

Managing Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process: Quick Reference Guide

Remember these mantras:

- Be aware
- Be humble
- Be mindful

Form diverse search and hiring committees

Diversity and equal representation amongst your committees can provide the following benefits:

- Fewer overlapping biases (especially in-group and affinity biases)
- Reduced likelihood of groupthink
- Increased ability to recognize each other's biases
- Signals to prospective candidates that your organization truly values diversity and equity
- Can provide awareness of, and access to, diverse networks from which to draw talent

Remember, your location's affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, Title IX, or diversity and equity department(s) can help you form diverse committees and may even be able to — or may be required to — provide a representative to serve on the committees.

Establish pre-determined, standardized and quantifiable procedures and criteria

By determining job criteria ahead of time, standardizing evaluation methodology and quantifying as many aspects of the evaluation process as possible, you reduce opportunities for implicit bias to influence your observations, reasoning and decision making.

Standardizing could entail:

- Asking each candidate the exact same interview questions, in the same order, by the same committee members, in the same environment and given the same amount of time to respond and be asked follow-ups
- Establish specific performance expectations

Quantifiable could entail:

- Assigning points to each question or assessment
- Weighing each evaluation method, question or assessment relative to the value of the skill/quality it reveals or measures

Recognize certain methods favor certain individuals and skills; evaluate and prepare accordingly

- Consider what evaluation methods are best suited for revealing and measuring the skills, abilities and qualities that are most important for a candidate to possess.
- Weigh assessment performance relative to the importance of skills assessed

Allow for some flexibility and differing interpretations, but track both

Some flexibility — such as exceptions made or standardized criteria waived — or differing interpretations of facts may be required during the evaluation process. Make sure to track when this occurs, why, for whom and by who to ensure certain individuals aren't receiving preferential or unfair treatment because of committee members' biases.

Recognize when other's biases may influence a candidacy

Anytime you rely on someone else's evaluation of a candidate — such as with letters of recommendation or even school admissions — you should consider how their biases could possibly have influenced their evaluation.

Avoid information that is not important to assessing a candidate's qualifications but may elicit an implicit bias

- Blind information such as candidates' names, addresses and email addresses.
- Thoughtfully construct interview questions so that they only induce information applicable to the job and not extraneous information that could elicit an implicit bias.

Track candidate demographics so you can detect at which stage diversity is lost

If you're losing candidate diversity at a certain stage of the overall candidate evaluation process, it could be a sign that implicit biases are influencing how candidates are evaluated during that stage.

Consider environmental factors that can influence committee member evaluations and candidate performance

- Time of day
- Weather
- Hunger
- Temperature

Whatever else you do:

- Discuss bias as a team
- Have a plan for addressing bias
- Foster an environment of open dialog and constructive co-analysis