

# Video Transcript How Boards Can Foster Inclusion in Governance Alison Carr

By Alison Carr, PHR, CUDE, ICUDE

## **Alison Carr** 00:15

When we talk about making the case for inclusive governance, it really requires us to shift into a more inclusive governance mindset. So by fostering inclusion, we truly demonstrate commitment to serving our members than our communities. But creating and sustaining an inclusive culture is just, I guess I would say, one of the most challenging things that an organization can undertake.

## **Alison Carr** 00:45

Diversity initiatives are more than just compensation review or evaluating pay equity. It's really about the capability and authenticity of an organization to engage with their people and engage with a diverse group of people and perspectives and interact across diverse cultures. And by doing so, we foster inclusion and belonging, which are critical skills in our evolving world, whether you're an employee, a senior leadership individual, or at the board level.

## **Alison Carr** 01:20

So it's increasingly important for boards to learn and practice inclusive behaviors. And when we do this, we are developing new skills, and it will make a difference for ourselves as individuals, personally, professionally with our colleagues and for our credit unions. So those that are really serious about improving diversity and inclusion, and more importantly, creating a sense of belonging, really take the time to discuss and evaluate the dynamics of diversity and inclusion and how they affect not only their marketplace, and being relevant, but their business strategy about how they go about doing what we as credit unions do, and really defining our why and connecting that those dots to our business strategy, and also to how we show up for our employees and our members.

## **Alison Carr** 02:22

Creating an inclusive governance model--it's not one size fits all. So it's really important to adapt the approach to our organization's unique characteristics. But as board members by advocating and setting an example at the board level, it helps move the organization forward. As it relates to diversity and inclusion, we really want to be walking the talk and modeling the behavior that we expect for everyone within our organization. And our members will feel that when they walk in the door.

## **Alison Carr** 02:59

So the first step is really advocating for inclusion. Every employee today sees inclusion as one of the most important factors when deciding where they're going to work. And they want the inclusion to be fundamental to their daily lives and their work experience. In a recent study conducted by Deloitte Center for Board Effectiveness, when boards think and act inclusively, it sends a clear message about what is important to the organization.

**Alison Carr 03:33**

Now, in the work that we do with clients, we utilize a few questions to help get the conversation started. So some things that we can be thinking about as boards and discussing during our board meetings during our strategy sessions are things like, what is the credit union's working definition of inclusion? And what is its vision of an inclusive culture? So you really need to define what you think it is what you want it to be, and then work towards that. And then also, how does the credit union's mission, vision and values reflect inclusion? And that really gets back to the why of who we are as credit unions, people helping people. And it's people helping people all the time, not some of the time.

**Alison Carr 04:22**

So we really want to make sure again, we're walking the talk, our actions, reflect our values, and that everything aligns from the top of the organization all the way down to the frontline. And then, what is the credit union doing to advance inclusion? And where is the credit union making progress? And it's important to celebrate early wins and celebrate often.

**Alison Carr 04:47**

You know this isn't a sprint; it is a marathon. It is actually a journey. There is no end goal. It's about improving our business and our organizations, our people and how we show up every day. So we want to celebrate our progress and recognize that it's an ongoing process. And then we want to ask how can the board begin to foster inclusion through its operating principles and behaviors.

**Alison Carr 05:18**

So again, modeling that behavior and then what tools and resources are needed to effectively and thoughtfully engage in discussions around diversity and inclusion. This in our work, we recommend that these are discussions that really need to be part of the board meetings on a regular basis, and really woven into the organizational strategy. And to have that dashboard and those metrics of what your goals are, and how you're progressing towards those. Now, that's how we advocate and get the conversation started. But how do we move towards cultivating a culture of inclusion.

**Alison Carr 05:58**

So more than anything, it's not just about the will and determination to bring forward fresh ideas and new perspectives. It really requires us to move from a place of complacency into one of action. So consider a few a few steps. You know, again, this isn't a checklist. If you do these five things, you're not going to be you know, winning an award. But these are some things to really to reflect on and to think about what you can start doing.

**Alison Carr 06:24**

So first, establish an organization-wide diversity and inclusion strategy and have practices that go along with that. Form an inclusion-specific committee or designate an inclusion champion within the board. That's a great starting point, especially for accountability, to have someone that really owns the work and can work with leadership and with the board in those discussions.

**Alison Carr** 06:51

Really take a look at your board composition, review and update how you recruit. What are your succession practices, and include a focused effort on building your pipeline for more diverse candidates and prioritize inclusion on the board agenda? I've already chatted about that a little bit but making sure there's time on the agenda to talk about and, and really discuss and monitor the progress towards the goals.

**Alison Carr** 07:19

So the question is, does it really matter? And the answer is yes. By fostering inclusivity and building a diverse organization and culture of inclusion, we truly demonstrate our commitment to creating equity and fulfilling our mission of fully serving our members and communities in a strategic and sustainable way. And the heart of this work is really about shifting our behaviors and our mindsets and ensuring these efforts are woven throughout the organization and are at the center of all of our decision-making.

**Alison Carr** 07:56

So I guess my call to action for everyone would be: It's time for boards to recognize both their personal and their fiduciary responsibility and the potential for influencing inclusion and belonging within the organization and that it's their responsibility to do so not just for the sake of employees, but for the members and communities that they serve. And bottom line, it's a moral imperative. And it's undeniable that the risk of failing to act is too great.