measure

THE **NEW** PHILANTHROPISTS

BREAKING BARRIERS: BRIDGING THE NONPROFIT BOARD REPRESENTATION GAP

a lived-experience data black paper

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ABOUT MEASURE

Measure, an Austin-based nonprofit, works to support people impacted by social disparities and the accompanying narrative. Measure believes that, when used strategically, data provides a common language upon which community members can meet and increase their knowledge about the causes and work together to create equitable change and increase awareness. Measure has a mission to mobilize communities that are furthest from the opportunity to fight against systematic disparities in health, economics, criminalization, and education through the Measure CARE Model and other anti-racist evaluation tools. The organization's vision is for powerful Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities to have access to information that will support them to self-advocate toward an antiracist and equitable future.

ABOUT THE NEW PHILANTHROPISTS

Since 2017, The New Philanthropists (TNP) has been working to create more racially diverse and inclusive nonprofit boards in Austin. TNP has a vision that they believe will enable nonprofits to be more effective stewards of public trust so that their communities are better served. With a mission that cultivates diversity, equity, and inclusion values on nonprofit boards, TNP creates opportunities and facilitates connections that prepare leaders of color to gain access and opportunity into board service, in conjunction with promoting a board leadership model where all can thrive through an anti-racist comprehensive process.
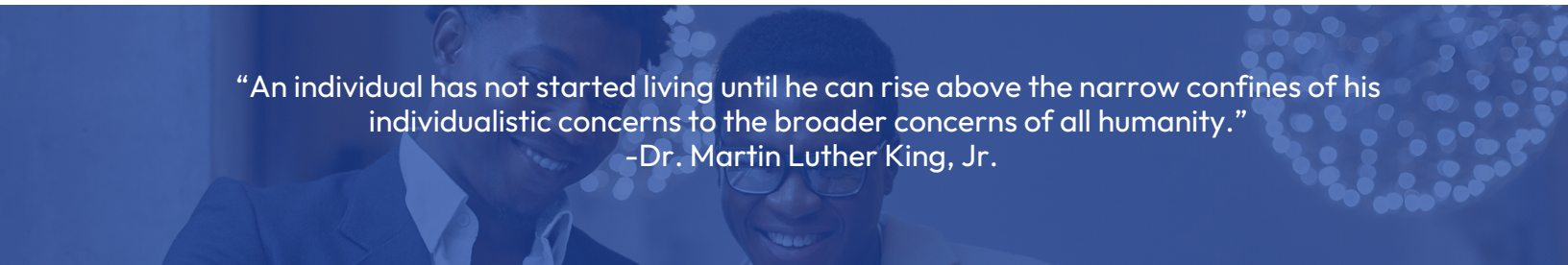
In alignment with its mission, TNP provides the Board Mentors of Color Program for leaders of color who are new to nonprofit board service or are experienced board members. This program supports board members of color by matching them with established community leaders as mentors in order to develop community leadership skills, build and deepen community relationships, and gain support in navigating Austin nonprofit boards. In order to become a "mentee," TNP hosts an open application process and selects 50 leaders to participate in the program annually. Over the course of four meetings over one year, program participants are matched with mentors in a group mentoring model to learn from each other's experiences, understand how to overcome barriers within leadership circles, and practice DEI values to strengthen their leadership initiatives. Since 2019, TNP has had 201 mentees and 41 mentors participate in this program. Learn more about The New Philanthropists on their website: https://www.tnpaustin.org/.

For more information, please see:
1. About - WE MEASURE. Accessed June 23, 2023. https://wemeasure.org/about/
2. About - The New Philanthropists. Accessed June 23, 2023. https://www.tnpaustin.org/the-mission/

The Board Mentors of Color Program provides leaders with a plethora of opportunities and benefits, including:

- The expansion of their philanthropic efforts and knowledge.
- Providing the forum and opportunity for participants to share lived experiences that are relevant to their backgrounds, community perspectives, and culture.
- Increased knowledge sharing among participants through a group mentoring model.
- Increased knowledge of how to navigate Austin nonprofit boards and professional networks.

