Diversity In Your Community

Diversifying Your Hub Memberships

Why is this important?

Diversifying participation in your memberships can quickly change your hub's reputation as a place where diverse people are welcome and belong. To achieve this your hub should intentionally seek out diverse members and consider what sponsorship your space might be able to offer budding entrepreneurs from disadvantaged areas.

Below are some simple actions you can take to help embed diversity into your membership screening process.

Accreditation

The following Change Catalyst toolkits were used to create this resource and will be referenced extensively throughout. We recommend you download them for a deeper dive of each of the sections below.

Recruiting Diverse Talent
Creating Inclusive Events
Creating Inclusive Tech Hubs Series;
Part 2: Measurement And Accountability Guide
Part 5: Expanding Your Diversity Goals Through External Programs

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Before you start

Establish a Baseline

- Analyze any demographic data of your community that you currently have. Use this to establish a baseline of representation. Some high-level data might be;
    - Founder demographics
    - The primary industry that the startup works in (i.e. AgTech, FinTech etc..)
- Define which minority groups you're specifically trying to reach?
    - ❑ Gender
    - ❑ Race
    - ❑ Ethnicity
    - ❑ Physical Ability
    - ❑ Religious Beliefs
    - ❑ Geographic Origin
    - ❑ Sexual Orientation
    - ❑ Age
    - ❑ Socioeconomic Background
    - ❑ Parental Status
    - ❑ Veterans Status
    - ❑ Formerly Incarcerated
- Does your membership process have specific diversity, equity, and inclusion targets in place?
    - ❑ Yes
    - ❑ No

    If yes
    - What supports are in place to set underrepresented minorities (URMs) up for success?

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If no;

- How can your hub help raise awareness of D&I as a core value in your hub?

- Is there capacity to create space URM led startups in your community?
  - ❑ Yes
  - ❑ Not currently

- What are some examples of other partners/peers supporting D&I in the ecosystem?

Applications/Sourcing

Diverse participation should be front of mind in all your programmes. Even if your hub isn't involved in the final selection process, you can still hold your partner accountable for D&I within a programme using this checklist.

Inbound Applications

Why

Inbound applications are self-selecting so it's important to make your channels (website, application forms, marketing content as inclusive and appealing to a broad audience.

How

1. Is inclusive language and diverse representation in images present on all your channels and touchpoints?
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
2. Does your site and application form explicitly state your D&I statement?
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
3. Does your site and application form explicitly state how accessible your facilities are? (link up with your facilities team to establish this)
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

Outbound Applications

Why

Outbound sourcing refers to research done by the community team to find startups that might be a good fit for their hub. There's a risk of bias clouting the research methods you use and the criteria you use to do initial evaluations and filtering.

How

1. Research
   - Is there diversity on the databases are you sourcing from?
     - ❑ Yes
     - ❑ No
   - Do you have clearly defined, objective criteria that
     - ❑ Yes
     - ❑ No

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- Do you have targets that encourage research into different countries/sectors
  - ❑ Yes
  - ❑ No

2. Network Referrals

Referrals can be great when building a new pipeline but be aware that networks tend to be made up of people who are similar to us. This can result in favourable outcomes because we have a tendency to favour sameness.

- Which of the following do you use for referrals
  - ❑ Previous alumni
  - ❑ VCs
  - ❑ Other less mature accelerators/incubators

Tip: If you're at a loss as to how to reach a particular minority community, an effective strategy is to develop partnerships with individuals/organizations that are already connected, established and trusted by the communities you're trying to reach.

- Have you checked whether anyone in your hub team has done any outreach with underrepresented groups?
  - ❑ Yes (If so ask them for an introduction)
  - ❑ No

Criteria

Think about what traits you value most highly when reviewing applications and selecting ideas within the programme.

Why

Lack of opportunities for URMs in your ecosystem might make them look like a less desirable candidate than other applicants. Access to a programme within your hub could be a game-changer for a URM, so consider how your hub can support these groups, whether that's through targets within your current programme or specialised programme dedicated.

How

1. Do you have well-defined rubrics defining what differentiates a Poor, Good and Excellent candidate?
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No (refer back to recruiting section of inclusivehubs.com for more information on how to do this)
2. Consider whether there is any scope to provide additional support for certain groups to bring them on par with other better-defined products or startups. This could take the form of;
   - Conditional admission - where you outline improvements that must be made before they can join
   - Pre-program mentoring or early access to onboarding materials.

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3. Who is involved in the decision-making process? Do you use...
    - ❑ A panel
    - ❑ Individuals

- Using a panel helps mitigate individual bias because of the multiple perspectives involved
- Diversity on the panel is key to keeping it balanced because similar people might have the same biases