LA CROSSE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING REPORT 2024

CHANIN KELLY-RAE CONSULTING LLC

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A MESSAGE FROM COUNTY BOARD CHAIR

Dear La Crosse County Community Members,

With deep gratitude and a profound sense of purpose, we share with you the La Crosse County DEIB Report 2024. As the Chair of the La Crosse County Board and Former Chair, we are honored to present this strategic initiative, which is rooted in our collective vision for a community that champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) at every level.

This report is more than a strategic guide; it represents our unwavering commitment to ensuring that every individual in La Crosse County has equal access to opportunities and services. Our community has faced numerous challenges that have highlighted existing inequities, revealing the need for systemic change to ensure fairness and inclusion for all residents. It is our responsibility to address these disparities directly and foster a community where respect, fairness, and a sense of belonging are fundamental rights.

The DEIB Report 2024 details specific, actionable goals aimed at enhancing the accessibility of our facilities and services, fostering inclusive community partnerships, and improving our public safety and justice systems. Each goal has been meticulously crafted to contribute to our vision of an inclusive community where every resident's voice is heard and valued in our decision-making processes.

This report is the result of a collaborative effort, drawing on the insights and expertise of community leaders, county staff, and most importantly, the residents of La Crosse County. I am deeply grateful for the dedication and thoughtful input from everyone who has contributed to this transformative framework.

As we move forward, we invite each of you to engage with us, provide feedback, and participate actively in our efforts. Your involvement is crucial to ensuring that the initiatives outlined in the DEIB Report 2024 truly reflect the needs and aspirations of our diverse community.

Together, we can make La Crosse County a place of equality, justice, and opportunity for all.

In Service,

Tina Tryggestad, Chair of the La Crosse County Board (2024 – Present)

Monica Kruse, Board Member (Former Board Chair, 2020 – 2024)

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Dear La Crosse County Residents & Community Members,

As your County Administrator, I am pleased to present the La Crosse County DEIB Report 2024, a comprehensive roadmap developed to enhance equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging within our county's many services and initiatives. This report demonstrates our collective vision for a county that not only values diversity but actively promotes justice and equality in every community interaction.

This document is a reflection of our commitment to actionable change. It lays out clear and structured goals aimed at addressing the systemic barriers that have historically hindered the full participation of all our residents.

By focusing on areas such as leadership, public safety, human services, and environmental equity, we are taking definitive steps towards creating a more fair and inclusive community.

Implementation of this report will require persistence, dedication, and most importantly, community engagement. We need your insights and involvement to ensure these efforts resonate on every level and truly reflect the needs of our diverse population. I encourage you to participate in our upcoming community forums, surveys, and public meetings as we roll out various initiatives outlined in this report.

Our journey towards a more equitable county is ongoing, and it will undoubtedly benefit from the diverse array of voices that make up La Crosse County. Together, we can foster an environment where every individual has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from our collective progress.

Thank you for your dedication to our community and for your active participation in this important endeavor. I look forward to working alongside you as we turn the goals of this report into reality.

Sincerely,

Jane Klekamp, County Administrator, La Crosse County

LA CROSSE COUNTY DEIB REPORT 2024 INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary and Process Overview

In this dynamic age of societal evolution and heightened recognition of systemic disparities, La Crosse County remains dedicated to purposeful leadership in fostering a community that is both inclusive and equitable. Our DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) Report 2024 is a meticulously crafted framework aimed at dismantling barriers to inclusion and promoting fairness within every sector of our community and administrative operations. Recognizing that language is evolutionary, we chose to use the term *historically marginalized people* to represent individuals and groups that have been systemically excluded.

The development of this report represents the culmination of extensive efforts, involving a variety of stakeholders and methodologies to ensure a comprehensive approach. Over the past year, we engaged in a thorough process that included:

- **16 community outreach workshops**: These sessions provided a platform for residents to share their insights and aspirations, helping us to understand the diverse needs of our community.
- **Meetings with board members**: Collaborating with county leadership allowed us to align strategic goals and operational plans, ensuring top-down commitment to DEIB principles.
- **Staff surveys**: Conducted from June 20 to September 1, 2023, gathering feedback from 542 participating respondents out of 1,211 possible respondents, representing a response rate of 44.8%. This survey included demographic analysis across various categories such as tenure, race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, military veteran status, department/division, and job role.
- **Community surveys**: Administered between November 9 and December 11, 2023, resulting in 507 responses. The survey collected data on connection to La Crosse County, years in the county, municipality, dwelling type, age, gender, race/ethnicity, place of birth, household income, home language, and disability status.
- **11 voluntary staff listening sessions**: Held from August 16 to September 27, 2023, involving 210 participants. These sessions included specific groups such as women, historically marginalized people, veterans, LGBTQIA+, all staff, and highway staff.
- **16 community listening sessions**: Conducted between September and October 2023, with 217 participants. These sessions included both virtual and in-person formats and were hosted by various community organizations and locations, such as The Reach Center, Hope Restores, Western Technical College, Town of Holland, The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection, Onalaska Public Library, Ho-Chunk Nation Three Rivers House, Holmen Public Library, and Hmoob Cultural and Community Agency.
- **La Crosse County Community Advisory Committee**: This committee met throughout the spring to review, assess, and offer insights to fully inform the work of each phase of findings and the final recommendations report, ensuring robust community participation throughout each phase of the project.

These efforts were anchored by strong community partnerships, ensuring that our approach was inclusive and representative of the voices within La Crosse County.

Project Milestones

1. **Leadership Insights (February – April 2023)**:
   - Conducted one-on-one leader interviews with 47 out of 49 leaders in La Crosse County government.
   - Completed a comprehensive SWOT analysis.
2. **Policy, Process, and Procedures Review (May – June 2023)**:
   - Reviewed existing policies and processes.
   - Assessed both internal and external cultural dynamics.
3. **Internal Culture Assessment (June – August 2023)**:
   - Conducted staff surveys and held staff listening sessions to gather internal feedback.
4. **External Culture Assessment (September – November 2023)**:
   - Implemented community surveys and listening sessions to gather external feedback.
5. **5-Year Roadmap Development (May 2024)**:
   - Published a strategic plan outlining specific, actionable goals and initiatives.

Introduction

Central to our strategy is the conviction that diversity enhances our collective well-being and that equity is crucial for the prosperity of all our residents. This report commits to cultivating an environment where every individual is provided the opportunity to excel, thus fulfilling our civic duty and enriching the quality of life throughout our county.

The objectives detailed in this DEIB Report 2024 are foundational to our efforts, addressing various dimensions of inequity from governance and service delivery to public safety, human services, and environmental stewardship. By systematically incorporating DEIB principles into our institutional practices, we endeavor to exemplify true inclusivity.

This report is structured to guide transformative actions that will significantly influence our policies, practices, and community engagements. It is organized around a series of strategic goals, each supported by specific, measurable objectives that provide a clear pathway to achieving greater equity and inclusion. These goals include enhancing organizational culture, building community partnerships, fostering an inclusive public service, and ensuring that all county facilities and digital platforms are accessible to everyone, regardless of their physical abilities or socio-economic status.

Furthermore, the report emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability. It includes a robust framework for monitoring and evaluating our progress through the use of clear metrics and regular reporting. This will allow us to remain adaptable and responsive to the needs of our community, making adjustments to our strategies as necessary.

We invite all members of La Crosse County—residents, employees, and partners—to engage with us in this vital and continuous journey. Together, we can cultivate a community that genuinely embodies the principles of equity and inclusion, where every

voice is acknowledged, and every individual is valued. Let this DEIB Report 2024 guides us toward a fairer and more just future for all members of La Crosse County.

By engaging with this report, we pledge to not only address the inequities of today but also to lay the groundwork for a more inclusive future. We understand that this is not the work of a moment but of sustained and committed effort. We are dedicated to this journey, knowing that our collective efforts will lead to a stronger, more unified community. Join us as we move forward, united in our purpose and driven by our values, to create a La Crosse County that upholds the dignity and potential of each of its members.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

We recognize and acknowledge that the land we occupy is the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk Nation, who have called this land Waziija haci since time immemorial. We acknowledge the circumstances that led to the forced removal of the Ho-Chunk people through governmental treaties and forcible removal, and we honor their history of resistance and resilience. The Ho-Chunk Nation and the other eleven First Nations residing in the boundaries of present-day Wisconsin remain vibrant and strong. We recognize and respect the inherent sovereignty of the twelve First Nations that reside in the boundaries of the state of Wisconsin. This history of colonization informs our work and vision for a collaborative future.

SUMMARY OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING GOALS

In anticipation of the evolving landscape and the complexities inherent in fostering a truly inclusive community, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, is committed to advancing towards a set of well-defined goals and strategic priorities. This commitment is rooted in our dedication to systematically dismantling inequities and nurturing an environment where every member of our community can thrive. By setting these goals, La Crosse County aspires to transform its mission into action, ensuring that deliberate efforts to cultivate inclusivity led to enhanced outcomes for all residents.

Goal 1: Leadership, Operations & Services
Advance leadership and operational excellence by embedding DEIB at the heart of our culture and service delivery. This includes the initiation of DEIB leadership development programs, revising procedures to eradicate bias, and ensuring equitable access to all community services.

Goal 2: Plans, Policies & Budgets

Embed DEIB principles in our planning, policymaking, and budgeting processes to ensure they reflect our core values of equity and inclusion. Conduct DEIB audits, create a DEIB-focused budgetary strategy, and continually adapt policies to promote equity.

Goal 3: Workplace & Workforce

Cultivate an organizational culture that values diversity, practices equity, and embraces inclusion at all levels. Develop strategies for DEIB-focused recruitment, retention, and advancement, fostering a work environment rich in dialogue and mutual respect.

Goal 4: Inclusive Community Partnerships

Forge and deepen partnerships with diverse community groups, ensuring these collaborations are equitable and mutually beneficial. Engage underrepresented communities, co-create initiatives addressing their needs, and prioritize their voices in our joint efforts.

Goal 5: Communication & Education

Elevate understanding and engagement on DEIB issues through strategic communication and educational initiatives. Implement DEIB training for staff, develop a communication strategy to promote DEIB dialogue, and establish educational partnerships for broader learning opportunities.

Goal 6: Facility & System Improvements

Guarantee our facilities and systems are accessible, inclusive, and equitable. Perform DEIB evaluations of current infrastructure, make necessary adjustments for better accessibility and inclusivity, and apply a DEIB lens to new projects.

Goal 7: Human Services

Deliver human services that meet the diverse needs of our community equitably and inclusively. Reassess and adapt service models for greater accessibility, solicit community feedback, and enhance services to reduce disparities.

Goal 8: Justice & Public Safety

Ensure our public safety and justice systems are equitable, inclusive, and trusted by all communities. Review and reform policies and practices to eliminate bias, engage with diverse communities to build trust, and adopt restorative justice approaches.