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."
-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

THE PROBLEM

Nonprofit boards have often been composed of individuals who have historically held positions of power and privilege (Boardsource, 2021). This historical imbalance can create a cycle where existing board members tend to recruit individuals similar to themselves, leading to a lack of diversity and representation. Unconscious biases can impact the selection process for board members. Biases can inadvertently exclude candidates from underrepresented groups. These biases can be particularly influential when decisions are made based on subjective criteria rather than objective qualifications.

According to a 2019 report, 78% of board members were White and rarely represented the communities they served (Boardsource, 2021). Nonprofits may not have robust outreach and recruitment strategies focused on diversifying their boards. Lack of targeted outreach to underrepresented communities can result in a limited pool of diverse candidates. Additionally, nonprofits may not have explicit diversity and inclusion goals or policies, further perpetuating the lack of diversity.

Sources
Leading with Intent: BoardSource Index of Nonprofit Board Practices (Washington, D.C.: BoardSource, 2021).

Underrepresented groups may face systemic barriers that hinder their access to nonprofit leadership roles. These barriers can include limited resources, a lack of mentorship opportunities, discriminatory practices, or socio-economic disparities (Boardsource, 2021). Overcoming these barriers requires intentional efforts to provide equitable access to leadership positions.

Board members are typically recruited through personal networks and relationships. If the existing board lacks diversity, their personal networks are likely to reflect the same demographics and way of thinking, resulting in a "cloning effect" (Andrade, 2021). This can make it challenging for individuals from underrepresented groups to gain access to board positions, as they may not have the same level of connections or visibility within those networks.

The New Philanthropists and Measure partnered to evaluate the TNP Board Mentors of Color program, which provides mentorship to people of color seeking the skills to navigate Austin nonprofit boards. The New Philanthropists leadership recognized the need to capture the mentorship program's impact on mentees and better understand the leadership community, their needs, and what is important to them as it relates to mentorship and board experience. Ultimately, these insights will contribute to increased nonprofit board representation in Austin and ultimately the dismantling of stereotypes and inequitable policies and protocols that have historically defined board membership.

Sources

Leading with Intent: BoardSource Index of Nonprofit Board Practices (Washington, D.C.: BoardSource, 2021).

Andrade, S. (2021, September 27). Why diversity on nonprofit boards is crucial to their mission. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/09/27/why-diversity-on-nonprofit-boards-is-crucial-to-their-mission/?sh=36d96e2e1d05

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The need for TNP's services to build a pipeline to leadership for people of color, and cultivate diversity, equity, and inclusion among mainstream nonprofit boards stems from a long history of inequity, racism, and discrimination in the United States as a whole and specifically within the nonprofit sector. An overview of key historic events over time, starting from the beginnings of organizational inequity in private companies as early as the 17th century, through the growth of nonprofits into the 20th century alongside the Civil Rights movement, leading up to the present day, where the hundreds of years of under-representation and privilege have systemic effects on how nonprofits are led and how boards operate, is present in the timeline. Use the link to view the timeline in a larger format.

METHODOLOGY

Annually since 2019, participants have been recruited from the Austin area by TNP leadership to participate in the Board Mentors of Color program. Program information and application materials were made available on the TNP website, relevant listservs, and social media groups for local organizations that provide support services and resources for the Central Texas community. In addition to sharing their professional background and board experiences, Board Mentors of Color applicants were asked the following questions in their application (referenced as "Candidate Application" in this report):

- Why is board service important to you?
- What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?
- What makes you an ideal candidate for The Board Mentors of Color Program?

Historical timeline link:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAFprfcbmPE/3gd-_oW7U2-g6lvGLPbsDA/view?
utm_content=DAFprfcbmPE&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink

METHODOLOGY CONTINUED...

Additionally, TNP sends an annual survey to selected mentees after the program (referenced as "Mentee Survey" in this report), which asks respondents to rate the value of the program, overall experience with their mentor, and overall experience of the program, and collects qualitative feedback about what the mentees like about the program and suggestions they may have to improve the program. The purpose of the survey is so that TNP can make continuous changes to programming in order to make it the best experience for the mentee by listening and learning from their feedback.

