White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion Extended Recommended Practices for Military and Veteran Serving Organizations

We, the military and Veteran serving organizations serving on the White Oak Collaborative Subcommittee on Racial Equity and Inclusion, are recommending the following practices and programs for our field and beyond. Many of us have piloted these practices in our own organizations. We are committed to those mentioned below in an effort to create robust support for all members of our communities, including the underserved and underrepresented. We encourage other organizations to make use of these recommendations in order to become more just, equitable, and inclusive community support organizations.

Be Intentional

Consider the organization's vision, mission, and strategic plan through a lens of racial equity and inclusion.

- Incorporate racial equity and inclusion into the heart of the organization by reconsidering the mission and vision with an intention to include, engage, and support underserved and underrepresented groups.

- Regularly reevaluate how equity and inclusion are built into your strategic or long-term plans whenever you update them (e.g., biennially, annually, or quarterly).

Establish and document clear goals, metrics, and expectations for racial equity and inclusion, especially regarding time and money.

- Develop short-, medium-, and long-term goals and expectations for your organization, and record them for accountability.

- Emphasize the importance of racial equity and inclusion to the executive team and managers by devoting time to and establishing specific goals.

  - Deliberately designate time to equity and inclusion programs, activities, and efforts.

  - Find a balance between equity and inclusion work and established programs — do not let either be ignored.

- Commit financial resources to racial equity and inclusion internally and engage in wallet activism with funds spent externally.

  - Evaluate where your organization spends money internally and dedicate funds specifically to racial equity and inclusion programs or efforts.

  - Evaluate where your organization spends money externally and engage in wallet activism; for example, use diverse suppliers and/or suppliers that have their own commitment to equity and inclusion.

- Define specific metrics to measure equity and inclusion; avoid limiting metrics to demographic representation and/or counting the number of ethnic groups, gender, abilities, sexual orientation, etc. Expand metrics to include the following with a focus on underrepresented groups:

  - Retention rate

  - Promotion rate

  - Compensation rate

Gather Data

Measure who is part of and served by your organization.

- Regularly collect descriptive and demographic data about your governing board (and other advisory/steering boards), staff, and membership.

Once you know who you serve, consider measuring how your board(s), staff, and members experience your organization.

- Gather data related to equity (including retention, promotion, and compensation rate for employees from underrepresented groups).

- Include questions about inclusivity, feelings of belonging, and a broader cultural analysis – especially from those in underrepresented groups.

Develop a method of gathering intake information and feedback from board members, staff, volunteers, partners, external experts, and members.

- Gather preemptive information about the needs of the groups you engage with (including your staff and your membership) to be proactive about equity and inclusion.

- Regularly and continuously gather feedback from all of these stakeholder groups to ensure change and progress. Such methods could include:

  - Annual staff survey

  - Annual member/volunteer survey

  - Relevant and timely listening sessions

Disaggregate new and existing data/feedback by underrepresented groups.

Implement Equitable and Inclusive Policies and Practices

Review company policies, and revise them to reflect equity- and inclusion-oriented strategic and long-term plans.

- Use inclusive and intersectional language.

- Ensure staff understands the basis for these changes for equity and inclusion within the organization.

Incorporate racially equitable and inclusive practices into day-to-day operations.

- Use inclusive and intersectional language and imagery in internal messaging and communications.

- Practice data equity: consider and refine how data is collected, analyzed, interpreted, and distributed through an equity lens.

- Establish written guidelines for equity- and inclusion-related conversations, training, and meetings. Consider including the following in these guidelines:

  - Listen deeply and respect silence.

  - Understand the difference between intent and impact.

  - Share the space.

  - Be mindful of the varying levels of power within our community/organization.

- Designate time for staff to engage in formal and informal practices that encourage equity and inclusion, including time and programs to learn about other cultures, engage in meaningful reflection, and give back to underserved and underrepresented communities.

Train Managers and Staff

Develop plans for ongoing training for managers, staff, and volunteers.

- Ensure timely and continuous training.

- Train regularly in cultural awareness, competency, responsiveness, and humility as well as in topics related to racial equity and inclusion (including anti-racism).

Provide opportunities to reinforce formal training through informal discussions and personal education.

- Provide both formal and informal forums for open dialogue to reinforce the lessons learned in training.

- Create employee resource groups for staff members of color and other underrepresented groups.

- Encourage personal education in equity and inclusion work, and engage outside experts who can direct staff to other resources.

Engage More and Better: Diversity Brings Diversity

Reach a wider population from which to draw board members, staff, volunteers, partners, and members.

- Find your organization's blindspots, and identify and remove barriers to entry.

- Expand the platforms you use to engage members and tap into diverse networks that already exist.

- Expand surveys and programs into other languages, and recruit multilingual volunteers and staff.

Develop diverse and novel recruitment programs to ensure representation from underrepresented groups.

- For board membership, staff, and volunteer recruitment, reach new communities by building personal and professional relationships with community ambassadors, community organizations that work with underrepresented groups, and your own employees.

- For community membership, expand the platforms you use to engage new members, work with other MSOs/VSOs to grow your network, use social media influencers and community ambassadors to encourage new membership, and tap into diverse networks that already exist (e.g., community organizations).

Engage inclusively.

- Seek representation and inclusivity in virtual and physical messages, language, and imagery.

- Expand culturally representative and meaningful activities for diverse populations (e.g., recognizing Juneteenth and Indigenous Peoples' Day).

Review Progress and Develop New Goals

Regularly examine progress and report to the governing board.

- Use already established check-ins (e.g., quarterly or annually) to take stock of successes, failures, and blindspots.

- Stay accountable by reporting to the governing board and receiving their feedback and insight.

- Ask for feedback from board members, staff, volunteers, partners, external experts, and members.

Identify and fix what is not working.

Develop new or amend short-, medium-, and long-term goals when appropriate.