Goal 9: Accessible Technology and Digital Inclusion

Promote digital inclusion and bridge the digital divide by making technology accessible to everyone. Evaluate and improve the accessibility of digital services, offer targeted digital literacy programs, and use technology to improve service access.

Goal 10: Environmental Equity

Integrate DEIB into environmental policies and initiatives to ensure they are fair and do not disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Conduct environmental justice assessments, engage with communities on environmental equity issues, and incorporate DEIB in environmental decision-making.

Goal 1: Leadership, Operations & Services

Advance leadership and operational excellence by embedding DEIB at the heart of our culture and service delivery. This includes the initiation of DEIB leadership development programs, revising procedures to eradicate bias, and ensuring equitable access to all community services.

Objective 1.1: Ensure Equitable Access to Data and Information

1.1.1 **County Extranet Portal:** Provide employees with equitable access to the County Extranet portal, maintaining an up-to-date resource hub for internal staff.

1.1.2 **Departmental Planning:** Aligning with the La Crosse County Strategic Plan, focus annual departmental planning on areas identified as highest need, employing both data and experiential feedback to enhance service provision and resource allocation.

1.1.3 **Finance Department Outreach:** Improve the Finance Department's website to offer comprehensive information for community members, staff and potential vendors; ensuring greater transparency and accessibility.

1.1.4 **Assisting Non-Internet Users:** Offer support to customers without internet access through direct phone assistance and in-person services.

1.1.5 **Policy and Resource Accessibility:** Make policies and resource information widely accessible online for both public and employee use.

1.1.6 **Inclusive DEIB Related Internal Communications:** Include Corporation Counsel to review communications to ensure consistent internal and interdepartmental responses to ensure equity and legal compliance, as needed.

1.1.7 **Public Meeting Accessibility:** Provide public access to meeting agendas and packets online to foster transparency.

1.1.8 **Digital Responses to Requests:** Respond to open records requests promptly via digital formats.

1.1.9 **Electronic Communication Strategy:** Improve communication access for all stakeholders, ensuring equal access to processes, policies, and decision-making, it is essential to address potential communication barriers caused by excessive and/or increased electronic communication use. This includes ensuring clarity and efficiency in digital correspondence and equity in access to County offices.

1.1.10 **Accessibility Standards Compliance:** Work to ensure that all digital tools

and resources adhere to accessibility standards to ensure usability for people with disabilities.

1.1.11 **Culturally Relevant Information:** Ensure resources and information are tailored to the cultural contexts and languages of Indigenous, historically marginalized people to ensure all community members can access and understand county services effectively.

Objective 1.2: Develop and Implement Civil Rights Compliance Plans
1.2.1 **Federal Compliance Requirements**: Establish compliance plans for all programs that receive federal funding, ensuring accessibility through systematic intakes, interpretation of forms, and the provision of interpreters.

1.2.2 **Accessibility and Translation Services**: Adhere to Civil Rights policy requirements by providing accessible written, verbal, and other forms of translation. Actively seek feedback to ensure information is accessible for each individual and document any declined offers for translation support, while adhering to guidelines for appropriate translation services to facilitate correct education about our services.

1.2.3 **Civil Rights Plan Development**: Advertise and maintain a comprehensive Civil Rights Plan to guide the organization in maintaining compliance across all services and interactions.

1.2.4 **Labor Law Compliance**: Ensure compliance with state and federal labor laws related to DEIB, reinforcing our commitment to equitable practices throughout the organization.

Objective 1.3: Maintain and Improve Existing Internal Portals for Resource Sharing

1.3.1 **Technology Assistance**: Provide ongoing support to County staff for all technology-related issues and information requests, ensuring everyone can effectively use our technological resources.

1.3.2 **Internal Communication Enhancement**: Improve and expand internal communications channels by ensuring that all members of the County are included (as appropriate) through various mechanisms to maintain alignment, clarity and consistency across the County.

Objective 1.4: Conduct Annual Compensation and Benefit Update Meetings

1.4.1 **HR-Led Benefits Meetings**: Organize annual meetings conducted by Human Resources to inform and update employees about benefits changes and updates, ensuring all employees are well-informed about their entitlements.

1.4.2 **Ongoing HR Communications**: Develop and utilize email communication strategies from the Human Resources Department to continuously provide updates and vital information

regarding employee benefits.

Objective 1.5: Foster Diverse Leadership through Mentorship Programs

1.5.1 **DEIB Subcommittee Participation**: Encourage staff participation in the DEIB subcommittee as part of our mentorship program to foster diverse leadership and ensure that DEIB principles are integrated at all levels of leadership development.

Objective 1.6: Incorporate DEIB Metrics in Leadership Evaluations

1.6.1 **Monthly Department Head Meetings**: Integrate DEIB metrics into the monthly meetings of department heads to monitor and discuss progress towards DEIB goals.

1.6.2 **Management Team Norms**: Establish and uphold a management team norm to lead with a vision and strategy focused on DEIB, ensuring leadership actions align with our organizational commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Goal 2: Plans, Policies & Budgets

Embed DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) principles into our planning, policymaking, and budgeting processes to reflect our core values of equity and inclusion. This includes conducting DEIB audits, creating a DEIB-focused budgetary strategy, and continually adapting policies to enhance equity.

Objective 2.1: Embed DEIB in Departmental Strategies

2.1.1 **Annual Policy Review Process**: Conduct annual reviews of all policies to ensure they are necessary and enforced fairly, with an emphasis on equity and inclusion.

2.1.2 **Policy Review Participants**: Involve Directors, Supervisors, Leads, and Office staff in the policy review process to ensure diverse perspectives and equitable enforcement.