A team of two Certified Measure Educators facilitated the quantitative and qualitative data analysis processes. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify, organize, and report prevalent themes from this project. The evaluators identified relevant excerpts from the participant responses as codes. The codes were then grouped to formulate overarching themes. Finally, after comprehensive discussion and refinement of each theme during weekly discussions, six major themes emerged. According to Gilgun (2005), "The use of the first person and of direct quotes is a way of acknowledging that the voices of researchers and those whom we research are not the same yet are interconnected" (p. 259). Hence, this paper includes several direct quotes from participants with the intention of honoring their voices, while sharing their experiences. With the aim of trustworthiness, preliminary findings were shared with Measure leaders in tandem with TNP leadership.

Sources

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Gilgun J. F. (2005). "Grab" and good science: Writing up the results of qualitative research. Qualitative Health Research, 15, 256-262.

CANDIDATE APPLICATION DEMOGRAPHICS

The Candidate Application received a total of 225 unique respondents from 2019 to 2023, 13 of which applied multiple years. Candidate demographics are broken down as follows:

Candidate Application Demographics

2019

Total applicants: 63

Unique companies/organizations represented: 63
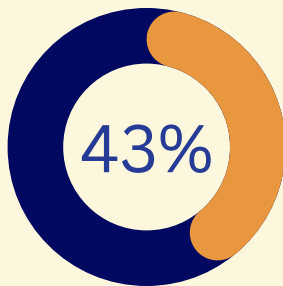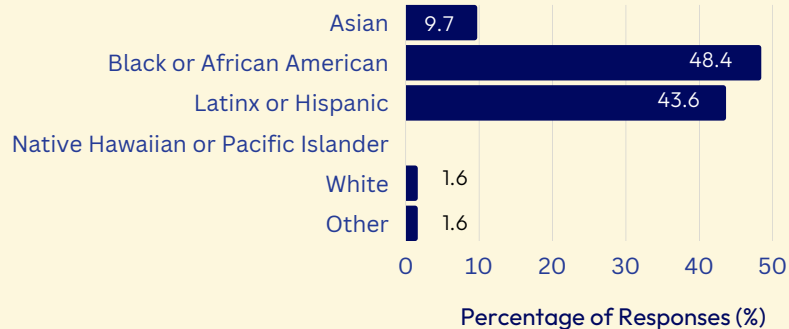
Figure 1. Currently serving on nonprofit boards

43%

Figure 2. Ethnicity/Racial Identification*

Asian	9.7
Black or African American	48.4
Latinx or Hispanic	43.6
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
White	1.6
Other	1.6

0 10 20 30 40 50

Percentage of Responses (%)

*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100% as respondents were able to select more than one option when asked to select the ethnicity or race to which they most closely identify.

2020

Total applicants: 69

Unique companies/organizations represented: 62
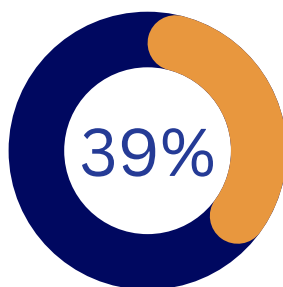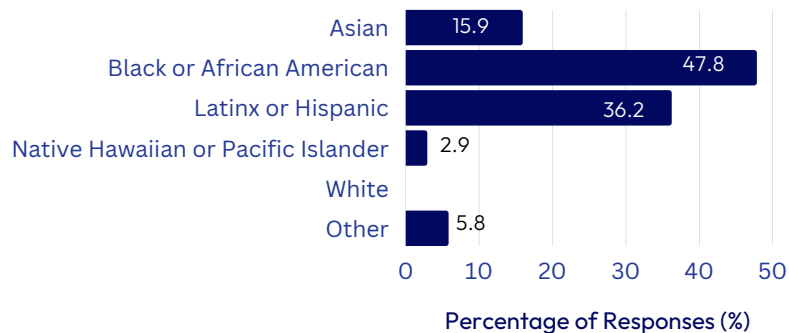
Figure 3. Currently serving on nonprofit boards

39%

Figure 4. Ethnicity/Racial Identification*

Asian	15.9
Black or African American	47.8
Latinx or Hispanic	36.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2.9
White	
Other	5.8

0 10 20 30 40 50

Percentage of Responses (%)

*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100% as respondents were able to select more than one option when asked to select the ethnicity or race to which they most closely identify.

CANDIDATE APPLICATION DEMOGRAPHICS CONTINUED...

