

# The Governance Institute

## Five Strategies and Tactics for Improving Diversity on the Board

Below are some strategies and tactics that can help hospital and health system boards increase board diversity and to realize the benefits of that increased diversity.

- 1. Make the case for greater diversity.** No board will ever become more diverse unless its members understand and accept the need to do so. Hence the first step is for the board to have an open, thoughtful discussion about the benefits of having a more diverse board, including what opportunities may be missed due to being too homogeneous.
- 2. Make greater board diversity an explicit aim.** In many cases, this process involves:
  - Development of a compelling “case statement” or diversity “vision statement” that includes a definition of inclusiveness/diversity, data about the local community, and a description of what the board will look and feel like when it has become inclusive and diverse.
  - More generally, board nominating committees should consider the development of formal recruitment policies related to diversity.
- 3. Set directional goals (not quotas) and continually monitor progress toward them.** Most experts advise against explicit, deadline-imposed quotas related to the number and mix of minority board members, particularly because such quotas can lead to decisions to recruit individuals who may not have the skills and experience the board should be looking for in filling a vacancy. As with any recruiting process, the primary focus should be on ensuring that anyone who comes on the board will do the job well and fulfills a key need for skills that the board may not currently have or may need more of. That said, organizations can:
  - Develop a set of “directional” goals related to diversity that lay out a long-term vision of what the board should look like. In most cases, these goals call for a board composition that looks very much like the communities that the organization serves.
  - Boards should regularly monitor progress toward directional goals, generally on a quarterly basis.
- 4. Create a formal plan and process.** The key to success is to create a formal process for finding qualified minority and younger candidates that leverages existing structures and processes, including the board nominating committee.
- 5. Go beyond traditional sources to find qualified candidates.** Success is unlikely if boards use the traditional approach of calling for volunteers and having members tap into their usual networks; not surprisingly, this approach tends to produce a group of candidates who look a lot like them. Instead, boards need to tap into local networks and organizations that represent and/or serve the various groups being sought after by the board.

*This content is from The Governance Institute’s toolbox, [Building a More Diverse Board](#). View this publication for additional strategies and tactics for improving diversity on the board.*