2.1.3 **DEIB-Integrated Planning**: Incorporate DEIB thinking and discussions in the planning and strategizing of all initiatives, ensuring that plans reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

2.1.4 **DEIB in HR Strategy**: Make DEIB a fundamental part of the Human Resources strategic plan, aligning HR practices with organizational values of equity and inclusion.

2.1.5 **Regular Interdepartmental Meetings**: Hold regular meetings with departments that receive the most litigation services to discuss and integrate DEIB strategies, ensuring legal compliance aligns with DEIB goals.

Objective 2.2: Integrate DEIB Principles in Policy, Process, Program, and Procedure Development and Review

2.2.1 **Formalizing DEIB Policy Development and Review**: Establish a formal process for systematic development, integration, and review of DEIB principles into all policy evaluations.

2.2.2 **Inclusive Program, Process and Procedure Development and Review**: Secure feedback from a broad spectrum of constituents during the development phase to ensure all county programs, processes, and procedures are inclusive and equitable.

2.2.3 **Evaluate Impact of County Programs, Processes, Policies, and Procedures**: Evaluate policies, processes, programs, and procedures for their impact and effectiveness, ensure data is available to County Board and community members.

Objective 2.3: Establish DEIB in Budgeting Processes

2.3.1 **DEIB-Focused Budgeting**: Allocate resources in the county budget for DEIB initiatives.

Objective 2.4: Develop DEIB Impact Assessment Tools

2.4.1 **DEIB in Purchasing Policies**: Revise purchasing policies to require that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) include DEIB-related questions and criteria, ensuring vendors are evaluated on their commitment to diversity and equity.

Objective 2.5: Establish Participatory Budgeting Processes

2.5.1 **Transparency in Financial Reporting**: Make financial reports readily available on the website and social media, enhancing accessibility through improved links and clarity of presentation.

2.5.2 **Utilizing DemandStar for Supplier Diversity**: Leverage DemandStar to connect with over 150,000 suppliers, promoting diversity in procurement processes.

2.5.3 **Enhanced Public Financial Engagement**: Provide detailed budget information to the public through various mediums, including customer surveys and social media updates, to foster a transparent and participatory budgeting process.

Goal 3: Workplace & Workforce
Cultivate an organizational culture that values diversity, practices equity, and embraces inclusion at all levels. Develop strategies for DEIB-focused recruitment, retention, and advancement, fostering a work environment rich in dialogue and mutual respect.

Objective 3.1: Promote Diverse and Inclusive Workplace Culture

3.1.1 **Innovative Recruitment Practices:** Enhance recruitment strategies by adopting flexible methods such as cold calling, virtual interviews, and remote working options, supported strongly by county leadership to ensure a diverse pool of candidates.

3.1.2 **Inclusive Job Advertisements:** Utilize language in job postings that encourages applications from candidates who do not traditionally apply for positions, promoting a more diverse workforce.

3.1.3 **Annual Departmental Report**: Produce an annual report that outlines each department's achievements and goals, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability.

3.1.4 **Workforce Development Survey:** Conduct a comprehensive survey to identify training strengths and needs, using input from both supervisors and staff to guide professional development plans.

3.1.5 **Employee Retention Strategy:** Focus on maintaining a positive work environment where all employees feel included and valued, which indirectly supports our DEIB objectives by fostering inclusivity.

3.1.6 **Team Building Activities:** Encourage team bonding and inclusivity through appreciation events, enhancing mutual respect and cooperation among staff.

3.1.7 **Culture of Inclusivity and Equity:** Promote an ongoing culture of inclusivity, equality, and acceptance of diversity within all departmental activities and policies.

3.1.8 **Teamwork Enhancement:** Strengthen teamwork by engaging employees in collaborative projects, which helps in understanding diverse perspectives and enhances team dynamics.

3.1.9 **Inclusive Decision-Making Meetings:** Conduct meetings that are designed to be inclusive, seeking insights from diverse groups and demonstrating our commitment to inclusive decision-making.

3.1.10 **Flexibility in Work Culture**: Encourage leaders in other departments to adopt a flexible approach to applying work rules and cultural expectations, promoting fairness and inclusion across the organization.

Objective 3.2: Improve Workforce Diversity Composition

3.2.1 **Diversity Tracking and Reporting:** Monitor and report on the composition of our workforce in accordance with Department of Labor (DOL) guidelines and recommendations to ensure diverse representation, and good faith efforts are

engaged to improve and increase diversity.

3.2.2 **Retention and Advancement Programs**: Create programs aimed at retaining diverse talent and providing clear pathways for advancement, ensuring that all employees have equal opportunities for growth.

3.2.3 **Mentorship and Support Networks:** Establish mentorship and support networks for all employees and work toward equal access for and participation from underrepresented groups, fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment.

3.2.4 **Inclusive Leadership Development**: Design leadership development programs that focus on inclusive practices, preparing future leaders to effectively manage and embrace diversity within the County.

3.2.5 **Employment of Individuals with Lived Experience**: Prioritize the hiring of individuals who bring valuable lived experiences that can enrich our understanding and approach to service delivery.

Objective 3.3: Facilitate Employee Listening Sessions

3.3.1 **Engagement Through Events**: Organize events and activities that encourage sharing and celebration of diverse cultures and perspectives within the workplace.

3.3.2 **Regular One-on-One Meetings**: Schedule consistent one-on-one or small group meetings between supervisors and employees to maintain open lines of communication and gather feedback.

