



# True Diversity: An Introduction

AN EQUALITY-BASED AND  
HOLISTIC APPROACH TO  
EMBRACING DIVERSITY

OCTOBER 2022





# What is True Diversity?

Americans have often relied upon charitable organizations at important moments throughout history. In recent years, Americans again turned to charitable organizations at a time of heightened desire to address injustice and discrimination. Since 2020, more than \$16 billion in philanthropic dollars have been earmarked for funding racial equity causes and programs, a dramatic increase in funding galvanized by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and George Floyd's murder in May that year.

At the same time, many organizations have increasingly adopted diversity, equity and inclusion policies and approaches that often focus intensely on immutable, physical characteristics to the exclusion of the many other important aspects of diversity. Today, there is growing concern about how these approaches have, intentionally or unintentionally, affected the missions of charitable organizations by prioritizing checking certain boxes rather than working on the most effective solutions. Some people have come to view these approaches as inflexible, outdated, counterproductive and at times even discriminatory. As a result, there is a strong desire for a more inclusive outlook that recognizes the multifaceted backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, talents and other characteristics one must recognize when defining diversity.

To address this need, Philanthropy Roundtable developed a positive vision for a better path forward—our True Diversity Initiative—through partnerships with philanthropists, nonprofit leaders, public policy experts, entrepreneurs and practitioners. These are people committed to building unity, healing division and upholding the fundamental truth that every person is created equal and worthy of being treated with dignity and respect.

True Diversity is an equality-based, holistic framework for embracing diversity. It values every person as a unique individual and empowers charitable organizations with the freedom and flexibility to advance their missions and help those in need. True Diversity, as a best practice, rests on five key principles.

# Five Principles of True Diversity

## ◆ **VALUE EACH INDIVIDUAL**

Each person is a unique individual worthy of dignity and respect. It is only by taking the time to know and understand people, their challenges and their circumstances, rather than simply making assumptions based on how they look, that we can best support them.

## ◆ **ADVANCE THE MISSION**

Excellent results are best achieved by bringing together people with diverse skill sets, backgrounds and perspectives to further a common mission. Each organization is in the best position to know what types of diversity in leadership and staffing will best support its mission — and thus strengthen the communities it serves.

## ◆ **SEEK DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES**

Good ideas can come from anywhere, and there are many ways to address social challenges. Bringing together people with diverse views is the key to encouraging a robust competition of ideas, experimentation with different approaches and ultimately better answers and outcomes.

## ◆ **EMBRACE CONVERSATION**

Discussion and debate open the door to progress. Direct, honest and respectful conversation may take courage, but it is the antidote to division, resentment and stagnation.

## ◆ **CULTIVATE EMPOWERMENT**

The best way to uplift individuals and strengthen communities is to foster the sense of agency that only comes when everyone is empowered to reach their full potential.



True Diversity puts people first. It recognizes and celebrates the fact that today's America is a dynamic kaleidoscope of rich and important identities: racial, ethnic, sexual, religious, socioeconomic and many others—identities often so complex, nuanced and interwoven as to defy any simple classification of individuals. It also recognizes that this diversity within each of us—from place of birth and religion to viewpoints and skills—cannot be fully grasped or appreciated by the boxes we must check on forms for work, school, government programs and assistance, or yes, even philanthropic grants.

Rather than asking charitable organizations to change how or who they serve in their communities with mandates or quotas, True Diversity empowers organizations with the freedom and flexibility to make decisions about their unique organizational needs and those who rely upon them.

It offers a powerful way for charitable organizations to honor the things that make us all human and harness their power to develop individualized pathways to opportunity that serve the whole person. Taking a more holistic approach will help organizations pursue the most effective ideas and strategies, hire the best talent, empower those on the ground and achieve better outcomes. In short, it's the best way to both advance the most effective solutions and fully achieve the benefits of diversity in a complex world.

That is why Philanthropy Roundtable is offering a new approach that recenters on the core American idea that every individual matters and that no one should be left behind simply because of how they look, who they love or the circumstances of their birth. True Diversity seeks to return love, compassion and empathy to the diversity conversation by providing a unifying vision rather than divisive and harmful mandates or quotas.

The Roundtable's initiative will provide a variety of resources and research to assist charitable organizations interested in practicing True Diversity. To learn more, please download our True Diversity Toolkit that offers:

- ◆ Legal and human resources guidance
- ◆ Diversity training recommendations
- ◆ Best practices
- ◆ Communication tools

**For more information, about the Philanthropy Roundtable's True Diversity Initiative, please visit [TrueDiversity.org](https://www.truediversity.org).**



# About True Diversity

Philanthropy Roundtable's True Diversity initiative provides an equality-based and holistic framework for embracing diversity. It values every person as a unique individual and empowers charitable organizations with the freedom and flexibility to advance their missions and help those in need.

Learn more at [TrueDiversity.org](https://www.TrueDiversity.org).



# About Philanthropy Roundtable

Philanthropy Roundtable is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building and sustaining a vibrant American philanthropic movement that strengthens our free society. To achieve this vision, the Roundtable pursues a mission to foster excellence in philanthropy, protect philanthropic freedom and help donors to advance liberty, opportunity and personal responsibility.



1120 20th Street NW, Suite 550 South, Washington, D.C. 20036

[philanthropyroundtable.org](http://philanthropyroundtable.org)