

An Equity Checklist For Your Grant Programs

Are your grant programs and processes diverse, equitable, and inclusive?

Equity now is, and should be, a critical topic driving assessment and change. All of us, even agencies and organizations driven by social impact and philanthropic missions, are faced with the realities of inequity – often due to historical bias and even modern-day blind spots. Unfortunately, one potentially overlooked area where bias and discrimination can lurk, if you're not vigilant, is within your grant processes.

This is why we created the checklist below. It guides you through a review of your application and review process. Use it to help ensure you embed equity into every step.

To assess if the entirety of your grantmaking processes and programs is equitable, download our [How to Insert More Equity into your Grantmaking eGuide](#) for a step-by-step approach including the key questions to answer.

Creating Your Application:

- Keep language simple** – Use simple language to ensure clarity, particularly for new applicants. [Microsoft Word can help](#) you determine readability.
- Remove or explain buzzwords** – Define all organizational lingo or acronyms so that anyone can follow your application prompts, regardless of experience level.
- Pare back your application to basic information needs** – Which application data points are “nice to know” instead of essential for your determinations? Recognize that not all applicants have the same access to meeting your “wants”. Focus instead on your “needs”.
- Ensure an ADA-friendly application experience** – When it comes to equitable grantmaking, [ADA-friendly applications](#) are a must. Without them, applicants with disabilities may not have proper access.
- Conduct user testing with target demographics** – Ask representatives of your target groups to complete the application and point out anything that's unclear.

Design Your Application Process:

- Allow to save and return** – Choose software that creates a user account, so applicants can return any time, aren't rushed through your process, and can seek assistance if needed.
- Create a qualifying quiz** – Ask a few questions first to confirm the applicant is qualified before asking them to complete an entire application.
- Enable integrations** – Look for ways to reduce data entry. For example, see if your online application can link to popular apps like Google Drive, OneDrive, or Dropbox.
- Provide application assistance** – For some individuals, this may be the first time they've applied for a grant. By making application assistance available, you help provide a more equitable experience.
- Consider translation options** – Some software may enable an application translation feature. This can be particularly helpful for applicants whose first language is not English.

Ensure an Equitable Review Process:

- Choose representative reviewers** – As you build the review team, ask yourself:
 - Do your reviewers reflect the population you serve?
 - Is there enough diversity to make sure you're seeing all perspectives?
 - Do you need representation from individuals outside your industry or field?
- Lean on technology to help remove potential bias** – Your [grant management platform](#) should be able to help you facilitate a more unbiased review process, including features like hiding demographic data and randomizing reviewer assignments.
- Clearly define criteria** – As you review your evaluation criteria, don't leave room for interpretation. Provide your reviewers with a detailed definition of each criterion, so they're reading each application through the same lens.
- Be transparent** – Visibly share the selection criteria and review process with applicants so everyone understands the measures by which they will be evaluated.

Encouraging a Diverse Applicant Pool:

- Create awareness** – If marginalized communities don't know about your funding or scholarships, they can't apply. Examine your pipeline to determine if you're casting a wide enough net outside of your familiar go-to organizations.
- Expand your networks** – Attend diverse community meetings, events, or town halls to promote your program. Build relationships with diverse leaders and affinity groups. Ask reviewers, awardees, and community leaders who they feel might benefit from your grants.
- Review application and promotional materials** – Ask people from disparate backgrounds to review your materials for tone and barriers. They should be reflective of diverse communities. You may also consider translating your materials into other languages.

Reviewing your application process from start to finish may not eliminate all areas of bias and discrimination from your grant programs, but it will most certainly reveal ways to improve your procedures and workflow. This can help you target areas for improvement in the future.

Let's chat about how the right grant management platform is an important component in creating a more equitable application and process. Reach out to [schedule a call with a solutions consultant](#) today.