3.3.3 **Offer Exit Interviews for All Staff**: Conduct exit interviews with employees to gather insights on operational improvements and employee experiences.

3.3.4 **Encourage Feedback on DEIB Initiatives**: Promote participation in DEIB and strategic planning surveys to gather broad employee feedback and identify areas for enhancement.

3.3.5 **Maintain an Open Door Policy**: Ensure that leadership maintains an open-door policy to encourage staff to discuss issues and ideas directly and informally.

3.3.6 **Open Communication Opportunities:** Ensure all employees have opportunities for open communication through meetings, written correspondence, and a County approved electronic portal allowing for equal access to a method for anonymous communication to County Leadership, as appropriate.

3.3.7 **Regular Listening Sessions:** Hold regular listening sessions to openly discuss

inclusion, belonging, and any DEIB-related concerns, enhancing employee engagement and understanding.

Objective 3.4: Enhance Communication Through Diversified Channels

3.4.1 **Community Feedback Integration**: Regularly collect and incorporate community feedback through multiple channels such as emails, phone calls, and public meetings to adapt and improve services.

3.4.2 **Employee Newsletters**: Distribute both digital and print newsletters to keep employees informed and engaged with departmental updates and initiatives.

Objective 3.5: Implement Comprehensive Bias Training

3.5.1 **Mandatory Racial Justice Training**: Implement mandatory racial justice training for all staff to deepen their understanding of racial issues and improve service delivery.

3.5.2 **Hiring Process Training**: Provide training for any leader involved in hiring to ensure fair and unbiased recruitment processes. This includes developing questions and interview techniques within each department.

3.5.3 **Addressing Barriers in Background Checks**: Evaluate and adjust background check processes that may disproportionately exclude potential employees, ensuring fair employment opportunities.

3.5.4 **Disability Awareness and Accommodation Training:** Provide training on ableism, accessibility, and accommodations required under ADA, enhancing workplace inclusivity and support for people with disabilities.

Objective 3.6: Internal Recruitment and Career Advancement Pathways

3.6.1 **Inclusive Monthly Meetings**: Conduct staff meetings that include a mix of the elements of training, networking, and strategic discussions about current and future department employment needs. Use a mix of face-to-face, online, remote, and written communication formats; and actively seek feedback to assess effectiveness and impact.

3.6.2 **Opportunities for Entry-Level Advancement**: Offer numerous entry-level positions, providing opportunities for individuals with limited or no experience to gain skills and advance within the County.

3.6.3 **Mindful Promotional Practices**: Ensure that hiring and promotional practices are inclusive and mindful of Title VII to prevent discrimination and promote diversity.

3.6.4 **TLC Training Portal**: Implement the TLC trainings through an internal software product to post essential trainings, including civil rights, client rights training, and how to access services, enhancing employee knowledge and compliance.

Objective 3.7: Enhance Supportive Work Environments for Veterans and People with Disabilities

3.7.1 **Disabled and Veteran-Specific Onboarding Programs:** Implement onboarding programs that includes mentoring, helping to ease the transition of veterans and People with Disabilities into the workforce and connecting them with existing veteran or disabled employees, as appropriate.

3.7.2 **Disabled and Veteran Resource Groups:** Establish resource groups within the workplace to provide support and networking opportunities for veteran and Disabled employees, promoting a sense of community and belonging.

Goal 4: Inclusive Community Partnerships

Forge and deepen partnerships with diverse community groups, ensuring these collaborations are equitable and mutually beneficial. Engage historically marginalized communities, co-create initiatives addressing their needs, and prioritize their voices in our joint efforts.

Objective 4.1: Strengthen Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms

4.1.1 **Targeted Outreach**: Conduct targeted outreach to directly ask communities about unmet needs and discuss potential solutions.

4.1.2 **Continuous Collaborative Community Planning**: Engage in ongoing collaborative planning with community stakeholders to address identified needs and disparities effectively.

4.1.3 **Ethical Community Inclusion**: Include impacted community members and partners in decision-making processes ensuring that County actions reflect the community's needs and values.

4.1.4 **Annual Community Education Plan Review**: Regularly review and update our community education topics to stay relevant and responsive to community needs.

4.1.5 **Feedback-Driven Service Improvements**: Use community feedback to inform and adjust County services to improve experience, impact and outcomes.

4.1.6 **Participation in Local Boards and Committees**: County Leaders and Staff should seek to actively participate in local boards, community coalitions, and committees to gather and integrate community insights into our operational strategies.

4.1.7 **Data-Driven Community Health Initiatives**: Utilize data to identify local health needs and disparities, focusing our efforts on areas where we can make the most significant impact.

4.1.8 **Diverse Community Member Recruitment Strategies**: Adjust our recruitment strategies based on the diverse experiences and feedback of community

members to better suit all residents.

4.1.9 **Establish DEIB Advisory Committees**: Create advisory committees incorporating lived experiences to guide the County in DEIB matters, ensuring that our strategies and actions reflect the diverse needs and inputs of our communities.

4.1.10 **Multiple Communication Channels**: Offer various ways for the public to communicate with the County, ensuring accessibility for all community members.

4.1.11 **Community-Based Relationship Building**: Encourage staff to be present in the community, not just to deliver services but to build trusting relationships, particularly for historically marginalized people of the community.

4.1.12 **Education and Community Engagement**: Actively participate in and provide educational support at community events and meetings to foster understanding and support for DEIB initiatives across diverse groups.

Objective 4.2: Engage with Diverse Community Groups for Collaborative Projects

4.2.1 **CHA and CHIP Community Engagement**: Implement community engagement activities under the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to foster inclusive health initiatives.

