



MIDWEST CENTER
FOR NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP



Kansas City Area Board Diversity Research

Need

The 2021 BoardSource report *Leading with Intent: Reviewing the Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards* includes findings at the national level. However, there is limited empirical data regarding the current state of diversity among nonprofit boards in the Greater Kansas City region. This research study aimed to provide a baseline assessment of the level of diversity among nonprofit boards in the Greater Kansas City region to enable Support KC and other interested parties to better evaluate the impact that board diversity efforts are having on the local community.

Approach

The study was a mixed methods design with a survey distributed to a sample of Kansas City area board members and executive leadership, followed by a series of in-depth interviews with individuals from the same sample.

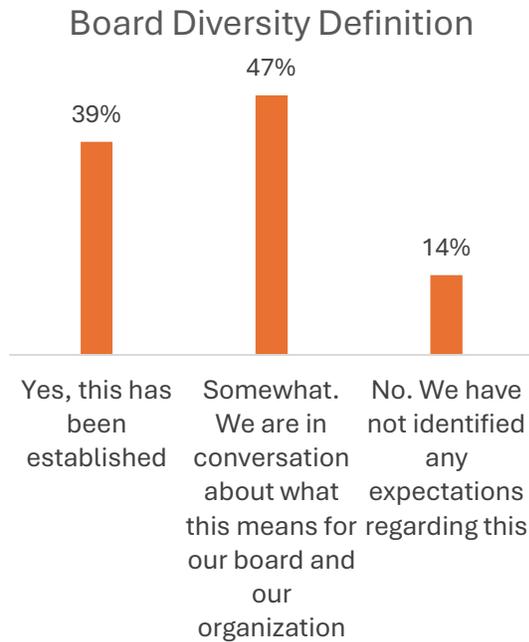
Findings

Of those surveyed, most Kansas City area board members and leadership are White. Most respondents report a strong importance (59%) at their organizations of focusing on diversity of their boards and inclusion of voices that represent the communities they serve. Most respondents feel the boards they are associated with generally represent the communities they serve (64%) and indicate a high priority on including a variety of experiences, voices, and demographic backgrounds when recruiting new board members. However, those responding also report demographics of their board members skewed white, cisgender, and more than half over the age of 45.

While the focus of diversifying boards, demographically, experientially, and in representation of the

- On average, boards are approximately 72% White and 28% Persons of Color
- 47% of board members are within the ages of 45-64
- Nearly 95% of organizations have only Cisgender male and/or Cisgender female board members.
- 45% of responding organizations have board members who identify as LGBTQIA+.

communities the organizations are serving from those receiving support or services to stakeholders that are partners, the outlook of boards is still skewed toward similar experiences and cultural backgrounds.



Nearly two-thirds of respondents report that a formally identified expectation of what board diversity and representation would be for their board has yet to be formally established. There is consensus from respondents that this needs to be a focus and is a focus for their organizations, but the formal practice appears to be less established.

Within the interview component of the study, thematic saturation¹ was achieved on topics relating to the importance of determining how to define diversity and representation when identifying voices needed at various organizations and the impact that may have on an organization’s strategic approach as opposed to selecting board member without considering the person’s experience, addition

to the existing leadership, as well as demographic background. Additionally, the importance of board members’ understanding of the organizations work first-hand as essential and as important to the criteria of their participation, as well as the impact of board voices as a partner in the community as an important focus.

Limitations & Future Research

Participation in this study was notably low. It is hypothesized that this could be due to several factors including the bias to participating in an interview on this topic, the demographics of the sample being similar due to the skewed demographics of leadership in Kansas City area boards and leadership, and the timeframe in which the study was conducted. These factors and more could be explored in further research to continue the effort of growing knowledge about Kansas City’s nonprofit boards.

About the Midwest Center

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL) catalyzes nonprofit and community organizations’ success through education, engagement, research, and service. Located within the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri – Kansas City, MCNL works in partnership with community and nonprofit leaders, combining academic rigor with practical application to propel community leaders and organizations of all sizes and missions forward.

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