2021

Total applicants: 51

Unique companies/organizations represented: 51

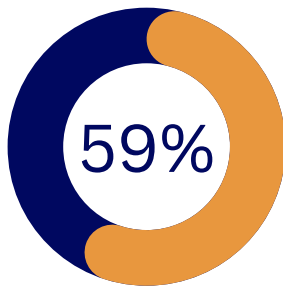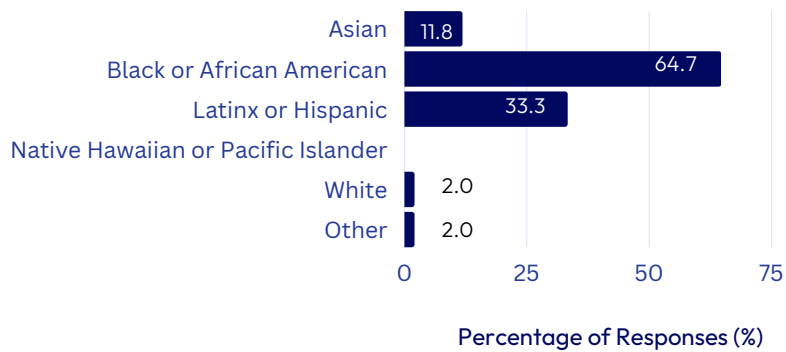Figure 5. Currently serving on nonprofit boards

59%

Figure 6. Ethnicity/Racial Identification*

Category	Percentage
Asian	11.8
Black or African American	64.7
Latinx or Hispanic	33.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
White	2.0
Other	2.0

Percentage of Responses (%)

*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100% as respondents were able to select more than one option when asked to select the ethnicity or race to which they most closely identify.

In 2021, for those that responded "Yes," experience level varied, with 70% of applicants that have served on a board indicating less than 5 years of experience.

2022

Total applicants: 56

Unique companies/organizations represented: 56

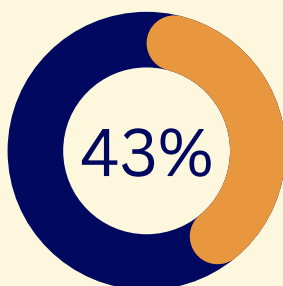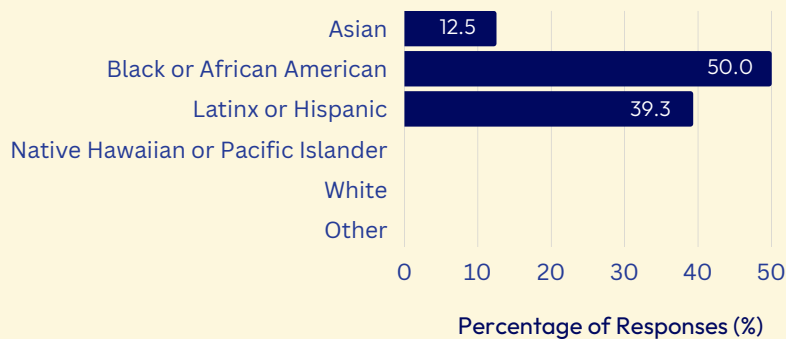Figure 7. Currently serving on nonprofit boards

43%

Figure 8. Ethnicity/Racial Identification*

Category	Percentage
Asian	12.5
Black or African American	50.0
Latinx or Hispanic	39.3
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
White	
Other	

Percentage of Responses (%)

*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100% as respondents were able to select more than one option when asked to select the ethnicity or race to which they most closely identify.

In 2022, for those that responded "Yes," experience level varied, with 74% of applicants that have served on a board indicating less than 5 years of experience.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FOR ANNUAL MENTEE SURVEY

The Annual Mentee Survey does not collect demographics of the respondents, and responses are anonymous. There were 21 responses from 2020, 4 responses in 2021, 3 in 2022 and 5 in 2023, for a total of 33 responses to the Annual Mentee Survey. In 2020 and 2021, this mentorship program was done virtually which may have had an impact on overall results.

Quantitative Results: Program Feedback

Consolidated quantitative results from the Annual Mentee Survey across four years indicated mostly positive feedback for the program. A majority of the mentees continued to connect with individuals that were a part of the program, whether their mentor or other mentees in their cohort after the program completed.

Key Metrics:
- Over 80% of mentees indicated their overall experience with the program was good or excellent
- The program continues to have an impact on mentees after its completion, as shown by almost half of the participants continuing to meet with their mentor after the program ended.

