

Local orgs tackle challenges of diversity

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Windy City Times recently surveyed a number of local organizations about the diversity of both their board leadership and their organization's staff and employees.

For the purposes of this survey, we were most interested in a snapshot of how well the organization reflects the constituency it serves, so questions focused in large part on how well overlooked parts of the LGBTQ community—who are quite often transgender/gender non-conforming/intersex individuals and bisexual/pansexual individuals—are represented in leadership and staff roles. Windy City Times intends to look at other equally or more vital aspects of representation, such as racial and economic diversity, in board leadership roles in future issues.

We also tried to get a sense of how organizations thought about discrimination in their midsts. While LGBT-rights or LGBT-health organizations would certainly have robust anti-discrimination policies, the potential for discrimination is just as insidious as it would be elsewhere. Our pages are rife with anecdotes about transgender people discriminated against by cis-individuals, or bisexual people who find themselves equally misunderstood and mocked by both gay and straight people.

Board service means different things for different organizations; some appointments bring with them great prestige and are highly-coveted. Other boards struggle to find members and enthusiastically welcome anyone willing to put in the work and time, with the only reward being the smoother operation of the organization. As such, committing to diversity is exceptionally difficult, especially as thinking about racial-equity has changed dramatically in recent months.

Nevertheless, every organization will have to think through these issues. We asked several organizations of varying sizes, missions and constituencies to describe their leadership structure and how they are doing this work internally. Among the orga-

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	ACLU of Illinois	Equality Illinois/ Equality Illinois Institute	Gerber/Hart Library and Archives
# of Board Members	44	20	4
Frequency of Board Turnover/Terms	Three-year terms	One-year terms	Three-year terms
Frequency of Board Meetings	Quarterly	Six times a year	Monthly
# of Staff Members/Employees	43	5	Three part-timers
What considerations do you make in persons whom you invite to the board? Do you give weight to a prospective member's sexual orientation or gender identity in making such decisions?	"Demonstrated commitment to civil liberties principles, special skills, willingness to serve as an ambassador for the organization, diversity, including sexual orientation and gender identity, are all factors that are used to consider nominees for the ACLU board."	"We look at three factors: 1) Does the person bring an expertise or perspective that is needed? 2) Is the person a #1 or #2 person in their organization, field or community? 3) Collectively, when we look at the Board as a whole, does our Board reflect back to our community our full diversity?"	"Key considerations are the prospective member's engagement with the mission of the organization, which is an LGBTQ-focused archives/library/cultural center, and their commitment to help keep it afloat financially."
# of LGBTQ Board Members	3 (including board president)	16	4
# of TGNC**/Intersex Board Members	0	2	0
# of Bisexual Board Members	0	"We have not tracked this information but will do so in the future"	0
# of LGBTQ Staff Members	12	4	"2 out of 3 for sure, but possibly all 3.
# of TGNC**/Intersex Staff Members	1	1	"I don't think so."
# of Bisexual Staff Members	0	"We have not tracked this information but will do so in the future"	"I don't know."
Has your board had conversations about its diversity and how well its makeup represents the constituency the organization serves? If so, what do you see as the key challenges to achieving such representation?	"Yes; Identifying nominees for the board who have time to serve, who bring community contacts, lived experience, experience with non-profit management, and familiarity with the broad array of ACLU issues."	"We do. Our Board charges the CEO with developing a Board prospect pool that has strong representation among women, people of color, TGNC individuals and people living outside Cook county. From that prospect pool, the Board selects the strongest fits for Board membership."	"Gerber/Hart has recently been going through a strategic planning process and the issue of diversity in all aspects—patrons, content of collections and exhibits, board and staff, volunteer pool—was a priority that was affirmed centrally."
Have your organization's principals had conversations about the organization's staff's diversity and how well its makeup represents the constituency it serves? If so, what do you see as the key challenges to achieving such representation?	"Yes; Job recruitment and marketing"	No answer	"Until very recently, Gerber/Hart has been entirely volunteer run. Hired a first part-time staffer in 2017, I think; a second early in 2019, and a third later in the year. Taken together, their hours do not even equal one full-time employee. Because of the limited hours and pay, our jobs do not attract a lot of candidates."
What policies and procedures does your organization have in place to guard against discrimination on the basis of gender-identity or sexual-orientation?	"ACLU of Illinois has a respectful workplace policy that spells out the core values and expectations of staff, board and volunteers."	No answer	"A basic non-discrimination policy. As an organization that is, in essence, an LGBTQ organization, discriminating on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation would be absurd."
**TGNC=transgender, gender-nonconforming			

