

# Bringing Your Whole Self to Work: Overcoming Bias Barriers

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# The Vision Test..



# SCENARIO 1

► Police arrived at the scene around 3 a.m. and found the victim lying on the sidewalk with a gunshot wound to the head. The victim had a bag of marijuana in their hand. The victim also had a handgun in the side pocket and a knife in their back pocket. Witnesses indicated that the victim was in the middle of a drug deal, when an argument ensued, and shots were fired. The victim has been arrested several times previously for drug possession and unlawful use of a weapon.

► What is the race and gender of the victim?

# SCENARIO 2

- ▶ The victim was sitting on the curb in front of the house when police arrived. The victim was crying uncontrollably. It was difficult for officers to understand what the victim was saying. After officers on scene were able to calm the victim, it was discovered that the victim had been violently sexually assaulted after a blind date. The victim had marks on the neck indicating strangulation. The victim was barefoot and shaking. The victim indicated they did not want to press charges because they were afraid of what people might say about them.
- ▶ What is the race and gender of the victim?

- ▶ An Individual applies for grant funds to support an agency in their community that helps gang members reintegrate into society and change course after they are released from incarceration.
- ▶ One of the former gang members in the community has benefited from reintegration service in the past and would like to partner in this work.
- ▶ The Individual often tells their families immigration story indicating their parents came to the United States without legal status and how they ultimately become a DACA recipient.
- ▶ This individual's parents taught them the value of hard work often spending long hours as service workers in less than desirable positions. This individual wants to give back to help individuals that look like them find a better path.
  
- ▶ What is the race and gender of the individual?
- ▶ What the race and gender of the former gang member?

## SCENARIO 3



# Scenario Discussion

# Session Overview

Define

Define implicit bias and identify its root causes

Identify

Identify areas where bias can impact victim services

Develop

Develop strategies for maintaining equity in interactions and assessments



# Can we live a bias free existence?

- ▶ Can we take steps to ensure that bias does not create a barrier to providing victims assistance funding and victim's compensation?





# What is Bias?

- ▶ *Bias* is a tendency to prefer one person or thing to another, and to favor that person or thing. ([www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com))
- ▶ Explicit bias is the traditional conceptualization of bias. With explicit bias, individuals are aware of their prejudices and attitudes toward certain groups. Positive or negative preferences for a particular group are conscious.
- ▶ Implicit bias involves all of the subconscious feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that have developed as a result of prior influences and imprints. It is an automatic positive or negative preference for a group, based on one's subconscious thoughts.

# Impacts of Implicit Bias

- ▶ Decisions to provide resources to one group versus another
- ▶ Determining an individual's credibility or propensity to tell the truth
- ▶ Determination about an individual's work ethic
- ▶ Determinations about an individual's propensity towards criminal behavior
- ▶ Determinations about an individual's intellectual capability
- ▶ Attempts to justify inequity
- ▶ Judgments about family relationships and moral aptitude

# Identifying Implicit Bias Does Not Mean...

- ▶ You are a bad person
- ▶ You are actively engaging in discriminatory behavior
- ▶ You look at all situations with a biased view
- ▶ A biased assessment does not have some factual things that can be identified
- ▶ You can never move past biased views to address situations and people with equity

# Identifying Implicit Bias Does...

- ▶ Help us to understand that recognizing implicit bias is the first step in preventing the negative impact it can have
- ▶ Helps us to understand how bias plays a role in our decisions, relationships, and interactions
- ▶ Helps us to understand how we categorize information to store it
- ▶ Helps us to understand how past judgments shape perspectives
- ▶ Help us create systems that have equity at the core
- ▶ Let us know that we all have lenses that at times need a little correction

What does Implicit  
Bias look like in  
Victim's Compensation  
and Victims Assistance  
Funding?



# Example 1:

- ▶ Two individuals are victims of a mass shooting. Individual A is a victim of a mass shooting in an inner-city community that is plagued with violence. Individual B is a victim of a mass shooting in an affluent community where crime is an exception instead of a rule. Families for both seek compensation.
- ▶ When individual “B”’s claim is reviewed. Compensation is granted for all parties associated to the crime with no question. When individual “A”’s claim is reviewed, questions arise about whether all parties associated should be compensated. The claim reviewer identifies differences in parties to be compensated.
- ▶ Is there bias here? If so, what biases do you see?
- ▶ Are there any underlying belief systems that may cause the reviewer to treat these two claims differently?
- ▶ Do you think the claim reviewer would deny bias and justify their decision?

