

***HIDDEN FIGURES:
IDENTIFYING HIGH NET WORTH PROSPECTS OF COLOR
THROUGH NON-BIAS SCREENING TECHNIQUES***

EXPLORE
PD25
New Depths

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EXPLORE
PD25
New Depths

At the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Identify the ways that systemic bias are embedded in our digital infrastructure
- Apply alternative prospecting strategies to surface hidden wealth
- Implement practical steps to audit and improve wealth screening practices for inclusivity

UNDERSTANDING BIAS IN AI & DATA-DRIVEN FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY

**Customer Relationship
Management (CRM) systems
often label donors by colonial
metrics of “value”.**





THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY



Why is this an issue?

- **Prospect scoring algorithms** disproportionately privilege white, male, cis, able-bodied, heteronormative donors because they are trained on past giving trends.
- **Donor segmentation** reinforces redlining when tied to ZIP code analysis, reinforcing geographic and racial disparities.
- **AI-based wealth screening** often taps into real estate records and stock portfolios, systematically ignoring non-traditional wealth expressions found in BIPGM (Black, Indigenous, People of the Global Majority) communities – like collective economic models, informal networks, or cultural assets.
- **Predictive analytics** fail to account for historic disenfranchisement or systemic philanthropic neglect.



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR FUNDRAISERS, ADVANCEMENT PROFESSIONALS & PROSPECT RESEARCHERS

Core truths:

Data isn't neutral—it's historical.

Most AI fundraising tools are trained on Eurocentric philanthropic histories that valorize elite institutions and reinforce donor colonialism.

Efficiency often equals erasure.

When automation prioritizes speed and scalability, it erases the nuance, cultural context, and relationality required to build equitable giving ecosystems.

Risk scoring is racialized.

Many platforms assign “likelihood to give” based on factors that penalize communities harmed by racial capitalism—from housing precarity to non-linear wealth accumulation to absence from legacy donor records.

CRM + TECH SYSTEM BIAS AUDIT

Data Equity & Representation

Representation isn't just about visibility; it's about dignity, agency, and context.

Key Questions to Audit:

- Are donor and constituent identities (race, gender, disability, 2SLGBTQIA+ status) self-identified or assumed by third-party data vendors?
- Do we offer constituents the opportunity to self-report identities such as race, gender, disability, or 2SLGBTQIA+ status, and do we explain how that data is used?
- Are global majority communities accurately reflected in reports and segmentation (not just numerically, but geographically, culturally, and by giving behavior)?
- Are relational aspects (like proximity to the issue, cultural alignment, or mutual aid) considered in donor engagement strategies?

Team Reflection Points:

- Are we prioritizing relational data or defaulting to extractive identifiers?
- Do our dashboards reflect equity-centered giving behavior (e.g., small but recurring gifts, peer-to-peer fundraising, community-led events)?
- What data is missing, and whose stories are being erased by that absence?

CRM + TECH SYSTEM BIAS AUDIT

Bias in Scoring & AI Prediction

Key Questions to Audit:

- Are predictive scores (e.g., wealth ratings, likelihood to give) disproportionately favoring donors with proximity to whiteness, wealth, elite institutions, or legacy systems?
- Do scores and tags like “top prospect” or “major gift ready” implicitly reward colonial class structures?
- Are philanthropic behaviors from global majority communities (e.g., collective giving, informal giving, faith-driven contributions) captured—or ignored?

Team Reflection Points:

- What assumptions are integrated into our AI models?
- Have we considered alternative models of generosity (advocacy, storytelling, time, lived experience)?
- What would our segmentation look like if we centered justice, not just capital?

CRM + TECH SYSTEM BIAS AUDIT

Are “High Value Donors” Coded in Ways that Reinforce Colonial Class Structures?

What to Watch For:

- Tags like “top donor,” “high capacity,” or “VIP” are based solely on wealth, education, or real estate holdings.
- Invitations to exclusive events, insider briefings, or naming opportunities are limited to donors from affluent, white-dominant circles.
- A donor pyramid that places grassroots contributors and culturally-rooted philanthropists at the bottom.

Team Reflection Points:


- Who gets invited to private cultivation events or gets a personalized stewardship plan?
- Are we unintentionally prioritizing donors who represent the same systems we’re trying to dismantle?
- Can “value” be redefined to include time, advocacy, lived experience, and community proximity?

CRM + TECH SYSTEM BIAS AUDIT

Audit Your CRM Language

Are you using racially coded, extractive terms?

