

**West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy**

Approved by the Board of Directors

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EQUITY STATEMENT

West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum believes that diversity, inclusion and equity are important dimensions of the social element of sustainability. As an influential network of businesses, governments, non-profits and academic leaders within a region that is home to many diverse communities, WMSBF affirms its commitment to promote and protect diversity, inclusion and equity within local businesses and institutions, and the community at large.

As part of our mission to promote sustainable business practices, we have a responsibility to work with vulnerable populations and communities of color to address historical disparate impacts affecting members of these communities resulting from the degradation of natural resources based on public policy or market-based actions. We advocate for sustainable development, environmental planning and economic development with the input and participation from diverse communities.

WMSBF will work to ensure that the practices we promote are aligned with principles of diversity, inclusion and social equity. This commitment is rooted in the unequivocal belief that a robust natural environment is incomplete when members of our human family face social and economic exclusion or inequities due to bias and discrimination.

We will promote acceptance, membership, employment, collaboration, equal decision-making and power-sharing in an inclusive and equitable manner with all individuals and groups. We pledge intentional inclusion of individuals and communities representing cultural, gender, ethnic, racial, sexual orientation, age, religious, disability, immigrant, family status, veteran, education level and socio-economic status diversity.

WMSBF follows clear definitions of equity, diversity and inclusion.

- Social Equity is fair access to livelihood, education and resources in order to have full participation in the political and cultural life of the community and self-determination in meeting fundamental needs.
- Inclusion is authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals into our processes, activities and decision/policy making.
- Diversity is the wide range of national, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds of U.S. residents and immigrants within our communities. It includes aspects of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class and other areas previously stated.

These commitments and actions to promote inclusion and equity are evidenced by past inclusion and equity training for WMSBF board and staff, a strategic plan with sustainable equity goals, and the equitable sustainability project. WMSBF will monitor operations to ensure inclusion and equity within employment, membership outreach, internship opportunities, board recruitment, vendor selection, research, grant projects, communications, events, partner programs, technical assistance programs and our flagship monthly forum themes.

1. CODES OF CONDUCT: EMPLOYEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Non-Discrimination Policy: West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum believes that it is the pre-eminent network of businesses, governments, non-profits and academic leaders working to promote sustainable business practices. Social equity is an important dimension of sustainability. It is our belief that a robust natural environment is incomplete when members of our human family face social and economic exclusion or inequities due to bias and discrimination. This is the philosophy and practice of our Non-Discrimination Policy.

- WMSBF does not exclude, deny benefits to or discriminate against any person on the grounds of culture, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, national origin (immigrant status), family status, education level or socio-economic status.
- WMSBF does not exclude, deny benefits or discriminate against any person on the aforementioned grounds in admission to, treatment of or participation in any services, activities or programs.
- No person shall be denied the benefits of membership, participation, services, programs or contracting opportunities on the aforementioned basis.

This policy of non-discrimination also applies to internal performance reviews, promotions, training, opportunities for advancement, terminations, outside vendors, members and customers, service clients, use of contractors and consultants, and dealings with the general public that include the use and stewardship of our resources.

- A. Discrimination Defined:** WMSBF defines discrimination as the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, sexual orientation, culture, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, national origin (immigrant status), family status, education level or socio-economic status.
- B. Examples of Prohibited Conduct:** No employee or other representative of WMSBF shall experience – or engage in – racial discrimination, such as obvious instances of being terminated, demoted, denial of fair salary, denial of equal treatment or employee benefits and training, or harassed because of race or the aforementioned grounds. Sex and gender discrimination occurs when WMSBF as an employer treats an employee or prospective employee differently solely because the individual is a woman or a man.
- C. Reasonable Accommodations:** As an organization that is inclusive of disability and religion, WMSBF will work to provide reasonable accommodations in any future rented or owned physical office space. Reasonable accommodations in this context are defined as designs or redesigns of an office to provide access and usage or other changes (working scheduling, meetings) to the workplace, unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship on operations.

