

### Vision for Our Equity Work

United Way of Washtenaw County (UWWC) recognizes that the strength and vitality of an entire community is tied to just and equitable access to resources and opportunities. In all our roles we will consciously work to eliminate injustice and inequity. We aspire to live in a community where:

- Community members seek understanding and awareness using their own power and privilege and actively working to end poverty in our County;
- Your zip code no longer determines your opportunity in life;
- The academic achievement gap is eliminated;
- Everyone in our community has a home;
- Life expectancy is the same across all populations and communities in our County;
- Poverty is not generational. If it exists, it is intermittent and brief;
- Everyone in our County is able to thrive and meet their needs-- housing, food, transportation, education, health expenses and childcare

### Our Statement on Equity

Equity is the foundation of our work, from our engagement with donors, to our investment of resources across neighborhoods in our community and in our interactions with the public. We define equity as the presence of justice and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.<sup>1</sup> We commit to equity as a core value and practice in order to advance our mission of connecting people, resources and organizations together to create a thriving community for everyone. Our mission compels us to prioritize historically and systematically excluded or marginalized people. Focusing on race, ethnicity and socio-economic status, as well as other intersectional identities, is necessary to end the historical, social and systemic inequities that persist in our County.

We acknowledge that we can only be successful if we recognize, raise-up and support leaders from within under-represented neighborhoods in our County. United Way is committed to engaging these leaders as partners, donors, and volunteers. Further, we commit to intentionally creating pathways for them to be included in decision-making and leadership roles within our own and other organizations. We can only eliminate inequity when all individuals reach their fullest human potential.<sup>2</sup>

We maintain that building and sustaining equity in our County requires an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion that must find full expression in our organizational culture, values, norms, and behaviors and those of our partners.

### Equity in our Own Operations

UWWC recognizes that its effectiveness will be enhanced and its mission well served when equity is reflected in all aspects of the organization and specifically when the following are achieved:

- **Board Membership & Employment-** Our board, committees and staff are reflective and inclusive of Washtenaw County's diverse communities.
- **Programming & Community Investment-** We create and implement programs that recognize cultural differences and treat all clients with dignity. We are committed to using an equity lens to clarify objectives, shape strategy and invest resources to end the historical, social and systemic inequities that persist in our County.
- **Policies and Procedures-** Our commitment to equity is evident in the fair and equitable application of our organizational policies and procedures, as part of our strategic plan, and within our organizational goals.
- **Donors-** We share our commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity as a core value and practice with current and potential donors as well as our corporate partners and encourage them to consider and embrace these values.

It is our belief that United Way's demonstrated commitment to equity represents an organizational standard for the nonprofit sector.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Definition provided by the D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from United Way of the Columbia-Willamette's [statement on equity](#).

<sup>3</sup> Language adapted from the Michigan Nonprofit Association and NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

## Key Definitions for United Way of Washtenaw County's Vision and Statement on Equity

**Academic Achievement Gap** - Refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized-test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. It is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic white peers, and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income families and those who are better off.<sup>4</sup>

**Diversity** - Being composed of a demographic mix of an intentional collection of people, taking into account elements of difference across national origins, languages, ethnicities, races, skin colors, cultures, generations, religions, spiritualities, socio-economic backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations, as well as different skills, abilities, customs, values, behavioral styles and beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

**Equity**- We define equity as the presence of justice and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems<sup>6</sup>

**Historically and Systematically Excluded**- Present day conditions resulting from institutional (e.g. government) policies, cultural practices and/or historic injustices, from slavery to segregation to redlining (the practice of denying services, either directly or through selectively raising prices, to residents of certain areas based on the racial or ethnic composition of those areas). For example, the great expansion of wealth post WWII was fueled by policies such as the GI Bill, which mostly helped white veterans attend college and purchase homes with guaranteed mortgages, building the foundation of an American middle class which largely excluded people of color.<sup>7</sup>

**Inclusion** – The full engagement of individuals sharing power at all levels of an organization. All members are valued, respected and supported. The act of inclusion is reflected in an organization's culture, practices and relationships that support a diverse workforce and is an intentional demonstration that counters the historical exclusion of underrepresented communities. Inclusive organizations ensure equal and full participation in decision-making processes by considering all views. While a truly "inclusive" group is necessarily diverse, a "diverse" group may or may not be "inclusive."<sup>8</sup>

**Intersectional Identities**- The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The term brings to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members, but often fail to represent them, for example, people of color within LGBTQ movements; girls of color in the fight against the school-to-prison pipeline; women within immigration movements; trans women within feminist movements; and people with disabilities fighting police abuse — all face vulnerabilities that reflect the intersections of racism, sexism, class oppression, transphobia, able-ism and more. Intersectionality is not just about identities but about the institutions that use identity to exclude and privilege.<sup>9</sup>

**Marginalized People and/or Populations**- Those excluded from mainstream social, economic, cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized populations include, but are by no means limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural group, age, gender, or financial status.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. (2011, July 7). Issues A-Z: Achievement Gap. Education Week.

<sup>5</sup> Definition provided by the D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

<sup>6</sup> Definition provided by the D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

<sup>7</sup> The Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap. Published by Demos and the Institute on Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University.

<sup>8</sup> Definition provided by the D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit

<sup>9</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Why Intersectionality Can't Wait" (Sept. 24, 2015) The Washington Post.

<sup>10</sup> The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods