

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. We recognize structural racism and other forms of oppression have contributed to persistent disparities which we seek to dismantle. In all our roles we will consciously work to eliminate injustice and inequity in order to realize a community where:

- Members use their power and privilege to end poverty in our county
- Your zip code no longer predicts your opportunity in life;
- Academic opportunity and achievement gaps between races and ethnicities are eliminated;
- Everyone in our community has safe, comfortable and affordable housing;
- Life expectancy, regardless of race, ethnicity or income level, is the same across all populations and communities;
- Poverty is not intergenerational. If it exists, it is intermittent and brief;
- Everyone is able to thrive and experience a life of joy, purpose and rest.

Our Statement on Equity

The present-day reality in the United States is that historical, persistent patterns of structural and institutional discrimination— born from our country’s legacy of colonialism, racism and white supremacy— have created lasting inequities and pose ongoing barriers for all to thrive. These conditions have been further exacerbated and laid bare by a global pandemic which continues to ravage communities of color.

Improving the lives of everyone in the communities we serve means we must explicitly focus on removing these barriers for those most harmed by them. This includes addressing systems, policies, practices, belief systems, and attitudes that have often served to privilege whiteness and disenfranchise others. Focusing on race, ethnicity and compounding marginalizations is necessary to end the historical, social and systemic inequities that persist in our county.

We commit to equity as a core value and practice, defining equity as the presence of justice, impartiality and transparency within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems.¹

We acknowledge that we can only be successful if we recognize, raise-up and support leaders from within historically excluded neighborhoods in our County. United Way is committed to engaging these community members and intentionally creating systems of leadership and decision-making within our own and partner organizations that center their agency and power. We can only eliminate inequity when all individuals reach their fullest human potential.²

We maintain that building and sustaining equity in our county requires an ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion that must find full expression in not only our organizational culture, values, norms, and behaviors but also those of our corporate and community partners.

Equity in our Own Operations

UWWC recognizes that its effectiveness will be enhanced and its mission fully actualized 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 and respect. 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 application of our organizational policies and procedures, as part of our strategic plan, ongoing evaluation, and within our organizational goals.

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

² Adapted from United Way of the Colombia-Willamette’s [statement on equity](#).

- **Corporate Supporters, Donors and Volunteers-** 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 provide meaningful opportunities for them to consider and embrace these values.
- **Community Partners-** Organizations and groups with whom we work demonstrate a commitment to ongoing growth through the integration of [diversity, equity and inclusion \(DEI\)](#) principles into both their external programming or services and internal structures and operations.
- **Culture, Systems, and Power-** We commit to ongoing thoughtful investigation of our default mindsets, practices and norms to disrupt and dismantle harmful aspects of [dominant culture](#) to create a more equitable organizational environment for our team.

We will know we are successful when UWWC's demonstrated commitment to equity serves as an organizational standard for the nonprofit sector.³

Expand your knowledge of definitions connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion by visiting the [glossary developed by Racial Equity Tools](#).

³ Language adapted from the Michigan Nonprofit Association and NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit
* Last updated March 2022