Sexual Harassment Policy: Sexual harassment has been defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit condition of employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions; or
- Such conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle conduct. Depending upon the circumstances, this conduct may be:

- Persistent, unrequited romantic advances;
- Overt pressure for sexual favors;
- Sexual jokes, flirtations, innuendos, advances or propositions;
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, including graphic commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies;
- Sex-based leering, whistling, touching or pinching;
- Assault or other coerced sexual acts, including suggestive, insulting, or obscene comments or gestures;
- Display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

Sexual harassment can include any harassment perpetrated because of a person's gender. Sexual harassment can include harassment between individuals of the same sex.

Discrimination Reporting Procedures: WMSBF maintains a clear structure for employees, interns and volunteers to report discrimination. It will maintain a clear reporting structure regardless of its workforce size.

1. Current or future employees, interns and volunteers may report discrimination and/or harassment directly to the Executive Director.
2. If a report involves the Executive Director, the employee, intern or volunteer may provide the report to the President of the Board of Directors. The President must formally acknowledge the report from the individual who filed it. The President must inform the Executive Director and Board within three (3) days for interview, action and/or resolution. Employees, interns and volunteers will be provided contact information for the current board President at time of orientation.
3. Any employee, intern or volunteer who feels that he or she has been harassed, or who knows of or suspects the occurrence of prohibited harassment, must contact the Executive Director or President of the WMSBF Board of Directors.

4. All cases will receive prompt and thorough action to determine whether prohibited discrimination or harassment has occurred. WMSBF will strive in all investigations to protect the privacy of and minimize suspicion of involved parties.
5. Retaliation in any form against an employee, intern or volunteer who in good faith has complained of harassment is prohibited.
6. Any employee found to have violated this policy and WMSBF values against prohibited harassment and/or discrimination, or who is found to have retaliated against another employee, intern or volunteer who in good faith has complained of harassment, will immediately be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
7. Enforcement of this policy is of the utmost priority of West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum.

Accountability Actions: If it is determined by WMSBF that an employee has engaged in discrimination and/or harassment, the following actions will take place with immediate effect:

First-time offenders in non-physical harassment and discriminatory statements: In cases where it has been determined that the employee's first offense represented the use of words and statements that WMSBF has found offensive and discriminatory, the following actions will apply:

1. Conference with an expert consultant and the offended party. During this conference, the consultant will meet or mediate with the two parties to ensure that the offender understands what the complainant finds offensive and that the offender promises to refrain from offending again. This may be affirmed through official diversity training and documentation in official records. (WMSBF will annually review availability of designated consultants for this purpose.)
2. Depending on the severity of the claim and it being a first offense, the employee may also be subject to counseling, monitoring, demotion, probation or a written warning or citation in the employee's permanent file.

First-time offenders in physical harassment and discriminatory behavior: In these zero-tolerance cases where it has been clearly determined that an employee has engaged in such discriminatory and harassing behaviors that are severe in nature based on physical conduct/contact, the following actions will apply:

1. The employee will be terminated.
2. As harassment may involve a criminal charge, and if the victim presses criminal charges, WMSBF will immediately and fully cooperate with law enforcement and ensure that the victim, WMSBF and public have complete confidence in WMSBF's avoidance of any perception of discouraging or impeding legal action.

2. EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND STANDARDS

Equitable and Inclusive Employment: WMSBF adheres to voluntary and non-compliance standards to ensure that current and future employment opportunities follow equity and inclusive practices. The following practices will be followed in order to fulfill equity in the workplace and to meet and surpass basic values of fair employment:

1. Continuous evaluation of WMSBF steps to meet reasonable accommodation to the needs of employees who are disabled as well as religious accommodation;
2. Annual review of future salary levels and benefits if/when WMSBF expands in Full-Time-Employees to ensure fairness;
3. Annual review of job descriptions and future position descriptions to ensure that they include inclusive language and mention of a WMSBF Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy and citation as an Equal Opportunity Employer;
4. Following the Racial Equity Impact Assessment process before the creation of new positions and any formal announcements or recruitment of new job positions.
5. Continuous evaluation of the hiring and promotion process;
6. Provide a complaint process for addressing allegations of unfair or unequal treatment;
7. Establish relationships with trusted sources, particularly non-profits that are either exclusively focused on diversity, inclusion and equity and/or companies adhering to such values – in order to create a strong referral pipeline of qualified applicants;
8. Annual review of Job Application to ensure that it adheres to (and communicates) the Forum’s Diversity, Inclusion and Equity policy;
9. Use pre-employment tests for non-exempt staff uniformly, ensuring they are absent of discrimination or favoritism.
10. Conduct training sessions and offer professional development opportunities to ensure that all employees are given an equal opportunity to participate, and;
11. Maintain a record of applications, hires, promotions and terminations.

Nepotism/Employment of Relatives: WMSBF recognizes that the Grand Rapids area in particular, and West Michigan in general, is a tight-knit community of many connected families and stakeholders. WMSBF also recognizes that many culturally, racially, ethnically, sexual orientation and gender diverse individuals may experience real or perceived disconnect (socially, etc.) from those stakeholders.

Therefore, WMSBF adheres to a policy of not hiring individuals who are direct relatives of WMSBF employees or its Board of Directors at the time of application, except as temporary and limited part-time episodic positions, such as event support.

Relatives are defined as:

1. Spouse
2. Child(ren)/Grandchild(ren)
3. Parent/Grandparent
4. Sibling
5. Aunt/Uncle
6. Niece/Nephew
7. Above listed relation to spouse

Exemptions may be provided to individuals hired prior to the adoption of this policy.

Fraternization: WMSBF has established guidelines on romantic and/or sexual relationships between employees, as a proactive approach to addressing sexual harassment, while affirming the freedom of association between two individuals. This includes:

1. Dating and romantic relationships that have been established in the workplace. Or, if established outside the workplace, is recognized and witnessed in the workplace.
2. Casual dating, serious dating, casual sexual involvement where the parties have no intention of carrying on a long-term relationship.
3. Cohabitation and any other conduct or behavior normally associated with romantic or sexual relationships.

The WMSBF Diversity, Inclusion and Equity values guide the following fraternization applications in order to respect fairness and relationships between people:

1. Restrictions on romantic relationships listed above apply regardless of the sexual orientation of the employees involved. Thus, this policy applies equally to opposite sex and same-sex relationships.
2. The policy applies only to consensual romantic or sexual relationships between employees. Employees are required to remember that unwanted sexual attention (including physical contact) and sexually oriented behavior with the purpose or effect of creating an offensive environment is strictly prohibited as detailed in the sexual harassment section of this document.

The following procedures dictate fraternization outside the workplace and are a guide for restrictions within it:

1. During working time (including satellite or telecommuting work for WMSBF), physical sites where WMSBF official activities take place and any future WMSBF office locations

such as working areas, employees are expected to keep personal exchanges limited so others are not distracted or offended by such exchanges and so productivity is maintained.

2. During non-working hours, such as lunches, breaks and before and after work periods, employees are not precluded from having appropriate personal conversations in the aforementioned areas or locations.
3. Employees are prohibited from engaging in physical contact that would in any way be deemed inappropriate while on WMSBF-owned or managed locations or event premises, whether during working hours or not.
4. Employee off-duty conduct is private, as long as such conduct does not create problems within the workplace. An exception to this policy is romantic or sexual relationship between supervisors and subordinates, and any activity described meeting the definition of sexual harassment on Page #.
5. Supervisors or others holding influential positions must disclose the existence of any relationship with another coworker that has progressed beyond a platonic friendship. Disclosure may be made to Executive Director or Board President.