There were no statistically significant differences year-by-year in the analysis of quantitative survey results. Respondents were able to select more than one response to multiple-choice questions to rate their experience.

Overall program experience, value of the program, and experience with mentors for the mentees that responded to the Annual Mentees survey is summarized below.

Figure 9. TNP Mentorship Program Mentee Experience (2019 - 2022)*
Total responses: 33

Legend: Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor
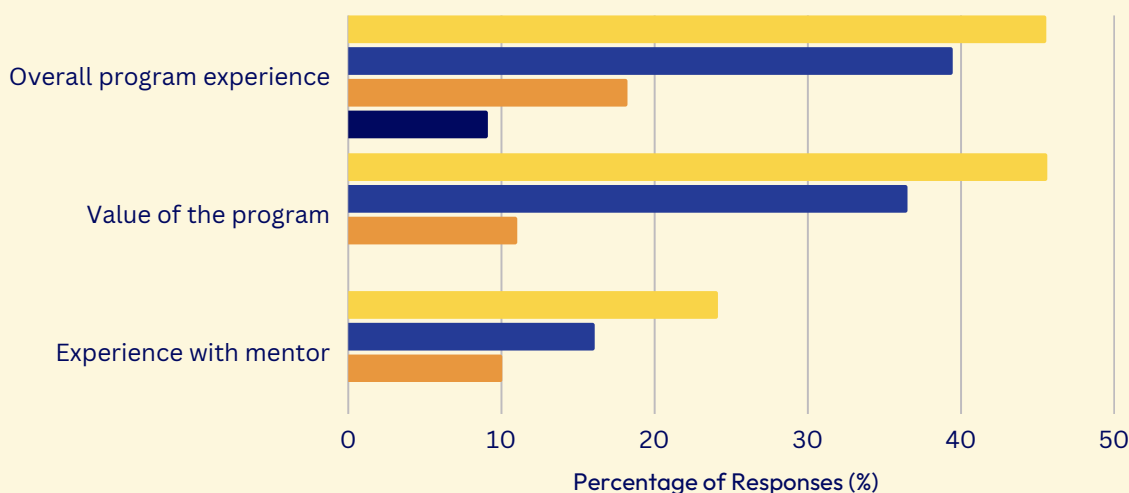
*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100% as respondents were able to select more than one option when asked for feedback on their experience.

X-axis: Percentage of Responses (%)
Categories: Overall program experience, Value of the program, Experience with mentor

Quantitative Results: Post-Program Involvement

Mentees were asked "Are you continuing to meet with your mentor or cohort outside of this program?" and responded as follows:

- 33.3% of mentees indicated they still continued to meet with their cohort after the program finished
- 45.5% of mentees indicated they still continued to meet with their mentor after the program finished
- 24.2% of mentees indicated they still continued to meet with both their cohort and their mentor after the program finished
- 18.2% of mentees indicated they did not continue to meet with their cohort or mentor after the program finished

Mentees were asked "Are you interested in being matched with a nonprofit board?" and responded as follows:

- 63.6% of mentees indicated an interest in being matched with a nonprofit board
- 33.3% of mentees indicated no interest in being matched with a nonprofit board
- 12.1% of mentees were not sure whether they wanted to be matched with a nonprofit board

"What did you like about the program?"

When asked to describe what they liked about the program, almost one-third of respondents cited their experience with their mentor. Members appreciated the diverse members within their mentorship group and/or the fact that the program provided a space to talk about diversity and inclusion in their roles. Connections and networking opportunities with like-minded individuals are very important to the mentees of this program.

"What suggestions do you have to improve the program?"

When offering suggestions for improvements to the program, some themes emerged:

- Respondents requested more structure to the program, whether through guided questions provided to the mentor or in terms of scheduling and expectations
- Expectations or matching were off, whether regarding commitment to the program from the mentors or mentees, or getting more 1:1 time with their mentor
- Several mentees wanted a longer program or more sessions, or to be provided with an exit plan
- A few also requested content specific to board service

OPPORTUNITIES

The mentors themselves have a large impact on the experience the mentees have with the program overall. Most of the mentees have little to no board experience, and this may be their first exposure to what it is like to serve on a board as a leader of color.

