



Customer story

# DonorsChoose takes a data-driven approach to DE&I in their hiring

Greenhouse empowers the education-focused nonprofit to create an equitable hiring process with the DE&I feature set

greenhouse + **DONORS  
CHOOSE**

DonorsChoose's challenge

Develop hiring processes that align with the organization's commitment to DE&I in their work in education

Greenhouse solution

Custom demographic reporting and structured hiring make data clear and accessible on demand for live roles



# Equity for educators – and prospective employees

## A pioneer of the crowdfunding model, DonorsChoose makes it easy to raise money and awareness for classrooms in need

Since launching in 2000, educators using the DonorsChoose platform have raised more than \$1 billion to bring to life 1.7 million teacher requests in classrooms across the US.

Educational equity is the driving force for DonorsChoose – the classrooms that need the most resources are often the classrooms with the most students of color. [According to DonorsChoose Founder Charles Best](#) in a recent letter to their community, “Since our founding twenty years ago, our organization has focused on economic need as our measure of equity. However, inequitable distribution of classroom resources falls not just on economic lines but also on racial lines. A sole focus on economic need doesn’t go far enough to deliver on our mission.”

Mirroring the company’s external mission, the People and Talent team at DonorsChoose is committed to promoting DE&I in their hiring practices. Director of People [Mary Holtzhauser](#) says, “Equity is the root of our mission, and we think not just about equity in the mission-driven sense as it pertains to education, but in terms of what it means to be a group of people doing that work. In that sense, there’s a clear connection to hiring.”

The People and Talent team had a feeling there was room for improvement, but it was difficult to gather the data they needed to make their case.

### Fast facts

2000

Company founded

1.7MM

Teacher requests funded

\$1B

Raised for classrooms  
across the US

160

Employees





DonorsChoose had used their previous ATS during the company's earlier stages. But as the organization grew, the People and Talent team realized that they lacked the tools to support the data-driven practices that would keep them on par with the rest of the organization, doing this work at scale.

And when it came to topics like promoting DE&I, good intentions simply wouldn't make the grade. "We made the case for Greenhouse because we needed the ability to access more reporting and streamline processes. Only Greenhouse could help us do that," says DonorsChoose's Manager of People & Talent [Austin Galoob](#).

## The challenge

### Collecting data was time-consuming for the small hiring team

DonorsChoose has a high standard for their DE&I hiring efforts and wanted to intentionally drive a more diverse candidate pool. To do so, they had to prioritize gathering better data on diversity in their hiring pools. Without that data, conversations between the People and Talent team and hiring managers felt uninformed and ineffective.

In an effort to become more data-driven, the People and Talent team created a list of optional custom questions to ask candidates about race, ethnicity and gender identity. The purpose was to go beyond general EEO definitions and to align the questions to DonorsChoose's values in hiring and as an organization. In their previous ATS, they couldn't store all the data they needed in one place and had to rely on external sources like Google Drive. Any time a hiring manager wanted to see numbers or get a sense of what the pipeline looked like, the team had to piece together a manual report – a slow and labor-intensive process.

It also meant that promising candidates would sometimes get stuck in the pipeline until all the relevant reports could be created, which was not an optimal candidate experience or an efficient way for the People and Talent team to work.

## Addressing bias in interviewing to level the playing field for candidates

Unconscious bias can be present at any stage of the interview. Thoughtful processes and structured hiring are the first – and most important – steps for addressing bias when and where it happens. At DonorsChoose, the biggest measure for controlling bias in hiring is an anonymized work sample, which is assessed against a predetermined rubric. Used for every candidate, it removes identity indicators from candidates' assessments so they are evaluated against the core skills for the role.

DonorsChoose wanted to give everyone a fair assessment, and knew that an application coming from an internal candidate or employee referral might unintentionally give those candidates a leg up. Hiring managers could also be influenced if they knew that a take-home test came from a candidate with employment gaps or an application that hadn't made a big impression. And while take-home tests were part of the DonorsChoose application process prior to implementing Greenhouse, the process to anonymize them was highly manual, making it potentially prone to error.