WMSBF will internally address any potential risks and conflicts that may arise for the aforementioned workplace relationships. Solutions that may be used are (but are not limited to):

1. Ensuring that the parties involved no longer work together on matters where one is able to influence the other or take action for the other.
2. Review of workplace matters affected by relationship conflicts. Those matters for review and solution may involve hiring, firing, promoting, performance managing, compensation decisions, and financial transactions.
3. Transfer or removal of an employee from a workplace project involving another employee.
4. Termination or resignation of employment. NOTE: In a conflict reaching this level that involves the party who is in the senior position, that individual will be considered first for termination or resignation.
5. Any refusal of the aforementioned or other reasonable alternative solutions, if available, will be deemed a voluntary resignation.

Employment Opportunity and Equity: It is the policy of WMSBF to establish uniformity, equity and fairness between all employees throughout their employee experience. The Executive Director will ensure that every employee receives equal treatment and time in the following during their tenure:

1. **Orientation:** In addition to receiving and reviewing this Diversity, Inclusion and Equity policy document, all employees will be given formal and informal opportunities no later than their first official work week to learn more detailed information about the organization in the areas of, and receiving materials for:
 - History: Receiving a historical overview of the organization.

- Position Requirements: Official review of the new employee's position description and a document affirming the mutual understanding and signature (between the employee and Executive Director) regarding all responsibilities of the position.
 - All necessary documents to efficiently begin the employee's tenure.
2. **Performance Review:** Executive Director and/or the direct supervisor for any new employee shall meet to mutually create a tangible performance plan. The plan will be developed by at least the second or third week of the new employee's tenure.
3. **Work Schedule and Time Tracking:** WMSBF establishes a work schedule for reasons of creating equitable opportunities between employees in the workplace, to adhere to fairness and avoid the perception of favoritism, and to advance mutual expectations of workplace schedule time and managing issues of overtime/flex-time. The schedule guides WMSBF employee work within a physical office location, satellite and/or telecommuting.
- Standard work hours begin no earlier than 8 am and end no later than 6 pm, except when required for travel or after-hours events or meetings.
 - All employees are required to track time on the standard timesheet.
 - Flex-time is available to all employees required to work before or after standard working hours, which should be used within the same or next two-week period (same or next timesheet).
 - Deviation from the standard workweek and/or work hours may be approved by the Executive Director, if such deviation does not conflict with the work of the Forum.
 - Executive Director will review work schedules with the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors annually.
4. **Position Descriptions and Position Description Review:** In order to ensure employee fairness of knowing expected responsibilities for maximum performance, advancement opportunities and eliminating the potential for discrimination/ inequitable expectations due to unclear position descriptions, WMSBF will adhere to the following steps:
- Position descriptions must be the same for an advertised job and the position description when the employee has been hired.
 - Any changes in the position description by Executive Director after hiring must be approved by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and by the employee, in writing.

- Performance review cannot be initiated if outdated position descriptions (or position descriptions updated without following the aforementioned process) exist and are therefore in conflict with the performance measurements.
 - Executive Director and President of the Board of Directors are required to review staff position description(s) annually, at minimum, and at least six months before a performance review.
 - Throughout the process of position description reviews, employee must be informed verbally and in writing of position description changes, and that Executive Director or Board President are only focusing on reviewing and/or potentially changing the job description, not conducting a performance review.
5. **Opportunity for Application and Advancement:** Forum interns, staff and volunteers of all backgrounds may have the opportunity to apply for available full-time or part-time employment. For current staff, the following steps will be followed in order to ensure equal and fair opportunity for any advancement regarding public positions:

Current employee(s): A current essential employee will be allowed to apply for an open position if he/she:

- Has fulfilled the responsibilities and duties of their current position as affirmed in their performance review.
- The employee can perform the essential duties of the new position on a continuing basis. Additionally, the employee must meet the knowledge, skills and ability requirements of the open position.