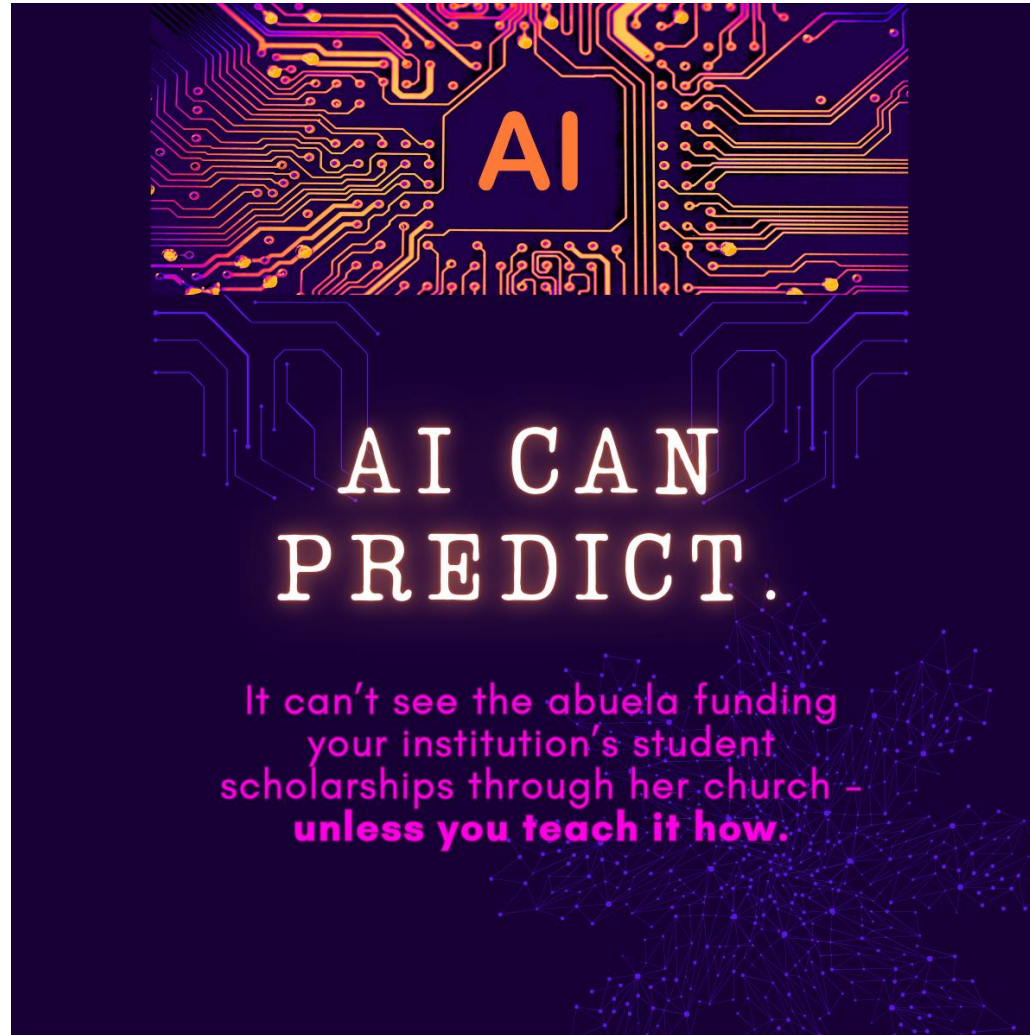
Why this matters:

- Language shapes perception. Terms like “low-performing donor” or “cold lead” carry value judgments rooted in wealth-centric logic.
- When your systems default to deficit framing, you risk reinforcing racism, classism, and cultural bias in how we relate to prospects, donors, and stakeholders.
- Does your CRM use terms like “low-performing,” “non-traditional prospect,” or “under-cultivated” in racially coded ways? If so:  **Flag and rewrite internal field labels that center white-normed fundraising logic.**

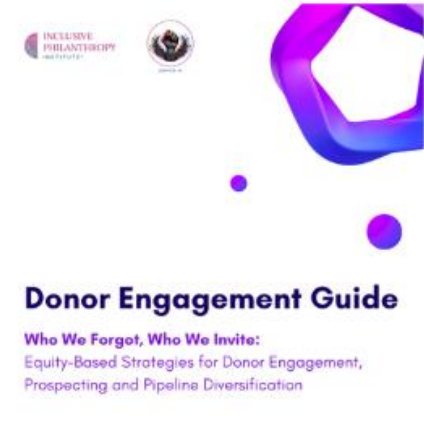
Why these phrases are harmful:

- These phrases were built in a framework where performance is tied to wealth, and wealth is tied to whiteness, proximity to elite networks, or assimilation into capitalist norms.
- A “non-traditional prospect” often means someone who doesn’t look like the typical white, wealthy, major donor.
- They position whiteness and wealth as the standard, and everything else as “non-traditional” or lacking.
- “Under-cultivated” implies that the problem lies in the donor, not in our failure to build trust, respect cultural giving practices, or address power imbalances.

