



Columinate

Catalysts for Common Good

Columinate Field Guide

Incorporating Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Into Board Policies

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Many cooperatives, social justice organizations, and businesses have begun to directly confront their own role in the social systems that perpetuate racism and inequity. Boards of directors who use Policy Governance (™) should feel empowered to use their policy document to clarify their expectations around the work of dismantling systems of racism and oppression. By clearly articulating the results that they seek to accomplish in the world and prohibiting the means that are unacceptable toward the achievement of those ends, boards of directors can shape and guide us toward a more just and equitable society. A Board can powerfully transform its organization by bringing an equity lens to the guidance it gives itself regarding its own job and responsibilities in its Board Process policies.

Note: While we are presenting something here that we believe is useful “as is,” each group is responsible for making its own decisions about the policies that will be useful. Use these examples as a starting place for your own conversations.

Discussion Questions

Before embarking on policy revision, address these questions:

- Is increased diversity/equity/justice/anti-racism an outcome your co-op exists to create or expects to work toward?
- Does your board have DEI expectations of itself and the co-op?
- To what extent is your board doing the ongoing work of reading, discussing, exploring, and studying the topic of diversity/equity/justice/anti-racism to be able to speak comfortably about it and to know what it expects of itself and the co-op?
- Does your board have systems and practices that support challenging conversations, deeply listening to diverse viewpoints, and moving from diverse perspectives to one voice?

If your board is ready to amend your board policies with a DEI lens, here is some language for you to consider:

Ends

The CBLD Policy Template does not include Ends language because we believe that each board needs to have its own robust Ends policy development discussions. If your co-op is interested in explicitly incorporating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as part of the impact your co-op should make in the world, you could consider including outcomes such as those set forth below into the Ends policies. Remember that the board speaks (writes policy) from broad to specific, stopping when it can accept any reasonable interpretation. A board may wish to further define what it means by words like “everyone”, “all”, “justice” or it may choose to stop at the broader level. See [Writing Ends Policies Field Guide](#) for a useful resource.

- Welcoming to all. Welcomes everyone. Everyone in the community.
- Accessible means physical, economic and social (all are and feel welcome) accessibility.
- End racial injustice. End oppression. Racial justice. An end to white supremacy
- Equity and justice for all. Inclusive. Equitable.
- Eliminate/challenge systems of oppression.
- Dismantle racism and other forms of oppression within the co-op and in its relationships.
- Redress historic wrongs done and heal relationships with the native people of our region.

As you consider incorporating a DEI perspective into your other policies, here is some suggested language to use as a starting point for your conversations. The underlined words could be added to the [CBLD Policy Template](#) sections pulled out below. The numbering is a suggestion for where to add new policies. Existing policies would then be renumbered. Each board will need to consider how specific you prefer to be. Some boards may prefer to be less specific and not include additional tiers of policy such as B5.3.1, B5.3.2, B6.6.1, and C 1.4a, giving the GM or board chair discretion to decide how to interpret the more general words. A board should speak (write policy) until it reaches a level of specificity when it can accept any reasonable interpretation.

Executive Limitations

B Global. The General Manager must not cause or allow any practice, activity, decision, or organizational circumstance that is unlawful, imprudent, oppressive, discriminatory, or in violation of commonly accepted business and professional ethics and practices, or in violation of the Cooperative Principles.

B5. Treatment of Customers

5.2 Allow an unsafe or unwelcoming shopping experience for our customers and potential customers.

5.3 Operate without written policies for handling of misconduct that include an appropriate range of responses depending upon the type of misconduct. (See Note #1)

5.3.1 The policies have a goal of de-escalation.

5.3.2 The policies provide for the use of law enforcement only as necessary.

B6. Staff Treatment and Compensation

6.1 Cause or allow inequitable treatment of applicants and/or employees in regard to race, sex, identity, national origin, primary language, cultural fit, or other factors unrelated to job qualifications and job performance.

6.6 Allow staff to be without training that supports justice and equity.

6.6.1 Training should include unconscious bias; cultural competency; anti-oppression; microaggressions; and the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

6.7 Allow the staff not to reflect the diversity of our community/neighborhood/town. (Pick the most appropriate one). (See Note #2)

Board Process

C1 Governing Style

C1.4. Maintain a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

C.1.4a. Support, respect, and acknowledge the land rights of the native people of our region.

C1.5 Seek, encourage, welcome, and listen to people with a variety demographic characteristics, diverse perspectives, and opinions. (See Note #3)

C5 Directors' Code of Conduct

C5.7 Directors will not exhibit violent, oppressive, or racist behaviors or speech. (See Note #4)

C8 Governance Investment

C8.2.a. We will use training and retraining liberally to orient new directors and board candidates, as well as to maintain and increase existing directors' skills and understanding of all aspects of our work. (See Note #5)

Notes on Policy Language

1. See your CBLD consultant for sample store policies with a range of responses to misconduct. (B5.3)
2. If the staff is to reflect the diversity of the neighborhood (or community or region), attention will need to be given to hiring, retention, and career development. (B6.7)
3. Having a more diverse board is not, by itself, sufficient to achieve nor is it a pre-requisite for becoming an anti-racist board. (C1.5)
4. Being a director is a position of responsibility and leadership. Personal beliefs can be a private matter, but in some circumstances freedom of expression can be incompatible with board service if the board determines that public expression of a director's beliefs is harmful to a co-op or its Ends. (C5.7)
5. If the Board adopts a DEI perspective, then "training in all aspects of our work" would include training and other learning to expand the ability of the board and its members to effectively and meaningfully engage in DEI work along with other topics such as governance, Ends issues, cooperatives, the grocery industry, etc. (C8.2.a). A board could be more explicit by naming the areas of training it wants to be sure are included.

Revising policies is necessary but not sufficient to create change in your organization. Monitoring is the process a board uses to ensure that policies are effectively carried out. Boards should be diligent in examining monitoring reports to ensure implementation meets expectations. Monitoring reports for Ends policies should include how the manager interprets the policy, the long-term goals, what metrics are used to measure progress, and data. Monitoring reports for Executive Limitations policies should include how the manager interprets the policy, what metrics are used to measure compliance, data, and an explanation and plan if not in compliance.

The board should also have a process for self-monitoring of its Board Process policies.

Lastly, dismantling systemic racism and other forms of oppression takes ongoing work. It is not a task to complete or a box to check off. Boards that are serious about this work will continue to invest time and other resources in learning, discussing, and creating the changes our world needs.

Useful Links

[CBLD Policy Template](#)

[Writing Ends Policies](#), Todd Wallace and Joel Kopischke

[Policy Governance Quick Guide](#), Michael Healy

[Monitoring the Manager](#), Mark Goehring

[Making Ourselves Accountable: Board self-evaluation fosters reflections, constant improvement](#), Rose Marie Klee

[Everyone Welcome? Examining Race and Food Co-ops](#), Patricia Cumbie and Jade Barker

[Everyone Welcome? Personal narratives about race and food co-ops](#), Jade Barker and Patricia Cumbie

[Deepening the Work of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#), LaDonna Sanders Redmond

Café Videos

[Principles of Openness](#), LaDonna Sanders-Redmond

[Welcoming Improvement](#), Leila Wolfrum

[What Everyone Welcome Means](#), Sarah Hannigan