# Example 2:

- ▶ A grant opportunity has become available to support counseling services for victims of sexual assault and abuse. Four organizations have applied to receive the funds. Requests for the funding are reviewed by a panel of three. One of the panelists is familiar with three of the agencies. The organization directors grew up in the same community where the panelist came from. She knows they would use the funds as they are intended. The fourth organization is a small group in a community that predominately serves victims of Latin descent. Without any history of mismanagement, the panel asks questions about how the money will be spent and questions the possibility of funds mismanagement. The organization is asked to provide financial records and disclosure not requested of the other applicants. The organization asked for a timeline extension to provide the documentation. The request was denied. It was decided that funding this organization would not be a good idea.
  - ▶ Is there bias here? If so, what biases do you see?
  - ▶ Are there any underlying belief systems that may cause the panelists to treat these applicants differently?
  - ▶ Do you think the panelist would deny bias and justify their decision?

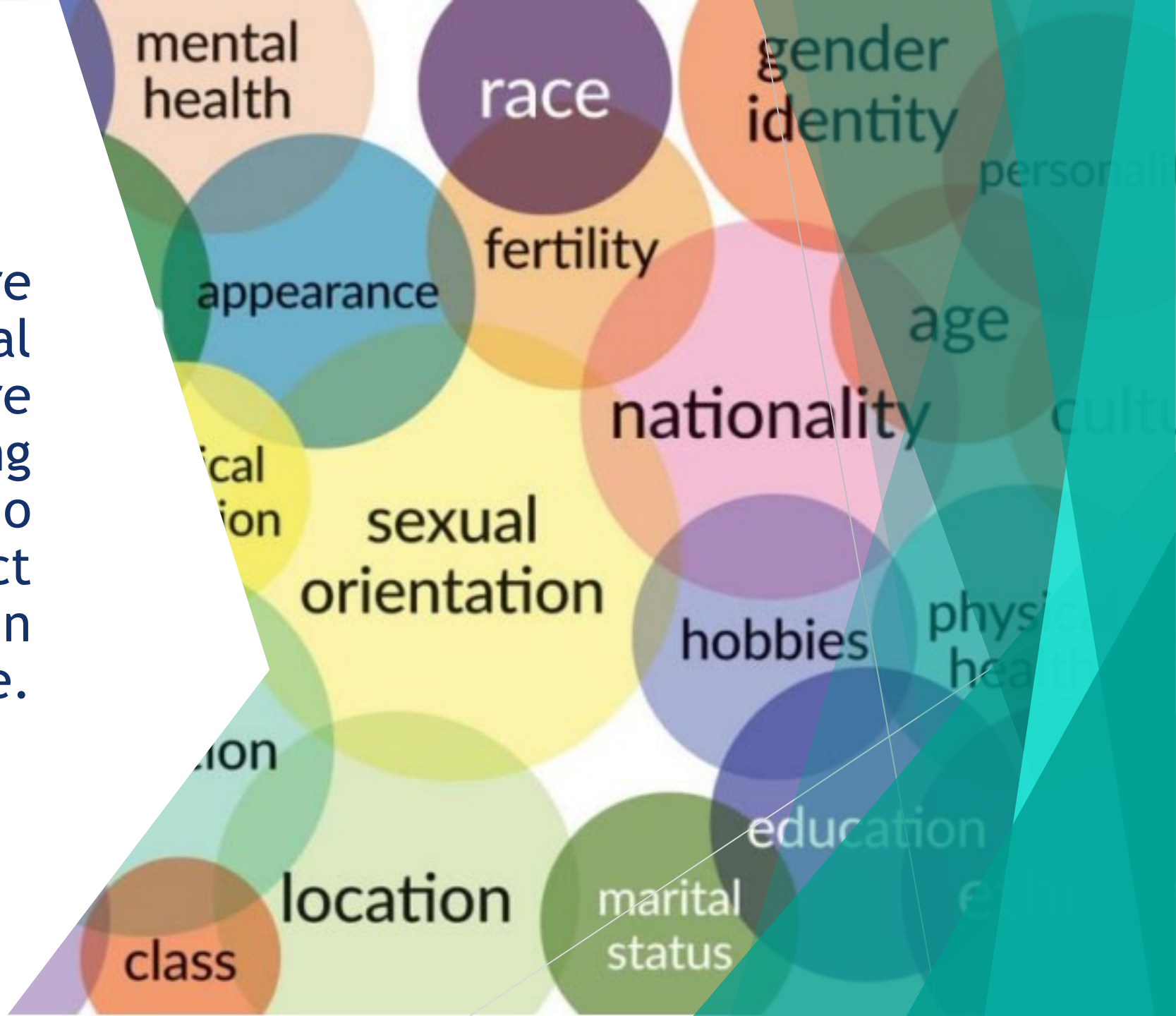
Why is it so difficult  
to see our own  
implicit biases?