AIDS Foundation of Chicago	Howard Brown Health	Center on Halsted	Chicago House & Social Service Agency	TPAN
27	17	21	16	9
Two-year terms	Three-year terms	Three-year terms	Three-year terms	Two-year terms
Six times per year	Monthly	Six times per year	Six times per year	Quarterly
128	540	65	85	37
"AFC considers a variety of criteria, such as commitment to the organization; connections to the communities that AFC prioritizes (young Black gay and bisexual men, transgender women of color, Black women living in high-incidence areas and Latinx gay and bisexual men); the demographics of the candidate and the board as a whole; and the candidate's knowledge and expertise about issues related to HIV; the ability to connect AFC to supporters, potential corporate partners, legislators and other key community leaders."	"The Board's Governance Committee develops a call for candidates each year that articulates the priority skills, experiences, and backgrounds desired among highly rated candidates for that year's recruitment cycle."	"Center on Halsted takes many factors into consideration when providing invitations to join the Board of Directors. All factors take into account the individual's ability to help hold the agency accountable and to move the organization forward in meeting its mission."	"Yes—both sexual orientation and gender identity are considered when evaluating prospective Board members. Additional considerations are: geography, sexual orientation, gender identity, profession, connection to HIV/AIDS, previous non-profit Board experience."	No answer
65 percent openly LGBTQ	16	17	15	5
0	1	1	1	0
4%	1	0	1	0
Does not collect info*	"The vast majority"	51	"majority of staff"	15
"At least two"	Dozens of staff members openly identify as TGNC"	5	Yes, but exact number not given 0	
Does not collect info*	"We have not polled staff on bisexual identity"	3	Yes, but exact number not given	1
"Yes. Over the past five years, AFC has prioritized representing the community we serve with a focus on recruiting diverse members."	"The Board's Governance Committee develops a call for candidates each year that articulates the priority skills, experiences, and backgrounds desired among highly rated candidates for that year's recruitment cycle."	"Yes, our COH board has had extensive conversation regarding its diversity and client representation which was further facilitated by an outside DEI consultant, Inca Mohamed, in 2019."	"Yes. The key challenge is balancing the terms served by current members with the need/desire/passion/urgency around expanding the diversity on the board with an emphasis on race and gender. The board of trustees is committed to diversity now and the years ahead."	Yes. [See response to next question for explanation]
"AFC prioritizes diversity, equity and inclusion among staff and strives to achieve racial equity."	"The proportion of staff who are Black and/or Latinx exceeds the proportion of patients who are Black and/or Latinx. Notwithstanding, diverse representation lags among directors and managers. At senior management, 7% are Latinx as compared to 22% of patients. Black executives comprise 29% of senior management and 23% of patients. Seven percent of senior management identifies as TGNC as compared to 15% of patients."	"Yes, our Senior Leadership and Human Resources department consistently strive to monitor and make progress in maintaining a diversified staff and leadership at COH. We manage this by actively recruiting in minority professional circles and strategically partnering with think leaders such as #Hire TransNOW. While COH does have a relatively diverse staff and leadership base already, we recognize the continued importance of improving the organization from not just a diversity perspective but also from an equity and inclusion perspective."	"Yes, the full Chicago House team is diverse and reflects the makeup of our program participants. However, the key area of opportunity is diversity among the leadership team. With 12 members on the leadership team, 2 are people of color, 2 are transgender, and 5 identify as female."	"For questions 14 and 15 TPAN hired the Morten Group and is in the middle of an agency and board wide DEI Assessment and Training. From that training, a committee will be formed with support from the Morten Group, and areas of bias and areas requiring improvement will be highlighted, as well as a DEI Strategic plan. That started in March of 2020 and will be over in September 2020."
"To support and solidify our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, AFC has developed and adopted [several] policies and procedures"	"LGBTQ liberation and racial equity principles are two of six frameworks adopted by Howard Brown Health as fundamental approaches pursued through all of the agency's work and practices. Its Code of Conduct, Employee Handbook, and established values bar gender-identity and sexual-orientation discrimination among other forms of oppression as part of a commitment to an equitable and just workplace."	"COH does not allow for any discrimination against an individual because of gender identity, including transgender status, or because of sexual orientation. Discrimination because of sex is in violation of Title VII. Our policies parallel U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission language forbidding discrimination when it comes to any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoff, training, fringe benefits, and any other term or condition of employment."	"Chicago House has HR policies in place that guard against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. The organization also offers trainings on how to work through a trauma-informed lens as well as trainings on harm-reduction."	"TPAN prohibits any form of discrimination or harassment because of race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, spiritual beliefs, sex (with or without sexual conduct), sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, medical condition, pregnancy, childbirth, protected activity (i.e., opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in the statutory complaint process) or other characteristics protected under federal, state or local law."