

# 5 Common Fundraising Mistakes That Slow Down Progress in DEI&A\*

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## 1. Making Implicit Assumptions About Giving Potential

Fundraisers cater to, then steward donors based on subconscious biases around who can be a philanthropist, contributing to the homogeneity of donor pools.

## 2. Recognizing Only One Form of Giving

Fundraisers recognize only those who give monetary contributions, de-incentivizing other forms of giving and creating socioeconomic and cultural barriers to inclusion.

## 3. Adopting a Scarcity Mindset

Fundraisers believe they are competing against other local organizations for a limited set of community resources, leading to competitive rather than collaborative relationships.

## 4. Keeping Donors Who Don't Reflect Organizational Values

Fundraisers accept or accommodate donor behaviors that are contrary to organizational values out of the fear of losing donations.

## 5. Distributing Resources Inequitably

As the organization acquires funding, it does not distribute that funding to continually advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility internally.

*\*Please note that this is by no means an exhaustive list, and the slides that follow do not provide exhaustive solutions. Rather, we seek to categorize a handful of major mistakes to avoid, paired with researched frameworks and real-world efforts to combat some part of each issue. We are always grateful for community input in this important domain, so feel free to reach out to us at [info@advisoryboardarts.com](mailto:info@advisoryboardarts.com) with questions, concerns, or suggestions for these materials.*

# 1: Combatting Implicit Biases When Stewarding Donors

**THE PROBLEM:** Fundraisers cater to, then steward donors based on subconscious biases around who can be a philanthropist, contributing to the homogeneity of donor pools.

**AN ANTIDOTE:** The Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers has collected suggestions for inviting philanthropic participation among individuals of minority backgrounds. One meaningful way to do so is by creating inclusive marketing messages. Here, we showcase a modified version of the Forum’s checklist of marketing strategies alongside examples that incorporate language used by donors themselves.

## Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers Suggestions

- Target minority-led news and media outlets for advertising, and tailor advertising to cultural cues of the intended readers, listeners, and/or viewers.
- Consider bilingual versions of flyers, leaflets, brochures, websites, and any other form of advertising.
- Create materials that celebrate the philanthropic activities of individuals of minority backgrounds.
- Create materials devoted to any one or several programs that might be of interest to a particular minority group within the community.
- Make sure advertising materials are distributed in various community outlets, including community centers, neighborhood schools and libraries, minority-led businesses, and religious organizations.
- As applicable, create materials that are accessible to all by offering multiple ways to digest information, using color contrast and standard fonts for better readability, etc. (Feel free to use ABA’s [article](#) on digital accessibility to get started).
- Increase representation of minority backgrounds on fundraising and marketing staff.

*The language and points in this checklist have been modified slightly to reflect the standards of today. For more from the Forum’s report, “Engaging Diverse Communities For and Through Philanthropy”, see [here](#).*

## Examples of Effective Marketing

### Family Reunion Institute Brochure

The Black-led organization’s brochure opens with a message that reads: “Giving thanks during our reunions, giving back through our reunions.” It encourages supporters to “mobilize our talents to make a difference in society.”



### ¡ÚNETE!

Podemos cambiar al mundo con una sonrisa que salga desde tu corazón

### The Hispanic Federation’s Yearly Campaign

A campaign called *Ayudanos A Ayudar*, or “help us to help,” has offered stories, messages, and fundraising to support giving by Hispanic individuals and for Hispanic-led nonprofits every fall since 1997.

“We can change the world with a smile that comes from the heart.”

## 2: Expanding Shared Understandings of Giving



**THE PROBLEM:** Fundraisers recognize only those who give monetary contributions, de-incentivizing other forms of giving and creating socioeconomic and cultural barriers to inclusion.

**AN ANTIDOTE:** Organizations like the **Detroit Symphony Orchestra** and the **National Trust** have sought to recognize folks who contribute time on par with those who contribute money. Both organizations' giving webpages feature volunteering alongside other ways to give – and offer lots of information about the value and impact of volunteer work.

### Website of the National Trust (May 2021)

However you choose to support us, you'll be helping ensure future generations can enjoy nature, beauty and history for ever

Donate

Your donation will help us continue the essential work of protecting and caring for places

Fundraise

Fundraising is another great way you can support nature, history and beauty

Volunteer

Each year thousands of volunteers join us in caring for all the special places you love

How volunteers help us care for our collections >

With over one million collection items to look after at over 200 historic places, we have our work cut out. We wouldn't be able to do it without our dedicated volunteers. We're highlighting our conservation volunteers and sharing their stories, favourite objects and conservation tips.

Instead of creating a separate webpage for volunteering, the National Trust places volunteering alongside information about monetary gifts. The language makes it clear that volunteering is an equally important way to contribute.

### Website of the DSO (May 2021)

In publicly delineating the core values of its volunteer, the DSO simultaneously gives prospective volunteers a sense of what to expect and adds legitimacy to volunteer contributions.

#### CORE VALUES

##### Gratitude

Valuing volunteers with appreciation events and providing proper training.

##### Excellence

Aligning volunteer skillsets with organization needs by creating a simple sign-up process, and a volunteer structure that has a clear communication path.

##### Inclusive

Open and welcoming to all while fostering an atmosphere of positivity and humbleness.

##### Passionate

Creating educational opportunities that allow volunteers to feel close to the music on stage.

### 3: Getting Past the Scarcity Mindset

**THE PROBLEM:** Fundraisers believe they are competing against other local organizations for a limited set of community resources, leading to competitive rather than collaborative relationships.