Therefore, several opportunities exist:

- Use the program as an educational opportunity for those who are new to board membership
- Invest in mentors with significant board experience that can commit to the program expectations, provide diverse perspectives, and provide a safe space to discuss difficult topics related to board service itself in addition to topics around diversity, equity, and inclusion on nonprofit boards
- Set clear expectations with mentors and mentees to avoid any confusion or frustration with the experience
- There may be an opportunity to facilitate long-term one-on-one mentorship connections, whether separately from the current program or as an addendum to the program once completed by a mentee

THEMATIC ANALYSIS FOR CANDIDATE APPLICATION

Question 1: Why is board service important to you?

Theme #1: I have an obligation to use my voice, skills, expertise, and power to empower, strengthen and serve my community while promoting impactful change.

Almost every applicant who was interested in leadership spoke of wanting to create structures and pathways that resulted in sustained change and community impact. They wanted to use their skills and expertise to support individual organizations in their journey to action. Among participants, there was less focus on the individual benefits of board service. Instead, applicants spoke more of their desire to use their voice to "give voice" to marginalized communities. In addition, they endeavored to use their power to empower and strengthen the communities they were committed to serving. Nonprofits often work toward addressing systemic issues and advocating for policy changes. Applicants agreed that their lived experiences and understanding of social injustices can inform an organization's advocacy strategies, amplify marginalized voices, and help advance policies that promote equity, justice, and positive social impact.

Theme #2: Nonprofit boards need people like me in order to achieve their mission and vision

In acknowledgment of the limited gains in board representation, potential leaders reported the belief that nonprofit boards needed people like them in order to achieve their mission and vision because their unique perspectives, experiences, and skills had the potential to contribute to more effective decision-making, improved governance, and better outcomes for the organization and the communities it serves. Leaders made it clear that diversity was not just limited to race, ethnicity, or gender; but it also included age, education, personal and professional experiences, sexual orientation, religion, and background. By including a wide range of perspectives, applicants believed that boards could better understand the needs of diverse communities and make more informed, strategic, and inclusive decisions.

"When you decide to serve on a board, you are making a commitment to make a bigger impact in your community. As a board member, you have the opportunity to use your voice, to make impactful changes."
– 2019 Applicant

Question 2: What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?

Theme #1: Diversity, equity, and inclusion are rooted in intentionality

Applicants reported that intentionality was at the "heart" of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), which they believed was crucial for creating meaningful and sustainable change within organizations and communities. They believe it involves taking deliberate and purposeful actions to address disparities, promote inclusivity, and dismantle systemic barriers. By being intentional in championing DEI, participants voiced a belief that nonprofit organizations should move beyond tokenism and surface-level diversity to create inclusive spaces that foster belonging, innovation, and equitable opportunities for all. They voiced that DEI requires sustained commitment, collaborative effort, and a willingness to challenge the status quo in order to drive meaningful and lasting change.

Theme #2: DEI efforts should focus on amplifying marginalized voices

Most participants shared the belief that amplifying marginalized voices is an essential aspect of promoting social justice, inclusivity, and empowering those who have historically been silenced or marginalized. They recognize that these voices have unique insights and knowledge that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of societal issues and challenges. Applicants voiced a belief that DEI should actively seek out, value, and listen to these perspectives, in an effort to ensure that marginalized individuals have a say in shaping policies, programs, and decision-making processes that affect their lives, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

"DEI means everyone has the same opportunities to live healthy, purpose-driven lives. The most important aspects of DEI are understanding and intention. I have sat through many "DEI" trainings that truly felt like an obligation, without the intent to identify, address, and eliminate the barriers marginalized populations experience. Successful DEI is founded on the fact that inequities exist in nearly every aspect of society; it takes work to identify, address, and eliminate those barriers."
- 2022 Applicant

Question 3: What makes you an ideal candidate for The Board Mentors of Color Program?

Theme #1: I am willing to learn and grow

Applicants voiced a willingness to continually grow and adapt as a means to effectively contribute to the organization's mission and goals. Nonprofit organizations often tackle complex social issues that require multidimensional thinking and innovative solutions. Most applicants voiced that a willingness to learn in the role of a board member would help to deepen their understanding of these issues, consider diverse perspectives, and engage in critical thinking. They shared the belief that learning fosters openness to new perspectives and ideas. Board members who are willing to learn actively seek out diverse viewpoints, challenge their own assumptions, and promote inclusivity within board discussions. This openness to learning from others encourages collaboration, creativity, and effective decision-making.

