

## Diversity and Inclusion Policy

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Lake Area United Way is a place where people of many backgrounds and perspectives come together, unified in a common vision to make our community better. The strengths of this diversity and the spirit of inclusion are what makes our community both strong and unique. Lake Area United Way is a convening body in this community, a space where people of varied backgrounds and perspectives come together, united in a common vision for a better community.

Lake Area United Way recognizes that:

- The diversity of our region's population brings cultural, social and economic enrichment to the community;
- Many members of the Lake County, IN and Lansing, IL communities encounter barriers to full participation; and
- The inherent dignity and worth of each person cannot be realized without deliberate efforts to create a climate of inclusion that fosters mutual respect and allows each person to realize their full potential and their ability to contribute fully to the community.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, loaned representatives, interns and consultants who work for or with Lake Area United Way.

### **PROCEDURES/PROCESSES**

This Diversity and Inclusion Policy is incorporated into Lake Area United Way's Operating Policies.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Diversity** refers to the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group or an organization and extends beyond the four categories identified in the federal Employment Equity Act. The dimension of diversity include, but are not limited to, age, gender, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, sexual orientation, educational background, talent, skill and experience. Diversity is seen as a positive valued concept indicating the richness that exists when people with a variety of backgrounds, orientations, skills and experiences participate in and contribute to an organization's work environment. Diversity encompasses elements of understanding, acceptance and respect. It emphasizes the need to embrace and celebrate the varied dimensions of diversity within each individual.

**Inclusiveness** is an attribute of organizational culture characterized by a demonstrated commitment to diversity. An inclusive organization is one

where all employees' contributions are valued, recognized and rewarded; where employees can realize their full potential, are motivated and engaged; and, where innovation is enhanced as diverse teams bring more perspectives to the table and generate more ideas. Inclusiveness also refers to the extent to which an organization fosters interaction, communication, knowledge-sharing and decision-making. An organization with an inclusive culture distributes accountability and responsibility for diversity across all employees and organizational levels.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Diversity and inclusion contributes to a more successful and effective organization.**

By ensuring a governance model accompanied by a staff and volunteer complement that reflects the demographics of the community we serve, and by implementing policies and practices that foster inclusion, Lake Area United Way, will enhance its ability to attract and retain diverse talent, and respond to the needs of our diverse constituent base.

### **2. Diversity and inclusion requires a conscious, continuous and deliberate effort.**

Inclusion requires the ongoing commitment and involvement of Lake Area United Way's Board of Directors, President & CEO, staff and volunteers to introduce and sustain a culture conducive to the development and implementation of strategies and programs that embrace the various dimensions of diversity.

### **3. The journey of diversity and inclusion is as important as the destination.**

The work of building a truly inclusive organization that embraces diversity is urgent and ongoing. Inclusion is a journey towards continuous improvement with an agreed set of actions founded on sustained change.

## **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES**

Lake Area United Way will establish and implement policies and practices that foster and promote diversity and inclusion, including:

- a. Competencies and understanding developed within the Board of Directors, volunteers and staff to ensure that we understand the needs of, and are responsive to the diverse community we serve;
- b. Resource development and community impact approaches that seek to eliminate barriers to full participation, and ensure access and equity

for diverse populations of Lake County and Lansing;

- c. Incidents and/or behaviors related to discrimination or harassment are addressed appropriately when they occur, including clear guidelines for internal and external complaints procedures.