If current employees are being considered as an internal candidate for an open position, they should be informed verbally and in writing that external candidates are being sought and considered. WMSBF will accept the employee's application but be clear in sharing with the current employee information about the application process, the search timetable, and specific criteria. While WMSBF will accept and encourage such applications, it will set expectations and avoid all implicit or explicit promises about the outcome of the process.

Due diligence: In order to protect the equity and credibility of the application process, the internal candidate(s) and external candidates will undergo the same review, consideration and decision-making process.

Declinations of internal candidates: Executive Director may follow these steps if a current employee as an internal candidate is not receiving the position or promotion:

- In-person meeting with the unsuccessful candidate to explain why s/he is not getting the requested position.

- Remind the unsuccessful candidate of the key requirements of the job with an explanation of the other candidate(s) who more closely align(s) with those requirements.
- Inform the unsuccessful candidate that they will continue to have opportunities, if appropriate, to apply for new positions.

Intern: An intern or volunteer will be allowed to apply for an open position if s/he can perform the essential duties of the position on a continuing basis. Additionally, the intern or volunteer must meet the knowledge, skills and ability requirements of the open position.

An intern will be considered as an internal candidate, but a volunteer will not. This is discussed further in Appendix B.

Public Disclaimers: WMSBF recognizes that many traditionally marginalized communities face barriers to employment and professional opportunities because of real or perceived discrimination and/or bias. As detailed in this document, WMSBF is committed to equity policies in employment practices, position descriptions and opportunities for advancement to ensure that staff, interns and others have full and equal access to opportunities.

In addition, WMSBF is also committed to communicating inclusion in our professional opportunities to traditionally marginalized communities. We recognize that some individuals may be more encouraged to apply for WMSBF opportunities if they believe or perceive us to be inclusive employers in practice and pronouncement.

Therefore, this policy requires WMSBF documents announcing employment opportunities, available position descriptions, intern/fellowship opportunities and contracting Request for Proposals (RFPs) include the abridged version of our diversity, inclusion and equity statement along with a stated expression of equal opportunity in hiring and contracting practices.

West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum has adopted various policies and practices to ensure that we offer full and equal professional opportunities within employment, internships and contracting. In following our diversity, inclusion and equity policy, West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum pledges to provide such opportunities and a professional environment that affirms the dignity of every person and is absent of harassment, discrimination and bias.

Applicants to West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum professional opportunities should be assured that our adopted diversity, inclusion and equity policies will ensure that candidate selections in employment, internships or contracts are based on qualifications and skills. WMSBF does not discriminate or engage in discriminatory decision-making due to race, age, culture, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, national origin (immigrant status), family status, education level or socio-economic status.

This statement will also appear on the WMSBF web site, annual report, and all other materials representing the organization, unless space or utility make it impractical.

3. VENDOR EQUITY ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum acknowledges that its internal resources can play a role in advancing economic equity for diverse business owners through its vending and contracting decisions.

WMSBF staff and the equity officer will frequently monitor operations to ensure that inclusion and equity will direct vendor selection. Specifically, it is the policy of WMSBF that:

