity and inclusion is critical. (**Equity** refers to the fair and respectful treatment of all people. **Inclusion** means that all individuals feel respected, accepted and valued.) But culture isn't a “thing” in and of itself. You can't press a button to change your organizational culture. Rather, it's a product of people and how their behavior and values shape your organization every day. Talent development, and how the people in your organization manage and support one another, is a key driver of culture. If inclusion and equity are important to you, your talent development practices should reflect these values.

One way to ensure this happens is by weaving equity and inclusion through the set of competencies you use as a foundation for talent development. Competencies are the set of skills, knowledge, and mindsets that your leaders need in order to drive your organizational goals. Having a competency-based approach to development can be powerful because it aligns all of your leaders on what “good” looks like, and it makes what might have previously been implicit, explicit. If having a culture of equity and inclusion is your goal, then you need to bake it into your competency framework so that you appropriately help your current and emerging leaders develop the necessary skills.

So how can you make sure your competency framework reflects your values around equity and inclusion? There are two ways to approach this challenge:

1. Identify a set of specific competencies that focus on equity-centered behaviors—such as “demonstrates cultural humility,” “brings an equity lens to the work,” or “values and prioritizes inclusivity.” It's important to remember that competencies aren't binary, where “you have them or you don't.” Rather, a leader can learn to be more proficient in competencies over time. For this reason, it's helpful to outline scaled definitions for each of your competencies. (For examples, download this [set of sample competencies](#).) These scaled definitions provide a roadmap so that all your leaders can see a pathway to developing and improving their competencies.

2. Another approach, which can complement these equity-specific competencies, is to infuse equity and inclusion across all of your competencies, including competencies like “communication,” “decision making,” and “critical thinking.” You might, for example, note that equitable decision making should incorporate input from diverse perspectives and stakeholders, including staff and clients.

Crafting competencies is just one part of creating inclusive talent practices. To read about a broader set of practices, see this article on [inclusive talent development](#).

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