## A need for consistent structured interviewing across the organization

While hiring managers and interviewers at DonorsChoose were using structured hiring, the company lacked a single way to ensure exacting consistency in interviewing for every role, creating the potential for bias. With limited consistency across hiring processes, interviewers lacked the accountability tools that would really inform them about each candidate's ability to perform the role in question. The People and Talent team at DonorsChoose realized that they needed a system that made it scalable in order to create a structured interviewing process for every single candidate.



“We’ve seen how access to data has given us **more leverage in conversations with leadership** where before we were estimating or only relying on stories and not actual numbers.”

**Austin Galoob**  
Manager of People & Talent at DonorsChoose



# The solution

## Data on demand drives impact on DE&I hiring in real time

DonorsChoose wanted data at their fingertips to drive their DE&I hiring efforts. The Greenhouse DE&I feature set offered them a robust set of tools.

**Data collection and reporting** empower DonorsChoose to track self-reported applicant demographic data throughout the hiring funnel and measure pass-through and drop-off rates.

**In-the-moment interventions** nudge interviewers to slow down and avoid instinctive biases that are not rooted in evidence or tied to role-relevant criteria.

**Structured decision-making** provides added guardrails that support a more objective selection process.

“At a high level, the DE&I feature set is really just an extension of what we offer in Greenhouse. There are a number of different additional guardrails that we put in place to make sure that the process is as structured and objective as possible.”

**Gary Davis**

Inclusion Strategist at Greenhouse



## Doing their homework for conversations with hiring managers and leaders

Since launching Greenhouse DE&I, the DonorsChoose People and Talent team has been using custom demographic reporting to guide their hiring processes and decisions. The team was particularly drawn to the custom demographic reporting because it allowed them to use a more inclusive set of identities that the general EEOC questions don't. Today, a conversation about an open role includes looking at reports on pipeline, sourcing and candidate surveys by demographic. These reports provide a clear snapshot of the hiring process, giving the team the language and tools they need to communicate an accurate assessment to hiring managers and leaders and to make decisions to pivot their recruitment strategies in real time.



**Austin Galoob**  
Manager of People & Talent  
at DonorsChoose

### Demonstrating the effectiveness of bias mitigation measures

Custom demographic reporting has already given the People and Talent team insights into their pipeline and allowed them to be more intentional about diversity in their interview process. Austin says,

**“Since turning on custom demographic reporting, 58% of the candidates who have made it to the face-to face interview stage have identified as people of color.”**

This demonstrates the effectiveness of several bias mitigation measures DonorsChoose has implemented, including bias mitigation training, anonymized take-home tests and structured interviews.



## Promoting inclusive hiring practices

DonorsChoose has also used Greenhouse to scale their inclusive hiring practices, including structured hiring and anonymized take-home tests. Using interview kits and scorecards in Greenhouse roots the interview process in competency-based interviewing. This makes it easier to train interviewers on what to look for and limits biased decision-making. Austin says hiring managers use the nudges to dig deeper into why an interviewer is giving a certain score or rating: “It gives the hiring managers more data beyond a thumbs up or a star rating.”

Similarly, anonymizing take-home tests and building a specific rubric for interviewers creates a single standard across the board. This levels the playing field as candidates are assessed on their abilities rather than their resumes or backgrounds. Austin says, “We’ve seen how the skills-based assessment shows that resumes and cover letters are not the be-all and end-all. They’re not the only way to assess a candidate’s fit for a role.”

As Director of People, Mary believes their updated approach to hiring benefits everyone at the organization – not just candidates. She says, “Hiring is also a forced stopping point for you to evaluate how intentional you’re being in structuring a role. You have to ask questions about growth, success and responsibility. And then you need to represent those answers clearly to candidates and to other employees at the organization. Equity is just as much about employee development and growth as it is ensuring a fair assessment process.”



# greenhouse

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