

Equity in the Boardroom



A short checklist for boards.

Equity in governance isn't an add-on. It's a quality of governance. The questions below help boards examine power, voice, and impact in real decisions — before, during, and after the meeting. Use the checklist as a working tool, not a compliance exercise.

The EQUITY Governance Lens

Six questions to bring to any significant decision.

Lens	Core Governance Question	What This Means for the Board
Examine Power & Voice	Who holds power in this decision, and whose voices are missing?	Ensure decisions reflect community voice — not only system or professional perspectives.
Question Assumptions	What assumptions are we making, and who might they exclude?	Challenge one-size-fits-all thinking and surface bias before it shapes the outcome.
Understand Lived Experience	How will this decision feel for the people we serve?	Consider dignity, safety, trust, and trauma alongside efficiency and risk.
Identify Impacts	Who benefits — and who might be harmed?	Assess unintended consequences and equity impacts, not just the intended outcome.
Take Accountability	How will we be accountable for equity?	Commit to measurement, transparency, and course correction.
Yield & Adapt	How will we learn, share power, and change course?	Be willing to shift decisions based on community input, evidence, and outcomes.

A Working Checklist

Use these prompts to embed equity into the rhythm of every board meeting.

Before the meeting

- Does our agenda leave room for the people most affected to be heard — or only for staff and professional voices?
- Have we shared materials in plain language and in time for every director to engage meaningfully?
- Are there any decisions on this agenda where we're missing a key perspective? If so, what can we do about it before — or during — the meeting?
- Have we considered access needs (timing, format, accommodations) so every director can show up fully?

During the meeting

- At the close of each agenda item, has every director had a chance to weigh in?
- Have we named the assumptions underneath this decision — and tested them?
- Have we asked: who benefits, who carries the cost, and how will we know?
- Have we paused to ask whose voice is shaping this decision and whose isn't?
- Are we modelling our organization's values in how we're working together right now?

After the meeting

- What did we decide today that affects people whose voices weren't in the room?
- What did we learn about how power and voice moved in this meeting?
- What one practice will we try differently next meeting to widen the circle?
- How will we follow up with — and learn from — the people most affected by today's decisions?

Boards don't struggle because they lack information. They struggle because governance is human. If your board is ready to bring equity into the everyday work of governing, we'd love to talk. [Visit our website to learn more.](#)