CHECKLIST

Recommendations to Incorporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Grant-Making

Arabella Advisors

Grant-Making Strategy	
	Discuss with board/staff how much they would like DEI to be incorporated in the priorities of the foundation and in the criteria to assess grant applicants
	Design a due diligence process / grantmaking criteria that explicitly mitigates implicit bias and levels the playing field for smaller organizations which may serve minorities, are led and staffed by minorities, and use culturally responsive approaches which may not be "evidence-based"
	Discuss with board/staff how much risk they are willing to tolerate: e.g., funding smaller organizations which have lower capacity and potentially unstable finances
	Consider unrestricted, multi-year grants. If grants are only one year, be up front with grantees about this, as well as the process to renew their funding year to year.
	Consider grants for capacity building including professional development, especially for smaller, under-resourced organizations.
Advisory Board Recruitment and Management	
	Include one or more grantees and/or beneficiaries on the advisory board. Consider the racial/ethnic, gender, income diversity of the board.
	Embed DEI in governance documents and train board in DEI principles
Grant Applicant Identification, Research, and Outreach	
	Conduct more in-depth research to vet organizations before you invite them to apply, so that the research burden falls on the grant maker
	Poll grantees, community foundations, intermediary organizations, community leaders to learn about strong grassroots organizations
	Conduct outreach to wide range of potential applicants and hold an open call for grant applications (or balance the number of applications received via an open call versus those invited). Create a short online screening questionnaire for interested orgs; use responses to determine whom to invite to submit a full application.
Grant Application Process	
	Consider a limited timeline from first contact with applicants to when they receive an award (e.g., 3-6 months). Create rapid-response processes that are more flexible, nimble, timely, and responsive in awarding grants (e.g., emergency/contingency grants). Consider receiving applications and awarding grants on a rolling basis. This can be critical for smaller organizations since they have greater budget sensitivities and therefore time-sensitive priorities.
	Give stipends to applicants who do not receive grants to compensate them for the time they spent on the application (e.g., $1,000 for a 10-hour process)
	Consider eliminating the written grant application altogether. Possibly replace the process with site visits and conversations with the applicant organizations.
	Allow applicants to submit proposals prepared for other funders or common applications
	Build capacity of grantees to develop strong grant applications. Clarify and demystify the grant-making selection, process, and timeline. Offer to review drafts of grant applications from smaller organizations to provide feedback before official submission. Give honest feedback to orgs on their applications. Hold info sessions.
	Give smaller organizations additional time to submit their applications (e.g., two additional weeks)
	Collect feedback about number of hours to go through application process and ways to improve it, from applicants, via a question on the application or survey

Download the full 7-page version of the checklist here: www.EquityinPhilanthropy.org. Questions? Please email Nancy Chan at nhchan@gmail.com.

Please also refer to the Stanford Social Innovation Review article, "Eliminating Implicit Bias in Grantmaking Practice": https://ssir.org/articles/entry/eliminating_implicit_bias_in_grantmaking_practice