CRM + TECH SYSTEM BIAS AUDIT - FINAL THOUGHT



AVAILABLE RESOURCES



Artificial Intelligence in Fundraising & Philanthropy Toolkit™



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PROSPECT DEVELOPMENT 2025

AUDIENCE POLL

What are your current data-related gaps?

What data sources do you wish you had?

LIMITATIONS OF TRADITIONAL WEALTH INDICATORS

Overreliance on:

- Real Estate assets
- SEC filings

Gaps:

- Underrepresents private wealth
- Reinforces systemic bias
- Misses invisible assets (community leadership, private ventures)

NON-TRADITIONAL INDICATORS OF WEALTH



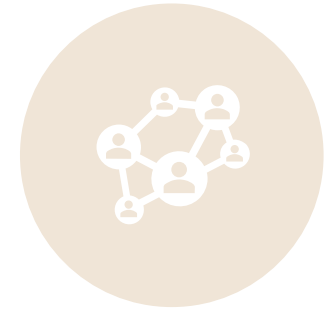
BUSINESS
OWNERSHIP,
PARTICULARLY
PRIVATE FIRMS



ACCOMPLISHMENTS
IN NICHE INDUSTRIES
(E.G., TECH, ARTS,
MEDIA)

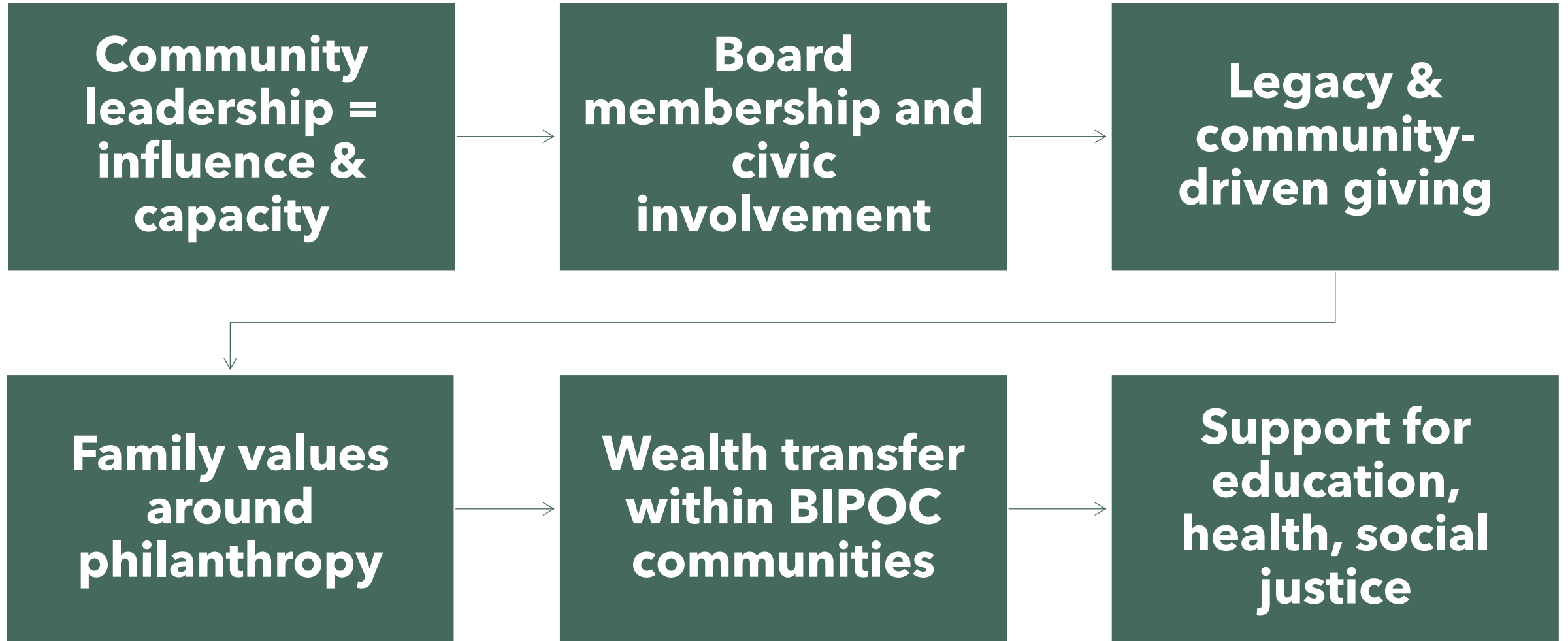


CULTURAL
PHILANTHROPY
ENGAGEMENT



PHILANTHROPIC
INFLUENCE VIA
NETWORKS,
COUNCILS, OR
LEADERSHIP

SOCIAL CAPITAL & PHILANTHROPIC MOTIVATIONS



STEP 1: IDENTIFY & MITIGATE BIAS

**Audit tools
for bias
(inputs,
outcomes)**

**Ask: Who is
consistently
under-
identified?**

**Add missing
datasets:
private
donors,
grassroots
leaders**

**Establish
equity
checkpoints**

STEP 2: USE ALTERNATIVE DATA SOURCES

- **Business Ownership & Entrepreneurial Data**
 - National Minority Supplier Development Council – certifies minority-owned businesses
 - U.S. Black Chambers Directory
 - Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Networks
 - Asian Business Association Directories
 - Inc. 5000 Lists – filter for BIPOC-owned and fastest-growing private companies
- **Professional Networks & Industry-Specific**
 - National Medical Association
 - National Bar Association
 - Association of Latino Professionals for America
 - National Black MBA Association
 - Women of Color in Philanthropy and Fundraising
- **Private Company Valuation Tools**
- **Cultural, Community, and Religious Leadership**
 - Local faith institutions and mega-churches
 - Fraternities/Sororities
 - Urban League chapters, NAACP branches, AAPI civic coalitions