Theme #2: It is less about individual benefits; my primary focus is serving my community

A strong commitment to service emerged as a primary theme among mentee applicants. Candidates spoke of being deeply invested in leading change in communities that they grew up in, lived in, or worked in. This commitment was presented as a driver to help leaders maintain focus, dedication, and alignment between board decisions and the organization's purpose and mission. It was also believed to underscore the importance of stewardship, a focus on the greater good, and active participation in advocacy.

It is important to note that mentorship was considered an act of service among potential mentees. Among mentee applicants, there was a pervasive belief that board members serve as "ambassadors" for the organization and set the tone for its culture and values. Potential mentees specifically expressed a desire to lead by example while inspiring future board leaders to be equally committed to an organization's mission. They voiced a desire to use their dedication and passion to create a positive and supportive culture that would attract and retain talented individuals who share a similar commitment to service.

LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA & STORYTELLING

"The voices of women and people of color are under-represented where important decisions are made. A seat at the table is crucial and the community is served best when a variety of voices are present."

- 2019 Applicant

"I live by the phrase "to go fast, go alone; but to go far, go together." I want to make a positive impression with the time I have in this world. I believe I can achieve this by investing the time with like-minded people who have a vision for a future that is better than what was handed to us. Serving on a board allows me to fulfill this need through collaboration, contribution, and connection, all of which I believe can push our communities forward and into the future."

- 2022 Applicant

our experience makes us EXPERTS

"My lived experiences, ability to focus on mission and strategy, and care for my community make me an ideal candidate. Having a mentor would help me harness and focus the value I could bring to others."

- 2019 applicant

CONCLUSION

What can we do to create space and opportunities for leaders of color?

By prioritizing diversity and inclusion at all levels of governance, nonprofits can foster greater representation, inclusivity, and effectiveness in their boardrooms. To address the lack of diversity on nonprofit boards, organizations can take several proactive steps. Increasing the representation of leaders of color serving on boards requires intentional efforts and a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Based on the lived-experience data shared in this Black paper, here are some strategies to help achieve this goal:

- Inclusive Board Culture: Foster an inclusive board culture where diverse perspectives are valued, and all members feel comfortable contributing their ideas and opinions.
- Board Mentorship and Leadership Development: Establish mentorship programs that support individuals in their journey while serving on boards. Offer leadership development opportunities to help them continue to build skills to learn and grow.
- Transparent Board Recruitment Processes: Make the board recruitment process transparent and accessible to all, ensuring leaders of color candidates are aware of opportunities and feel encouraged to apply.
- Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies: Establish board DEI policies that set measurable goals for increasing leaders of color representation and hold the board accountable for progress.
- Recognize and Celebrate Measurable Results: Celebrate the contributions of board members and showcase their achievements to inspire others to follow suit. Visualize, through data, the impact made in the community by clearly aligning outcomes to the activities of the organization.
- Address Racist Barriers and Structural Inequities: Identify and address systemic barriers and structural inequities that hinder leaders of color representation on boards, both within the organization and at the broader societal level.

our experience
must inform
CHANGE

ABOUT OUR DATA ACTIVISTS

TIFFANY N. RICKS, PH.D., RN

Tiffany is a nurse scientist and Associate Dean of Nursing with comprehensive expertise in racial/ethnic healthcare disparities, evaluation, and health promotion initiatives. She has 10+ years' experience investigating and developing research-based tools, strategies and initiatives that improve organizational systems, policies and healthcare outcomes. She is the founder of Health R.E.P., LLC. She believes that health equity is a matter of justice , so her passion for the strategic and creative use of research (R.),evaluation (E.), and policy (P.) is the basis of her commitment to leading change and advancing equity.

HANNA CHUN

Hanna is a Data Architect and Technology Manager with over 6 years of consulting experience across industries including healthcare logistics, restaurants, staffing, and affordable housing. Her engineering background and business degree bring the right combination of technical breadth and analytical skills and project execution management to deliver valuable insights. Hanna has partnered with MEASURE for 3 years doing survey analysis, and believes empathy is key to growth and long-term success.