4.2.2 **Community Forums for Broad Engagement**: Host community or participate in forums within neighborhood locations and online to facilitate wider participation and gather diverse viewpoints.

4.2.3 **Inter-Governmental Collaborations**: Collaborate with other governmental entities on common focus areas, like environmental health and local housing issues, to ensure comprehensive community support.

4.2.4 **Expanded Educational Outreach**: Utilize diverse educational methods, such as face-to-face interactions and digital engagements, to reach a wider audience and build trust within the community.

4.2.5 **Community Event Participation**: Support and participate in community events that celebrate and engage diverse groups, ensuring cultural significance and community value are recognized and preserved.

4.2.6 **Partnerships with Local Organizations**: Develop partnerships with local organizations to enhance community involvement and support local initiatives.

Objective 4.3: Foster Partnerships with Diverse Businesses and Organizations

4.3.1 **Vendor Diversity Analysis**: Analyze current contracts to identify gaps in vendor diversity and set goals to increase engagements with Small Business Enterprises, Veteran Business Enterprises, Women and Minority-Owned Business Enterprises supporting DEIB initiatives.

4.3.2 **RFP Process Review**: Review and adapt the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to make it more accessible to Small Businesses, Women-Owned Businesses, and Minority-Owned Businesses. Solicit feedback and design an inclusive process based on community feedback indicating current barriers.

Objective 4.4: Develop Community Engagement Programs Targeting Veterans

4.4.1 **Veteran Engagement in Civic Activities:** Encourage and facilitate the involvement of veterans in civic activities and local government roles, enhancing their contribution to community planning and decision-making processes.

4.4.2 **Community Recognition Events for Veterans:** Organize or participate in community events that recognize and honor the contributions of military veterans, such as Veterans Day parades and memorial dedications, fostering community respect and appreciation for their service.

Goal 5: Communication & Education

Elevate understanding and engagement on DEIB issues through strategic communication and educational initiatives. Implement DEIB training for staff, develop a communication strategy to promote DEIB dialogue, and establish educational partnerships for broader learning opportunities.

Objective 5.1: Enhance Internal and External DEIB Communication

5.1.1 **Diverse Media Outreach**: Regularly update and distribute an external digital newsletter to county board supervisors and the community, engage actively on social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram, and conduct traditional media outreach.

5.1.2 **Community Surveys and Feedback**: Implement community engagement surveys and feedback strategies to identify areas for improvement. Use the survey findings to guide and enhance future communication strategies.

5.1.3 **Educational Articles and Media Releases**: Publish informative articles in local newspapers and online and provide frequent media releases and interviews to keep the public informed about services and initiatives.

5.1.4 **Website and Social Media Updates**: Continuously update the County's website and social media pages to provide timely and relevant information, ensuring content is accessible and meets both the County and community's needs.

5.1.5 **Multilingual and Accessible Communication Options**: Offer communications in multiple languages and formats, ensuring that all members of the community can access and understand information from the department.

Objective 5.2: Implement Comprehensive Communication Strategies

5.2.1 **Employee Engagement Through Newsletters**: Distribute a regular employee newsletter, available in both digital and hard copy formats, to ensure all staff are informed and engaged, regardless of their internet access.

5.2.2 **Targeted Community Education**: Conduct onsite outreach at community-centric locations, such as farmers' markets, and utilize a variety of educational methods to facilitate learning and information sharing, ensuring effective engagement with diverse audiences.

5.2.3 **Inclusive Communication Practices**: Utilize certified language lines and bilingual staff to facilitate communication, and ensure all forms and newsletters are available in plain language and multiple formats, including digital and audio.

5.2.4 **Inclusive Community Outreach:** Strengthen outreach programs by using culturally sensitive and inclusive language and media that resonate with historically marginalized people, ensuring that communication is both engaging and respectful.

Objective 5.3: Provide Accessible Employee Education and Training

5.3.1 **Sensitivity and Awareness Training**: Offer sensitivity and awareness training for staff to enhance their interactions with the public, focusing on effective service delivery that respects all community members.

5.3.2 **Educational Opportunities for Staff**: Provide various educational programs, including leadership training for supervisors and continuing education opportunities for all staff to foster a culture of continuous learning and skills enhancement.

5.3.3 **Training Across the Organization**: Ensure that skill and leadership training is not only focused on specific departments but integrated across the organization to build a uniformly responsive and inclusive culture.

Objective 5.4: Develop a County-Wide DEIB Awareness Campaign

5.4.1 **Enhance DEIB Committee Involvement**: Increase participation in the county's DEIB committee to ensure a wide range of perspectives and ideas are included in the development of DEIB initiatives.

Objective 5.5: Offer DEIB Training and Resources to Local Businesses

5.5.1 **Support for Local Businesses**: Partner with local industries, trade groups and organizations to increase access to DEIB training resources to local businesses and organizations, helping them to create inclusive workplaces and better serve

their diverse customer bases.

Objective 5.6: Offer Specialized Training on Civil Rights and Client Rights

5.6.1 **Routine Compliance and Competency Training**: Conduct regular civil rights compliance and cultural competency training, including Trauma Informed Care to address stigma and accessibility barriers in service provision to all relevant County staff.

5.6.2 **Establish Training Expectations**: Set clear expectations for training across all levels of staff and leadership to ensure consistency and comprehensive understanding using the incorporation of DEIB best practices.

5.6.3 **Leadership and Cultural Competence**: Include DEIB definitions and principles in the development of leadership and cultural competencies, ensuring that leadership training aligns with organizational DEIB goals.