STEP 3: INCLUSIVE DATA MODELING

1

**Diversify data
inputs for
predictive
scoring**

2

**Model
influence, civic
leadership, and
trust indicators**

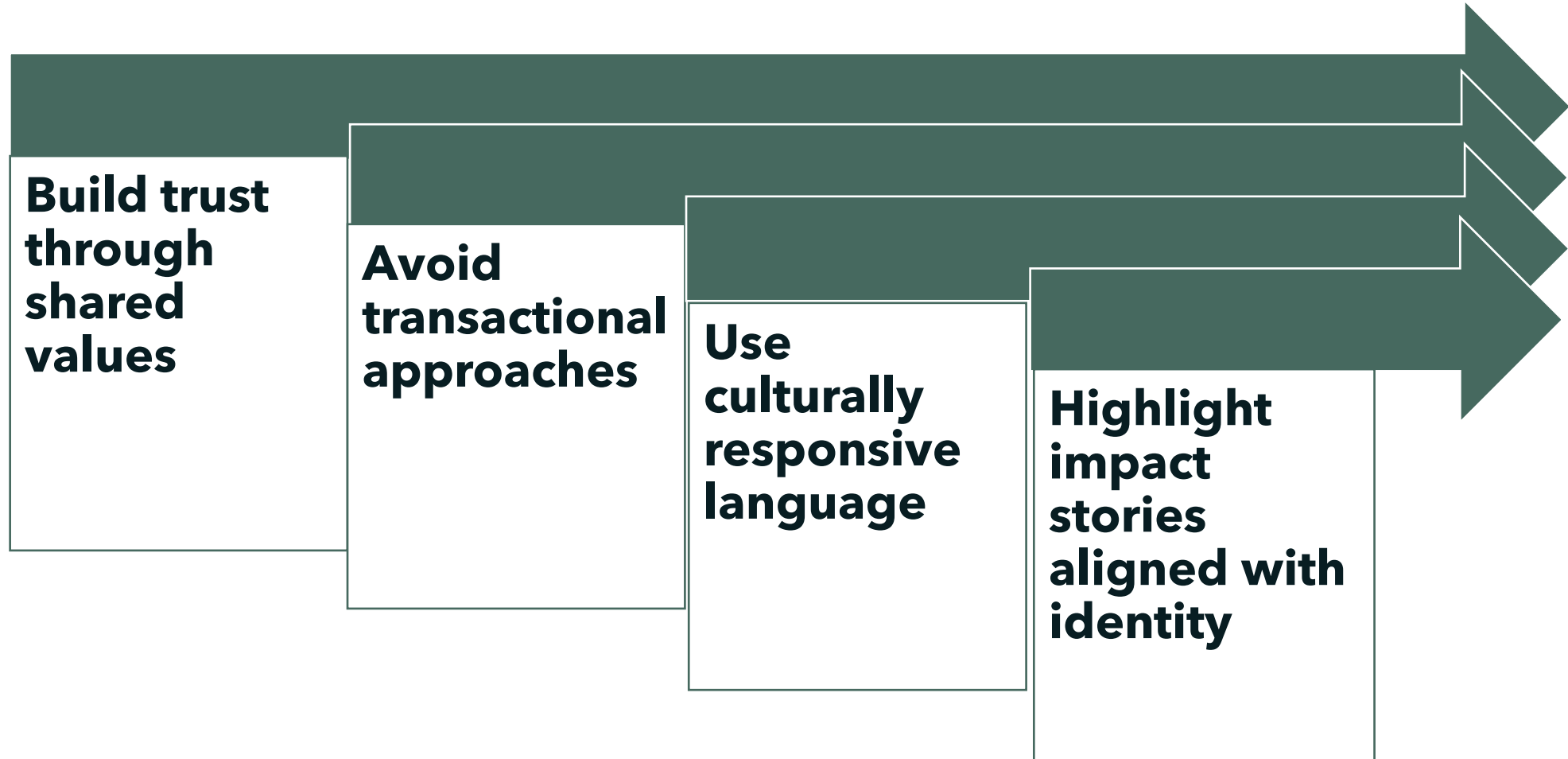
3

**Audit AI tools
for bias**

4

**Follow ethical
data practices**

STEP 4: EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



CASE STUDY: WHAT WORKS



A nonprofit focused on educational access and racial equity. They had a long history of relying on traditional wealth screening tools to identify major gift prospects.



Development leaders noticed gaps in their prospect pool, particularly among donors of color, many of whom were deeply engaged programmatically but absent from cultivation pipelines.



The organization was experiencing stalled revenue growth and increasing pressure to diversify philanthropic partnerships. The org committed to reimagining how they identified, assessed, and engaged major donor prospects.



CASE STUDY: WHAT WORKS

Roadmap

- **Step 1: Identifying and Mitigating Bias in Existing Wealth Screening Tools**
- Org reviewed and assessed the algorithms, assumptions, and inputs used in their wealth screening platform.
- The audit revealed:
 - Overreliance on homeownership and public securities data, which undervalued wealth in immigrant and historically excluded communities.
 - Low recognition of entrepreneurs in cash-based industries or private ventures.

Action Taken

- Org worked with their screening vendor to customize inputs.
- Adjusted thresholds to recognize non-traditional assets like business ownership, private investments, and philanthropic board activity.

CASE STUDY: WHAT WORKS

Step 2: Utilizing Alternative Data Sources

- To supplement traditional screening data, the org integrated new sources:
- Local and national minority business databases