Where do our biases come  
from?



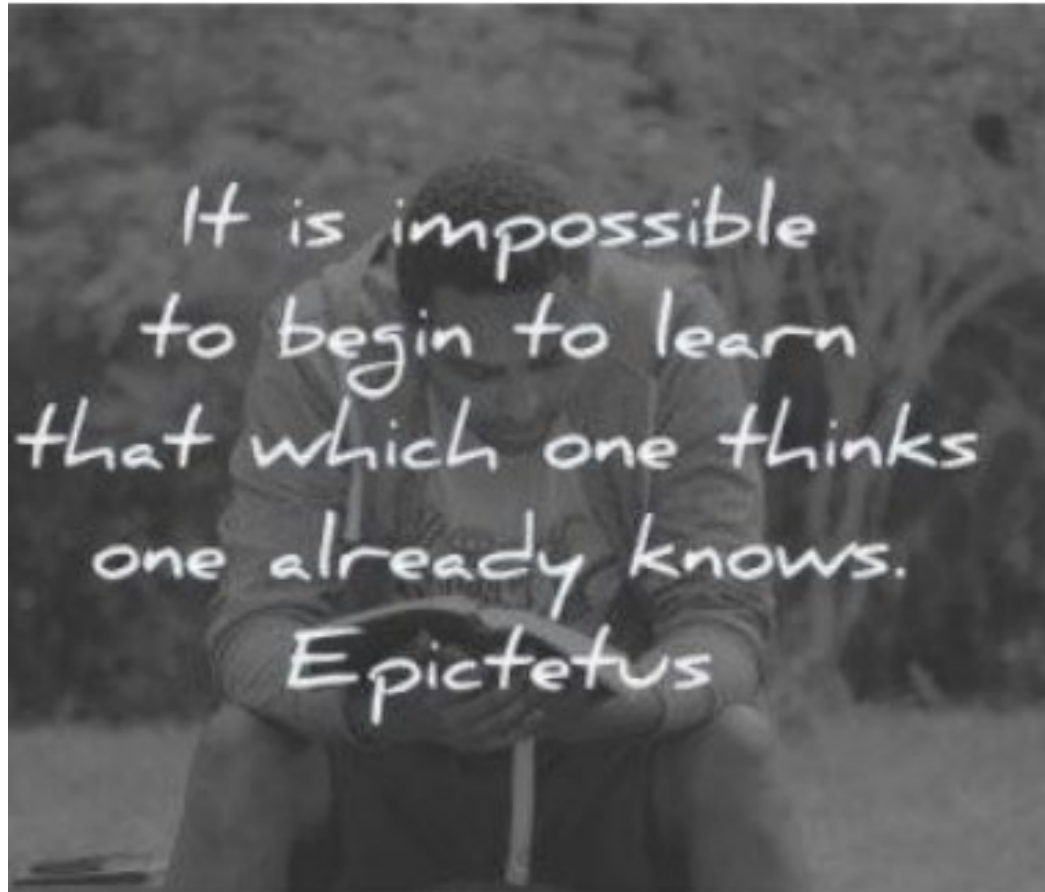


Principle One: We are not unidimensional beings. Who we are today began forming generations ago. Who we become will impact several generations in the future.