5.6.4 **Specialized Training and Onboarding Collaboration**: Engage key stakeholders in selecting and/or delivering specialized training sessions (i.e. onboarding of new social workers) and orientation programs for County Board members.

5.6.5 **Enhanced Training Opportunities:** Continuously provide and improve training and learning opportunities focused on multiple modalities ensuring staff are well-versed in the requirements for improved service access, accountability, and transparency.

5.6.6 **Cross-Departmental and Annual Training Initiatives:** Collaborate with other departments and organizations to offer DEIB-focused training and learning opportunities. Facilitate annual stay interviews to discuss DEIB concerns and enhance the understanding and implementation of DEIB principles across the County.

Goal 6: Facility & System Improvements

Guarantee our facilities and systems are accessible, inclusive, and equitable. Perform DEIB evaluations of current infrastructure, make necessary adjustments for better accessibility and inclusivity, and apply a DEIB lens to new projects.

Objective 6.1: Assess and Improve Facility Accessibility

6.1.1 **Comprehensive Accessibility Reviews**: Conduct thorough reviews of all facilities to ensure they meet ADA standards, including accessible parking, office layouts, and public access points.

6.1.2 **Ongoing Improvements and Upgrades**: Continue to upgrade facilities, such as installing ADA-compliant features in parks and campgrounds and improving signage and communication systems to accommodate all users.

6.1.3 **Technology and Communication Accessibility**: Enhance the accessibility

of online systems and physical communications to ensure that all community members can access services without barriers.

Objective 6.2: Conduct Accessibility Audits of Public Facilities

6.2.1 **Regular Accessibility Audits**: Perform regular audits of public facilities to ensure they are accessible to individuals with disabilities and meet all regulatory requirements.

6.2.2 **Assess Facilities for Emergency Housing Use:** Regularly evaluate public facilities for their potential use as emergency housing solutions during crises, ensuring readiness and adequate resources for housing-insecure populations.

Objective 6.3: Prioritize Accessibility in New Facility Plans

6.3.1 **Incorporate Accessibility from the Start**: Ensure that all new facility plans incorporate accessibility considerations from the initial design phase, prioritizing inclusivity in all new constructions.

Objective 6.4: Support Green Infrastructure Projects

6.4.1 Climate Action Plan Strategies: Ensure that the Comprehensive Plan and future policies, processes, and procedures take into account the County's goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 and other green best practices and recommendations.

Goal 7: Human Services

Deliver human services that meet the diverse needs of our community equitably and inclusively. Reassess and adapt service models for greater accessibility, solicit community feedback, and enhance services to reduce disparities.

Objective 7.1: Optimize Service Delivery for Equity and Inclusion

7.1.1 **Localized Health Services**: Collaborate with providers to offer immunizations and other essential health services in community-based settings like homeless centers, food pantries, and schools to ensure accessibility for those unable to reach traditional healthcare facilities.

7.1.2 **Community Liaison Program**: Support and enhance a Community Liaison Program that redistributes donations and resources effectively through a triage process, providing targeted assistance for immediate needs and enhancing resource allocation efficiency.

7.1.3 **Housing and Safety Initiatives**: Work with property owners to

improve housing safety and accessibility, ensuring that housing options meet the diverse needs of the community.

7.1.4 **Community Health Improvement Planning**: Engage in comprehensive community health planning to address priorities such as safe housing, food access, and physical activity. Regularly update and report these plans to maintain transparency and accountability.

7.1.5 **Resource Navigation by Social Workers**: Ensure social workers are equipped to guide residents through available resources, enhancing access to economic support, social security, and other essential services.

7.1.6 **Mobile Health and Social Services:** Deploy mobile health clinics and social service centers to provide regular, on-site support in historically marginalized communities, reducing barriers to accessing essential health and human services.

7.1.7 **Support for Housing Insecurity:** Ensure targeted resources and services on the County website specifically designed to assist unhoused and housing-insecure individuals.

7.1.8 **Public Health Outreach Initiatives**: Include lessons from the 2023 Public Health Outreach pilot to enhance relationship-building with community agencies and the effectiveness of outreach efforts**.**

Objective 7.2: Expand Access to Mental Health and Wellness Services

7.2.1 **School-Based Health Services**: Enhance partnerships with local schools to provide accessible dental care and other health services in neighborhoods at higher risk of health disparities.

7.2.2 **Community Collaborative for Addiction Recovery**: Facilitate the Alliance to Heal initiative to work with health systems and community partners on improving outcomes for addiction-related issues.

7.2.3 **Telehealth Expansion**: Increase the availability of telehealth services to ensure residents can access care remotely, particularly for mental health and wellness support.

7.2.4 **Crisis Co-Responder Program**: Enhance the collaboration between law enforcement and mental health services through the Crisis Co-responder program to improve responses to mental health emergencies.

7.2.5 **Accessibility in Mental Health Services:** Ensure that mental health services are fully accessible, incorporating facilities and telehealth systems designed to accommodate people with disabilities.

Objective 7.3: Establish a Feedback Loop with Service Recipients

7.3.1 **Enhanced Accessibility of Emergency Tools**: Improve the placement and accessibility of community AEDs, Narcan, and Fentanyl test strips to ensure they

are readily available in emergencies.

7.3.2 **Feedback-Informed Service Adjustments**: Utilize feedback from service users to continuously adapt and improve housing conditions and other human services, ensuring the interventions are effective and equitable.