**AN ANTIDOTE:** The **Scottish Ballet** has used the opportunity of its digital productions to help generate fundraising for partners across the UK. As part of the booking process for its 2020 holiday production, *The Secret Theatre*, the Ballet made it easy for patrons to donate to partner theatres. In turn, the theatres promoted the show to its own databases, continuing their lasting mutually beneficial relationship.



Scottish Ballet's *The Secret Theatre*

Moving From Scarcity to Abundance in Fundraising	
Scarcity	Abundance
Hoarding resources and information	Sharing resources and information
Competing with others to be successful	Collaborating with others to be successful
Fearing organizational change	Embracing change as an essential part of growth
Seeing fundraising as a zero-sum game	Seeing fundraising as a community effort that advances collective interests
Promoting only your organization	Promoting and congratulating others for their progress toward shared goals

# 4: Staying True to Organizational Values in Fundraising

**THE PROBLEM:** Fundraisers accept or accommodate donor behaviors that are contrary to organizational values out of the fear of losing donations.

**AN ANTIDOTE:** Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company invests in and supports leaders who are willing to take a stand against discrimination, harassment, and ignorance – *especially* when it comes from a place of power or privilege. A 2020 profile of artistic director Maria Manuela Goyanes describes her willingness to lose a trustee over an insensitive comment about preferred pronouns.

## “Woolly Mammoth’s New Leader Wants to Run The Most Woke Theater in Washington” (January 2020)

Excerpts from the article in Washingtonian. See the full article [here](#).



Maria Manuela Goyanes. Photo: Lauren Bulbin.

The company had decided to add preferred pronouns to Woolly’s website and dispatched an employee to collect everyone’s information. The trustee sent back a sarcastic joke instead. As it happened, one of the employees on the receiving end was transgender. “Super not cool,” Goyanes says. She stepped in, saying the note was hurtful and asking the trustee to remember the power that came with the perch.

“I was like, whoa. It’s the first time I’ve ever reported to a board—I’m new, I’m a woman, I’m Latina, I was like. uh. am I doing the right thing?” Govanes says. adding. “Should I have just shut up?” More than a year later, her answer is a clear *hell, no.*

It’s a lot of emotional labor being The Person of Color in a workplace. On the flip side, Goyanes does have a cohort to lean on—a handful of other artistic directors of color helming regional theaters around the country. And unlike, say, Ari Roth, who lost his job at DC’s Theater J after fighting with his bosses over choices they viewed as critical of Israel, Goyanes’s board—intact but for the casualty of the Gender-Pronouns Incident—seems eager for her to keep challenging them.



Photo: Malcolm Lewis Barnes.

Woolly Mammoth has also sought to build a donor base that shares its support for Black Lives Matter. The organization provided “radical hospitality” for BLM protestors in its extended lobby in summer 2020.



# 5: Distributing Resources Equitably Within Your Organization

**THE PROBLEM:** As the organization acquires funding, it does not distribute that funding to continually advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility internally.

**AN ANTIDOTE:** The **Seattle Opera**, **Seattle Symphony**, and **Pacific Northwest Ballet** all partnered to create the Seattle Arts Fellowship in 2020, enabling a cohort of BIPOC individuals to receive leadership training, mentoring, and networking opportunities while working full-time with the organizations. The fellowship offers a stipend of \$24/hour for full-time work, plus benefits commensurate with the benefits package offered to full-time staff. The initiative also includes racial equity trainings for the staff and board at each organization.

## Seattle Arts Fellowship Publicity and Media Coverage

Excerpt from an article in The Daily UW. See the full article [here](#).

Creating a fellowship that invests in BIPOC individuals reflects an investment in future leaders of the classical arts world. The fellowship proves that it is possible to set aside positions and funds to implement a program that values greater representation in the arts and arts leadership.

Excerpt from an article in 425 Magazine. See the full article [here](#).

“Black, Indigenous, People of Color are an integral part of what this art form should be now and in the future both on stage and behind the scenes,” said Christina Scheppelmann, general director of Seattle Opera, in a statement. “With the Seattle Arts Fellowship, we invest in their voices, and in their leadership.”



Seattle Opera also devotes resources toward facilitating meaningful community conversations on power and privilege, as seen in this picture from a 2019 panel, “Decolonizing Allure.”

# Suggestions for Further Reading

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## Primers on Racial Equity & Philanthropy

- [“Stifled Generosity: How Philanthropy has Fueled the Accumulation and Privatization of Wealth”](#), Justice Funders
- [“Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance”](#) and [“The Decolonizing Wealth Toolkit”](#), Edgar Villaneuva

## Philanthropy in Communities of Color

- [“Racial, Ethnic, and Tribal Philanthropy: A Scan of the Landscape”](#), Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
- [“Caring for Each Other: Philanthropy in Communities of Color”](#), Grassroots Fundraising Journal

## Intercultural Competence & Inclusion in Fundraising

- [“A Practical Guide on Intercultural Competence for Nonprofit Managers”](#), Alexis S. Terry
- [“Engaging Diverse Communities For and Through Philanthropy”](#), Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers
- [“Cultures of Giving: Energizing and Expanding Philanthropy by and for Communities of Color”](#), W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- [“How to develop inclusive communications and fundraising strategies”](#), YW Boston
- [“From Diversity to Inclusion in Philanthropy”](#), The Arc

## Reimagining Approaches to Fundraising

- [“Fundraising as Activism through the Community-Centric Model,”](#) AMT Lab @ CMU
- [“Fundraisers for All Causes Can Work with Donors to Advance Equity,”](#) The Chronicle of Philanthropy
- [“Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources through Participatory Grantmaking”](#), Grantcraft