

---

**HIGH LINE**

---

**NETWORK**

---



**Building Equity  
Within Our  
Organizations**

**Six Takeaways from the High Line Network  
November 2020**

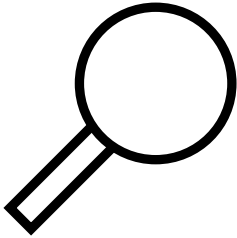
**The High Line Network** supports its members in building better civic connections and ensuring reimagined public spaces are inclusive and welcoming. Often, the work focuses on an organization's outward actions. Yet it is also deeply important to look within and ask how a common mission and value system has been defined and implemented to root their external actions in equity and inclusivity. Do internal hiring, leadership, and systems reflect the same values of equity, and ensure access and benefits to all?

This year has reignited or sparked a new commitment among Network members to examine their own actions and role in building the kind of communities they want to see. And like so many other organizations, figuring out how to do this is difficult. To support this important work, the Network interviewed members from July to August 2020 to understand if and how organizations are setting internal practices, protocols, and overall governance to build more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations for their staff, board, and communities.

# Six Takeaways

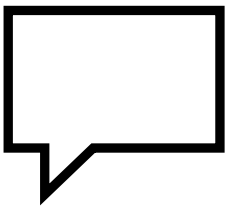
While organizations can be diverse in their approach, progress, and resources, survey results showed six clear trends that are necessary to building more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organizations and that advance racial justice.

## ONE



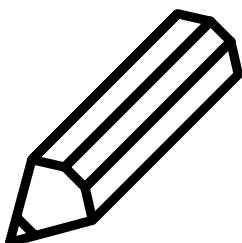
**While we're saying equity is central to our work, we need to first define it.** You're referencing it in strategic plans, community engagement, and even mission statements. Yet not many organizations have a written, commonly shared definition of equity. If you're using it to guide programs, policies, and operations, it's vital to take the time to ensure staff, board, and community stakeholders have a common understanding of what equity means in your community, and for your organization.

## TWO



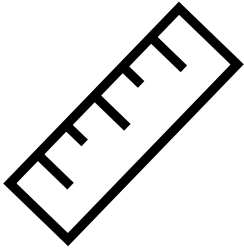
**Talking about diversity, racism, equity, and inclusion is uncomfortable, but it's critical to building better organizations.** While holding these conversations can be difficult, organizations that have sponsored racial-bias training for their staff or board have had an overall positive experience. Sometimes, staff and board may not agree on concepts of racism and equity, often uncovering previously hidden issues in an organization. Moving towards an anti-racism approach to your work requires this and the follow-up to move forward.

## THREE



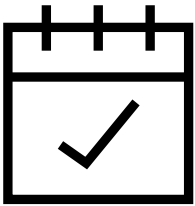
**Conversations alone aren't enough. Organizations need systems of accountability, with a written commitment to action.** George Floyd's murder and the subsequent aftermath of social turmoil inspired many to new levels of accountability and action within their organizations, although clearly defined outcomes and metrics of success are often missing. Written plans are ways to ensure all stakeholders (including staff, board, and community) are aligned on the values and mission of an organization.

#### FOUR



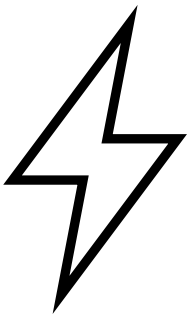
**It's important to know what success means to your organization, and measure progress over time.** The work doesn't stop once you've written the plan and allocated the capital. How will you remain accountable over time? Documenting progress is a vital tool not just internally, but to the communities you serve. Measures of success also help build outcomes across a larger field, ultimately influencing public, private, and philanthropic funding decisions.

#### FIVE



**Without a long-term commitment of both human and financial resources, any well-intentioned plan will fail.** While most recognize the need to combine real financial resources along with a commitment to equity, many have difficulty allocating dedicated funds to internal equity work alone. Formalizing a process over time to ensure equity needs are reevaluated and met on a regular basis will build longer-term change.

#### SIX



**Take time to understand the power each staff person holds to uplift both your organization and your city.** It's not just the senior leaders of an organization that have a role in creating an inclusive environment and policies. Every level, every department, and every person holds power in their individual work. So the first question to answer is: what is the power you hold, and how will you use it?

---

These takeaways serve as a starting point for organizations to consider in their own work to evolve as organizations building equitable practices and values internally to support and elevate both their staff and communities. Defining these needs can be easy, but the work behind them can be difficult, and takes time. The High Line Network will continue supporting its members in their own journeys to build capacity, transparency, and empathy.

## ABOUT THE NETWORK

**The Network is one powerful tool for members on their individual journeys to advance internal and community goals of diversity, equity and inclusion. Through regular peer conversations and collaboration, collective auditing to identify best practices, and development of resources, we're able to leverage our own power to help strengthen communities across North America.**

---

### **A strategic hub for infrastructure reuse projects —and the people who are helping them come to life.**

On our own, we don't have all the answers. And we never will. But together, we're defining equity-focused practices and championing their importance to the public and field at large.

### **The next generation of public spaces.**

Projects in the Network are transforming underutilized infrastructure into new urban landscapes. Redefining what a park can be, these hybrid spaces are also public squares, open-air museums, botanical gardens, social service organizations, walkways, transit corridors, and more. Often, our member projects employ innovative models of public space governance, employing complex public/private partnerships with unique management, funding, and operations challenges.

### **Building equity in communities.**

Infrastructure reuse projects can bring tremendous social, environmental, and economic benefits to our cities. Together, we learn how to extend these benefits to reach as many people as possible—especially longtime residents and businesses of neighboring communities.

**[network.thehighline.org](https://network.thehighline.org)**

---

## SUPPORT

The High Line Network is made possible by the founding support of The JPB Foundation.