1. The Executive Director, equity officer, social responsibility working group, and the Board of Directors will mutually establish a numerical goal for the number of businesses headed by racially, ethnically, etc. diverse individuals retained by WMSBF for vending/contracting/supplier contractual services each fiscal year.
2. The Executive Director will provide a report on the aforementioned benchmark at each board meeting.
3. The Executive Director, as the main purchasing agent, will direct his/her individual efforts (with advice from the equitable sustainability committee) to research and engage in opportunities to retain small, minority-owned suppliers and contractors as sole source providers or to compete for business to provide WMSBF with goods, products and services whenever possible.
4. While WMSBF will not require a minority-owned supplier to be a Minority Business Enterprise or a Woman Business Enterprise, WMSBF adheres to the conventional definition that guides our outreach and report as:
 - Minority Business Enterprise: Defined as being owned, capitalized, operated and controlled by a member of an identified minority group. The business must be a for-profit enterprise which physically resides in the United States or one of its territories.
 - Woman Business Enterprise: Defined as being owned, managed and controlled at least 51% by a woman who is a U.S. citizen or legal resident and is President or CEO (if both positions exist) in ownership and officer position for at least six months in active daily management.
5. The Executive Director will purchase or subscribe to resources such as the Grand Rapids Area Black Business Directory and the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in order to have expanded knowledge of, and gain access to, potential vendors/contractors as well as formally invite those business owners or organizational leaders to meet with him/her to review product/service specifications, and review any supplier qualifications.
6. The Executive Director or his/her designated staff will act as a liaison with small, minority, and women owned businesses.
7. The Executive Director will ensure that any grant in excess of \$50,000 will be reviewed to determine if it can utilize diverse vendors as defined in this policy.

8. Any WMSBF initiative funded from the organization's resources or a grant or donation in excess of \$50,000 will undergo a Racial Equity Impact Assessment to ensure that the resources provide an opportunity for racial equity and/or do not heighten racial inequity.

4. GOVERNANCE

Processes for Complaint: It is important that employees, interns and volunteers are assured that there is a process to provide clear and factual complaints of workplace issues, situations or decisions that are intentionally or unintentionally in violation or contrary to this policy.

The following steps will allow any employee to share complaints or concerns on workplace operations, particularly those dealing with WMSBF adherence (or lack thereof) to the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy:

1. **Direct Resolution:** Any WMSBF employee who believes, through real or perceived grievement, that they have a credible work-related complaint should first be encouraged to make a full and good faith effort to bring the issue to resolution by discussing it with the Executive Director. Good faith in communication to the Executive Director to bring the issue to resolution means:
 - Providing clear information on the complaint (matter, date, time, etc.).
 - Providing citation of the policy that the complaint is in violation of.
 - Communicating the issue(s) of the complaint immediately upon the employee's perception or involvement of the complaint.
2. **Immediate and Accountable Resolution:** The receipt of the complaint must be acknowledged within five (5) business days via the Executive Director replying on-record through email or letter to the employee. The complaint must be resolved within five (5) business days from the time of the acknowledgement email or letter to the employee, or employee must be notified in writing of expected date of resolution.
3. **Inability to Resolve Complaints:** For any complaint that cannot be addressed and resolved by the Executive Director, the complaint will be forwarded by the Executive Director to President of the Board within no more than ten (10) business days. The Executive Director's communication to the Board President must be in writing via letter or email.

If the Board President cannot resolve the matter by rendering a decision, then the Board will secure the services of a third-party mediator.

Institutionalized and Permanent: To ensure the prominence and prioritization of the principles and practices outlined in this policy, a new officer position has been created on the Board of Directors with the specific responsibility of ensuring that diversity, equity and inclusion are represented in all relevant decisions of the board.

The Equity Officer will work with the Executive Director to maintain an advisory group that will provide the Executive Director, staff, Board of Directors and Equitable Sustainability Working Group with the support, advice and direction necessary to ensure the organization's adherence to this internal policy with the same focus as its external (programs and projects) commitment to social equity.

During meetings of the Board of Directors, Equity Officer or a designated proxy will provide a report on the organization's adherence to these policies and progress on its annually defined social equity benchmarks and goals.

Further, the Board of Directors will commit to having at least two membership slots of individuals from traditionally marginalized groups reflecting the diversity as defined by the groups listed in the Forum's diversity, inclusion and equity statement.

Finally, the bylaws of the organization have been updated to reflect adoption of the Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy:

- Adoption of the following language in Article I (Name, Offices and Purpose), Section 3 as *Item Two*:

**Specifically promote the social equity imperative within social responsibility through policies and programs that advance diversity, inclusion and equity for all communities through employment, membership, projects, communications, events and community partnerships.*