

Definitions

- **cultural competence:** The ability to understand, accept, respect, lead, work, and volunteer with people from other cultures and backgrounds. Cultural competence can be measured by the extent to which individuals and organizations can create and maintain an environment that is welcoming, equitable, and supportive of difference in the pursuit of common goals. Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process that starts with recognition of the need and value of incorporating diversity, progresses to implementation of policies and practices, and continues with further refinement and understanding of the benefits of inclusive practices.
- **diverse:** The individual leaders who compose nonprofit boards are a reflection of an organization's values and beliefs about who should be empowered and entrusted with its most important decisions. We believe that all social sector organizations can better achieve their missions by drawing on the skills, talents, and perspectives of a broader and more diverse range of leaders, and that the diversity of viewpoints that comes from different life experiences and cultural backgrounds strengthens board deliberations and decision-making.
- **inclusive:** The most effective boards work to build a culture of trust, candor, and respect — none of which is possible without a culture of inclusion. Boards that cultivate an inclusive culture ensure that all board members are encouraged to bring their perspectives, identity, and life experience to their board service. An inclusive board culture welcomes and celebrates differences and ensures that all board members are equally engaged and invested, sharing power and responsibility for the organization's mission and the board's work.
- **equity-focused:** Boards play a critical role in helping organizations understand the context in which they work and how best to prioritize resources and strategies based on that reality. An awareness of how systemic inequities have affected our society and those an organization serves enables boards to avoid blind spots that can lead to flawed strategies, and creates powerful opportunities to deepen the organization's impact, relevance, and advancement of the public good.