Principle Two: The complexity of our identity can also create certain ‘blind spots’ into other people’s experiences.



Principle Three:  
Humility, curiosity,  
and openness are  
key ingredients to  
understanding the  
experiences of  
others who stand  
outside of our  
identity.

# Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

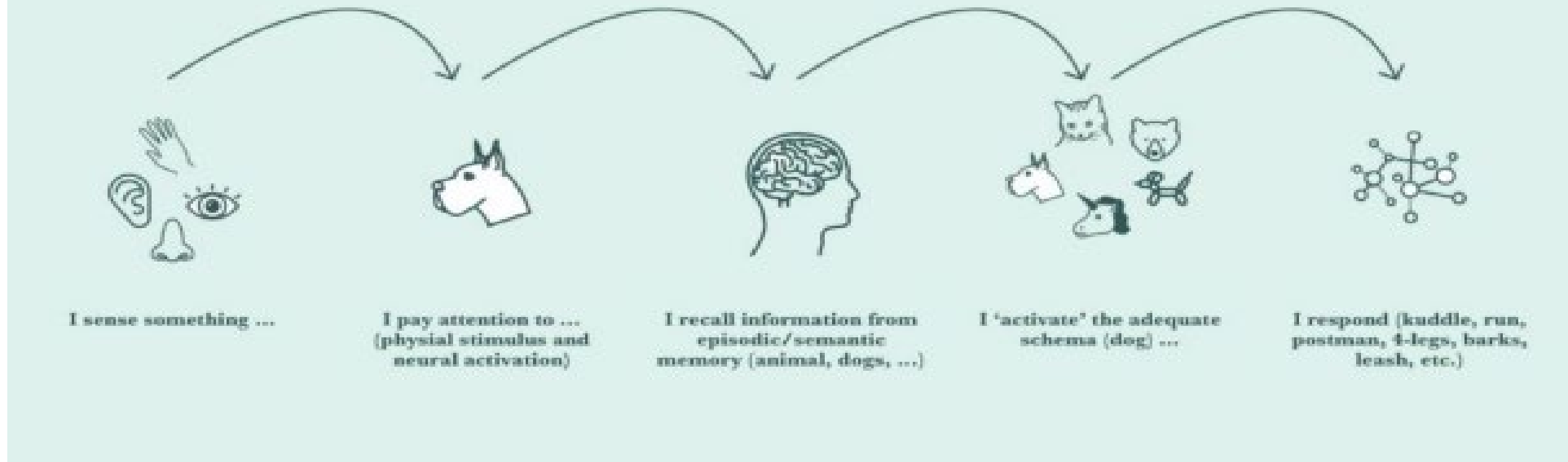
- ▶ **Prejudice** refers to irrational or unjustifiable negative emotions or evaluations toward persons from other social groups, and it is a primary determinant of discriminatory behavior
- ▶ **Discrimination** refers to inappropriate treatment of people because of their actual or perceived group membership and may include both overt and covert behaviors, including micro-aggressions, or indirect or subtle behaviors (e.g., comments) that reflect negative attitudes or beliefs about a non-majority group.
- ▶ **Racism** refers to prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups based on beliefs about one's own racial superiority or the belief that race reflects inherent differences in attributes and capabilities.
- ▶ **Everyone** is capable of thinking and acting in ways that are prejudice, discriminatory, and racist.



# Implicit Bias

- ▶ Implicit bias involves all of the subconscious feelings, perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes that have developed as a result of prior influences and imprints.
- ▶ It is an automatic positive or negative preference for a group, based on one's subconscious thoughts

**Fig. 1: Schema Theory**



- Bias is a human trait resulting from our tendency and need to classify individuals into categories as we strive to quickly process information and make sense of the world.
- Categorizing sensory input efficiently helps us throughout the day. Automatic processing occurs with tasks that are very well practiced; very few mental resources and little conscious thought are involved during automatic processing, allowing numerous tasks to be carried out simultaneously.
- These schemas become templates that we use when we are faced with new encounters. Our brains take pieces of information associated with familiar objects, sort it according to the schemas, and respond according to how we have been trained to react to that category.