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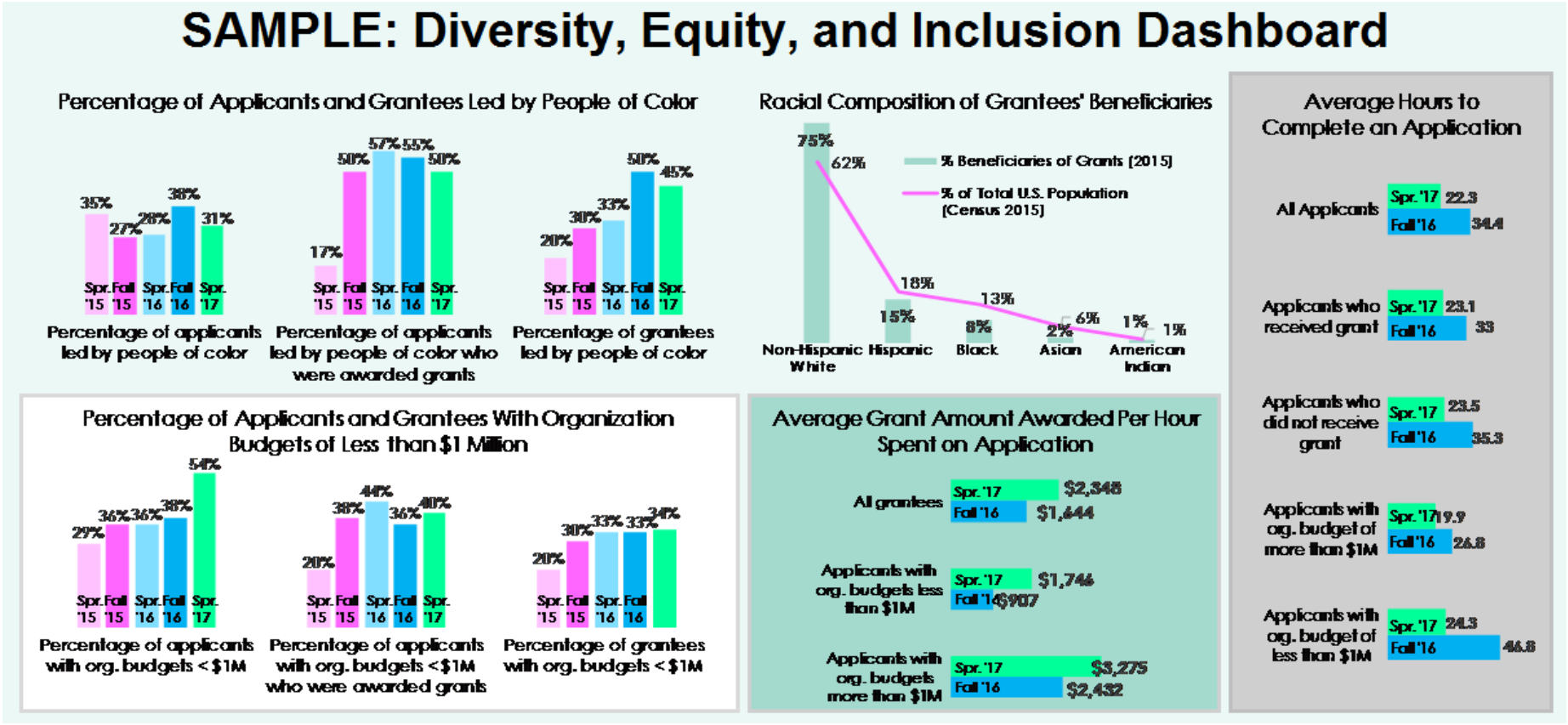
Request for Proposal (RFP)	
	Make grant application short and concise to minimize burden on applicants. Keep the application process under 10-15 hours (depending on the grant award amount, in some cases the application should only take 2-3 hours to fill out). Allow applicants to submit proposals prepared for other funders or common applications. Eliminate strict character limits for responses to application questions: instead provide guidance on range of number of characters or words.
	Make sure that questions are clear and not duplicative. Use lay language and avoid using technical jargon in application form
	Do not require applicants to translate their project budget into your budget format, OR provide a simple, flexible budget template
	Ask about how perspectives of beneficiaries (and the community) are included in program design and delivery
	Ask about demographics (e.g., ethnic/racial, gender, income diversity) of organization's beneficiaries, board members, and staff members
	Ask about cultural competency of staff, where appropriate
	Ask applicants how they currently measure success and what metrics they already collect
	Give applicants the option to provide a budget narrative so that they can explain any financial circumstances
Due Diligence and Grant Decision Making	
	As you are making decisions about grants to award, consider what your overall portfolio looks like and where there might be "gaps" in terms of diversity. For example, use a dashboard displaying with grantee portfolio characteristics. Understand the board/staff's tolerance for funding higher-risk organizations.
	Be aware about how your due diligence process may be biased towards well-resourced organizations with greater capacity. Decide ahead of time to award a certain amount of funding to smaller organizations, and compare applications from smaller organizations against each other.
	Be aware of how your due diligence process may favor "evidence-based" practices. Many research studies traditionally focus on white populations.
	Use a "peer-review grant making" process (e.g., advisory board and grantees vote on applications; or applicants vote on anonymized applications)
	Do not over-rely on a scorecard / scoring rubric to determine funding decisions. It is hard to capture nuances and complexities in a simple application score.
	Communicate directly with applicants when you have questions about their applications
Grantee Reporting and Evaluation	
	Have realistic expectations for grantee results based on the grant amount and grant period, intervention, and target population
	Work with grantees to determine which metrics to collect, based on their organizational capacity as well as the data they already collect
	Make reports (and metrics) streamlined and easy for grantees to fill out. Consider check-in calls or site visits with grantees instead of formal reports.
	Consider asking grantees to submit reports they have already drafted for other funders
	Pay for data collection / evaluation efforts, and/or provide technical assistance to grantees with evaluation
	Deepen understanding of and be open to different types of evaluation, e.g. participatory evaluation
Other Grantee Management	
	Develop relationships with grantee program staff. Have an open-door communications policy with grantees. Host restorative retreats for grantees.
	Create a simple grant renewal process for grantees: allow grantees to submit a combined final grant report and proposal for continued work
	Streamline grantee processes for project timeline extensions and budget modifications
	Encourage feedback from grantees. Consider offering anonymous mechanisms for grantees to submit candid feedback.
	Provide additional support beyond funding, e.g., connecting grantees with other organizations and funders, being a sounding board, etc.

DEI Dashboard



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