



# Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity in Community Foundations

## ***Choosing an Organizational Paradigm for Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity***

---

When community and civic leaders come together to “address” or “strengthen” diversity in their organization it is unlikely that each person concept or picture of what a “strengthened” organization looks like will be exactly the same. Whether the objective is to strengthen capacity around diversity or the use of technology, building an shared understanding of what success looks like (and feels like) is an essential aspect of organizational change. In this session your team will have the opportunity to think about and discuss a range of organizational paradigms and practices for responding to diversity.

The suggested questions and guidelines for discussion presented here are based on concepts presented in two publications shared with LBE Network Members. Your teams members should be asked to read them prior to this session. The first, article Making Difference Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity (Harvard Business Review September 1996), written by David A. Thomas and Robin J. Ely examines different approaches for responding to diversity in corporate America. A second reading is excerpted from *Improving Race Relations and Undoing Racism: Roles and Strategies for Community Foundations* (Rainbow Research 2001). We have attached copies of excerpted pages from the Rainbow Research. For copies of the Harvard Business Review article see: [http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b02/en/hbr/hbr\\_home.jhtml](http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b02/en/hbr/hbr_home.jhtml)

### **Overview of Session**

---

- **Discussion of paradigms for embracing diversity.**
  - **Discussion of what would it look like to embrace that paradigm (i.e., what organizational culture and practices would flow from our paradigm?).**
  - **Group assessment of where the foundation is now and where do we want to go.**
- 

*Diversity is not something just for minorities. It is an organizational issue related to efficacy and much more. It is not simply about a list of things we do. It is about who we truly are.*

*Geneva Johnson, Trustee, The Greater Milwaukee Foundation*

---

# Diversity Paradigm for the Foundation:

---

## (Self-Reflection)

First take a few moments to think about the various approaches for embracing diversity you have been reading about and discussing in this effort. Taking into account your own personal values, experiences, and intents regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity, what paradigm for addressing diversity do you want your foundation to operate under?

Consider the basic paradigms outlined in the Thomas & Ely article in the Harvard Business Review:

Based on either “the Discrimination-and-Fairness” or the “Access-and-Legitimacy” model, “workplace diversity is about increasing racial, [culture], national, gender, or class representation—in other words, recruiting and retaining more people from traditionally underrepresented groups.”

In the “Learning and Effectiveness” model “companies have developed an outlook on diversity that enables them to incorporate employees’ perspectives into the main work of the organization and enhance work by rethinking primary tasks and redefining markets, products, strategies, missions, business practices, and even cultures.” This new model for managing diversity lets the organization internalize difference among employees [and trustees] so that it learns and grows because of them. Indeed, with the model fully in place, members of the organization can say, We are all on the same team, *with* our difference—not *despite* them.”

## (Group Discussion)

Then share and discuss with your team members which of the two approaches resonates more with your diversity, inclusion, and equity values, experiences, and intents; and Why?

Do you have agreement on one paradigm, what steps can you take to reach such an agreement?

What about other important stakeholders in your foundation? Which paradigm do you think the whole organization is ready to embrace?

## *Eight Preconditions for Making the Paradigm Shift*

1. “The leadership must understand that a diverse workforce will embody different perspectives and approaches to work, and truly value variety of opinion and insight...”
2. The leadership must recognize both the learning opportunities and the challenges that the expression of different perspectives presents for an organization...be committed to persevering during the long process of learning and relearning that the new paradigm requires...
3. The organizational culture must create an expectation of high standards and performance from everyone...
4. The organizational culture must stimulate personal development...such a culture brings out people’s full range of useful knowledge and skills...through careful design of jobs that allow people to grow and develop, but also through training and education programs...
5. The organizational culture must encourage openness...such a culture instills a high tolerance for debate and supports constructive conflict in work-related matters...
6. The culture must make workers feel valued...a culture that helps workers feel comfortable in taking the initiative to apply their skills and experiences in new ways...
7. The organization must have a well-articulated and widely understood mission...that grounds and guides discussions about work-related changes that staff members might suggest...
8. The organization must have a relatively egalitarian, non-bureaucratic structure...its important to have a structure that promotes the exchange of ideas and welcomes constructive challenges to the usual way of doing...leaders must retain the organization’s efficiency-promoting control systems and chains of command while finding ways to reshape the change-resisting-mind-set of the classic bureaucracy.”

## Organizational Culture & Practices:

---

Now take a few minutes to consider the organizational shifts and practices outlined the Rainbow Research report and the Harvard Business Review article. Review the “Stages in the Journey” continuum presented in narrative and chart form by Rainbow Research and the “Eight Preconditions for “making the paradigm shift” by Thomas and Ely in the Harvard Business Review article.

- Pick 5-10 practices listed in Rainbow Research’s Stages 2-5 that you would like to see assimilated effectively into your own foundation over the next 3-6 years? If you would modify or add to the practices how would you do so?
- What 3-4 organizational cultural shifts identified (or implied) in Rainbow Research’s Stages 2-5 do you think would assist your foundation in effectively implementing those practices over the next 3-8 years?
- Finally, which of the Thomas and Ely’s “Preconditions” for making a paradigm shift (listed below) do you believe are most relevant and needed to achieve success in this diversity, inclusion, and equity change process?

### *Stages in the Journey*

- 1) Passively perpetuating divisions and disparities**
- 2) Beginning to recognize diversity**
- 3) Valuing Diversity**
- 4) Actively Multicultural**
- 5) Actively Multicultural and Anti-Racist**

## Current Baseline Picture of Foundation:

---

Now, take some time to think about and discuss the following questions about how diversity is understood and structured in your foundation. Where do you believe your community foundation currently is on its journey to becoming



the inclusive and equitable foundation your team has envisioned? What organizational paradigm is currently embraced? What practices are already well established?

What paradigm does your team think best fits the foundation’s mission and current objectives? What shifts in thinking and practices are needed to move toward a full embracing of this paradigm or integrate some of the practices? Is there a relationship between embracing a new paradigm and integrating and sustaining new practices?

What can your team do help others in the adopt any new thinking and practices you are envisioning for the foundation?

---

**Notes & Next Steps:**

---



Copyright 2003