

CHEAT SHEET
for philanthropy leaders

Fundraising for DEI

How development teams can play a role in advancing DEI

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Key takeaways

- **Fundraising for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) includes fundraising for both internal and external DEI initiatives.** It can encompass a wide variety of initiatives within the hospital or health system and the community.
- **Fundraising for DEI is the development team’s new and necessary value add to the hospital or health system’s mission.** Development teams can support their broader organization’s top priorities and position themselves as an invaluable asset in their organization’s DEI strategy.
- **Fundraising for DEI enables development teams to deepen their connection to the community.** Development teams can ultimately help their hospital or health system become more representative of the community they serve.

What is it?

Fundraising for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) encompasses fundraising for both internal DEI initiatives and external community health initiatives. Common examples include:

Internal DEI initiatives	External community health initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive hiring/staffing practices • Medical scholarships to increase diversity in provider pipeline • Training/continuing education opportunities • New system-level DEI roles (ex. Chief Diversity or Health Equity Officer) • Board diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with community organizations • Community programs that address the social determinants of health and health disparities • Hospital or health system programs that connect patients to resources after their visit

Most development teams already fundraise for DEI in at least one of the ways above, but few have connected their efforts to a cohesive strategy. Development leaders should identify the internal DEI initiatives and external community health initiatives they are already funding and ensure they are accounted for in their own DEI strategy and aligned with that of their hospital or health system.

For many development leaders, fundraising for DEI has become synonymous with fundraising for community health. While funding programs that address the social determinants of health is one way to fundraise for DEI, it is certainly not the only way. Now is more important than ever for development teams to expand their definition of fundraising for DEI.

Why does it matter?

In 2020, Covid-19 exacerbated long-standing health inequities and a mass movement for social justice illuminated deeply rooted societal inequalities. As a result, many hospitals and health systems renewed their commitments to expanding access to quality health care and set goals for advancing DEI both internally and externally. DEI will remain a top priority for years to come – and development leaders can play a major role in advancing DEI priorities.

Development teams are highly skilled at raising money for different causes; this ability positions them to uniquely support their organization in advancing DEI by growing revenue. They can utilize their expertise to fundraise for both internal DEI initiatives and external community health initiatives. By doing so, they can support their broader organization's most pressing goals and position themselves as an invaluable asset in their organization's overall strategy.

Along with supporting their organization's goals, fundraising for DEI – and specifically for external community health initiatives – enables development teams to deepen their connection to the community. A strong community connection provides several benefits to their broader organization, including intelligence on community needs and preferences for health care services, forums to share fundraising priorities, and the ability to become a trusted provider of choice for a new set of patients..

How does it work?

Define areas of focus within broader organizational strategy

To effectively fundraise for DEI, development leaders must first define their areas of focus within their broader hospital or health system's DEI strategy. Whether it be specific internal initiatives, like implicit bias training for staff, or external community health initiatives more broadly, leaders must determine where they can best support their hospital or health system with funding.

Set goals

After defining their areas of focus, development leaders must set goals to ensure they are accountable for making progress. Some leaders set monetary goals for how much their team should raise for a specific DEI initiative, fund, or area. Others set qualitative goals that outline the types of initiatives they plan to fund or reiterate their overall commitment to DEI. At the very least, many development leaders set goals to increase the diversity of their internal workforce or board. Regardless of the approach, all development teams should have goals in place that allow them to track their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Conversations you should be having

01 Gather a diverse set of perspectives and opinions to inform your fundraising priorities.

02 Identify and capitalize on areas where your organization's DEI priorities align with donor interests.

03 Set specific and measurable goals to hold your team accountable and track progress.

04 Use intentional and inclusive messaging to communicate the intent and impact of your fundraising efforts for DEI to donors.

For many development teams, the biggest impediment to progress is not knowing where to begin. Initiate these conversations with your team to get the ball rolling and choose a fundraising initiative with the lowest barrier to entry to get started. Making progress in DEI is not about finding the perfect place to start, but rather about making a sustained and consistent effort in the long run. 

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