**Bias is not synonymous with prejudice or bigotry**

# Stereotypes

- ▶ When these schemas are used to categorize people by age, gender, race, or other criteria, they are called stereotypes.
- ▶ This term is not necessarily a negative concept; the brain is sorting new people into easily recognizable groups.
- ▶ For example, a stereotype may consist of “elderly people,” or “people who went to the same school that I attended.” Attitudes, on the other hand, are positive or negative feelings and attributes towards a person or a thing.



How does our inheritance impact how we develop schemas?



# Color-blind Racism



- ▶ Color blindness is rooted in the belief that racial group membership and race-based differences should not be taken into account when decisions are made, impressions are formed, and behaviors are enacted.
- ▶ The logic underlying the belief that color blindness can prevent prejudice and discrimination is straightforward:
  - ▶ If people or institutions do not even notice race, then they cannot act in a racially biased manner.
  - ▶ Although this tendency to sidestep mention of race may stem from a well-intentioned desire to avoid bias (or at least a desire to appear unbiased), such color-blind behavior has been found to result in various negative social consequences.
  - ▶ “[Color-blindness] communicates that my distinctions don’t matter, right, which would mean that my identity doesn’t matter... and that’s confusing to a young Black man, because you’re telling me my identity doesn’t matter, yet I’m being treated a certain way because of this identity”



# We Recognize Bias

Now What?

# Action Steps

- ▶ Recognize the potential for and presence of implicit bias
- ▶ Evaluate your desire to modify incorrect perceptions and actions
- ▶ Actively take steps to avoid the implicit bias in your interactions and ideas

# Questions to Begin Your Self-Reflection

- What core beliefs do I hold? How might these beliefs limit or enable me and my colleagues at work?
- How do I react to people from different backgrounds? Do I hold stereotypes or assumptions about a particular social group?
- As a colleague, do I acknowledge and leverage differences on my team?
- Do my words and actions actually reflect my intentions?
- Do I put myself in the shoes of the other person and empathize with their situation, even if I don't relate to it?

# Additional Self-Evaluation

- ▶ Are there specific areas for where I am more prone to show bias?
- ▶ Are there negative experiences that I have had which make me more prone to be biased in certain areas?
- ▶ Does my exposure or lack of exposure to people or environments that are different than I am familiar with impact my views in certain situations?
- ▶ Are my ideas based in fact in this situation?
- ▶ Am I making exceptions in this situation that I would not make in other situations? Why?
- ▶ Why am I thinking about this person or situation in this way?

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>



Do I want to  
show equity in  
my thoughts and  
actions?

Or, have I decided that there is  
nothing wrong with the way I see  
the world?

# Evaluate Policies, Procedures, and Patterns

- ▶ Ensure that you have clearly defined rules and expectations for both compensation and victim's assistance.
- ▶ Ensure that expectations consider the possibility of bias.
- ▶ Do not deviate from established rules without careful consideration of the reasons for deviation.
- ▶ Ensure that exceptions are applied in a consistent fashion.
- ▶ Ensure that everyone has access to the same information and opportunity.
- ▶ Remain transparent when decisions are made.


- ▶ Don't make assumptions about people or situations simply based on what you see.
- ▶ Recognize when assumptions are being made.
- ▶ Consider narratives other than the one that comes to mind first.
- ▶ As much as possible eliminate the need for “judgment calls” or discretionary decisions.





# Evaluate Outcomes

- ▶ Are my assistance funding and compensation determinations being made with consistency across the board?
- ▶ Can I point to specific details that show consistency?
- ▶ Are there any examples of exceptions that are made?
- ▶ Are those exceptions being applied consistently?
- ▶ Are there any consistent patterns in granting or denying funding?
- ▶ If this applicant or organization was in a different community, looked different, came from a different source, would I make the same decision?

A red cartoon character with a green oval on its forehead containing the word "FACT". The character has a friendly expression with a wide smile and is set against a yellow background.

**FACT**

If you find evidence of inequity in either yourself or program assessments, take steps to identify issues then commit to change perceptions, change rules, create policies, change determinations and remain determined to foster an atmosphere of equity.

# Sources

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