- Leadership directories from associations like the National Society of Black Engineers and Latino Corporate Directors Association
- Private philanthropy data through Form 990 reviews and community foundation records

Step 3: Implementing Inclusive Data Modeling

- The org's data science team built a new prospect model using:
- Predictive analytics that included alumni engagement, volunteerism, cultural affiliations, and social capital indicators
- Ethical AI practices, including bias audits at each stage of the model's development

CASE STUDY: WHAT WORKS

Step 4: Creating an Equitable Engagement Strategy

- With a redefined prospect list in hand, the org shifted its cultivation strategy:
 - Reframed donor outreach to focus on shared values and community impact rather than transactional giving
 - Hosted intimate salons and listening sessions co-hosted by trusted community leaders
 - Ensured that fundraising materials reflected the language, values, and legacies of diverse communities

Outcome & Impact

- Identified 178 new potential prospects, including BIPOC philanthropists who had never been flagged in previous screenings.
- Increased accuracy of prospect identification by 37%, particularly among women and donors of color.
- Secured \$1.4M in new gifts over 12 months, including a \$500K gift from a Black-owned investment firm whose founder was previously unflagged by traditional screening.

PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION



Quick Wins:

- Update screening criteria
- Staff training on alternative indicators



Long-Term:

- Partner with affinity orgs
- Rebuild predictive models
- Track inclusion outcomes



FINAL TAKEAWAYS

- Wealth is multi-dimensional
 - Traditional tools must evolve
 - Inclusion improves pipeline and relationships
 - Begin with small steps—change is cumulative
-

THANK YOU!

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