Objective 7.4: Develop Initiatives to Address Homelessness with a Focus on Equity

7.4.1 **Collaborative Homelessness Response**: Strengthen partnerships with organizations and other relevant stakeholders to address the comprehensive needs of the unsheltered population, ensuring initiatives are inclusive and equitable.

7.4.2 **Policy and Planning Collaboration**: Engage in joint city-county planning efforts to develop and implement strategies to address homelessness, ensuring that solutions are integrated and community-informed.

Objective 7.5: Culturally Competent Service Delivery

7.5.1 **Culturally Specific Health Services:** Develop health and social services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for historically marginalized communities and other adversely impacted populations to ensure these services are accessible and effectively meet their specific health needs.

Goal 8: Justice & Public Safety

Ensure our public safety and justice systems are equitable, inclusive, and trusted by all communities. Review and reform policies and practices to eliminate bias, engage with diverse communities to build trust, and adopt restorative justice approaches.

Objective 8.1: Reform Practices to Enhance Equity

8.1.1 **Support Services for Jail Release**: Implement support services for individuals exiting jail, focusing on medication-assisted treatment and recovery support to facilitate successful community reintegration.

8.1.2 **Policy Advocacy with Equity Tools**: Utilize an Equity and Justice Tool to review and reform public safety policies, ensuring they are fair and do not disproportionately affect historically marginalized people and communities.

8.1.3 **Civilian Review Board**: Support the design and implementation of a 2-Year Pilot launching a newly developed Civilian Review Board.

8.1.4 **Community-Based Restorative Justice**: Expand restorative justice programs that involve community members in the resolution process, promoting healing and reconciliation while reducing reliance on traditional punitive measures.

Objective 8.2: Enhance Community Policing Initiatives

8.2.1 **Build Community Trust through Engagement**: Increase and expand

community policing initiatives that facilitate Two-Way open dialogue and education, aiming to build trust and understanding between law enforcement and the community.

8.2.2 **Diverse Recruitment and Training**: Expand and improve efforts to recruit a more diverse Sheriff's Office staff and provide comprehensive training in crisis intervention, cultural competence, and implicit bias to all department personnel, both sworn and unsworn.

Objective 8.3: Review and Update Policies to Eliminate Bias

8.3.1 **Comprehensive Policy Review with External Experts**: Collaborate with appropriate partners to review and update justice system practices, focusing on reducing racial disparities and ensuring fair treatment for all community members.

8.3.2 **Equity Training in Public Safety:** Include mandatory equity training for law enforcement and public safety officials that focuses on the history, culture, and specific needs of historically marginalized communities to foster understanding and reduce biases.

Objective 8.4: Implement Restorative Justice Programs

8.4.1 Establish Restorative Justice Framework: Develop and implement a comprehensive framework for restorative justice programs, including guidelines, protocols, and best practices tailored to the needs of the community.

8.4.2 Pilot Restorative Justice Programs: Launch pilot restorative justice programs in select communities to test the framework and gather data on effectiveness and impact.

8.4.3 Expand and Sustain Restorative Justice Programs: Scale successful pilot programs to additional communities and establish long-term sustainability plans.

Goal 9: Accessible Technology and Digital Inclusion

Promote digital inclusion and bridge the digital divide by making technology accessible to everyone. Evaluate and improve the accessibility of digital services, offer targeted digital literacy programs, and use technology to improve service access.

Objective 9.1: Improve Digital Literacy and Access

9.1.1 **Hearing Accessibility Enhancements**: Successfully implement Hearing Loop Technology or similar technology into the county board room and advocate for accessible communication technologies across all county facilities.

9.1.2 **Multilingual Access**: Integrate a translation widget or similar technology into county webpages and ensure all critical program documents are available in multiple languages to accommodate diverse linguistic needs.

9.1.3 **Ensure Technology Accessibility and Solutions:** Develop and procure technology solutions that are culturally relevant, inclusive, and accessible while fostering inclusivity in all digital interactions.

9.1.4 **Information Accessibility:** Keep the community and staff informed through updated website content, current phone messages, and readily available paper copies of policies; utilize social media for broader outreach

Objective 9.2: Launch Digital Literacy Programs for Underserved Populations

9.2.1 **Wi-Fi Expansion in Public Spaces**: Extend free Wi-Fi access to areas surrounding key county buildings and libraries to support education, employment, and health services access for those without private internet resources.

9.2.2 **Onsite Digital Assistance**: Provide on-the-ground support at community locations for individuals needing assistance with digital applications for benefits and other services, ensuring equitable access to digital resources.

9.2.3 **Adapting Service Delivery to Digital Platforms**: Transition traditional face-to- face service offerings to accessible digital formats like video calls and online meetings to cater to a wider audience and improve convenience.

9.2.5 **Enhancing Digital Infrastructure in Rural Areas:** Focus on improving digital infrastructure in rural parts of the county by partnering to support the enhancement to broadband connectivity and providing public Wi-Fi spots to bridge the digital divide.

Objective 9.3: Determine Metrics for Online Access

9.3.1 **Evaluate Online Service Usage**: Develop and implement metrics to assess the effectiveness of online access to county services, focusing on user engagement, satisfaction, and barriers to access.

Goal 10: Environmental Equity

Integrate DEIB into environmental policies and initiatives to ensure they are fair and do not disproportionately affect marginalized communities. Conduct environmental justice assessments, engage with communities on environmental equity issues, and incorporate DEIB in environmental decision-making.

Objective 10.1: Integrate DEIB into Environmental Policies

10.1.1 **Inclusive Policy Development**: Ensure the Climate Action Plan is developed through collaborative processes involving impacted parties, community partners, and stakeholders to foster inclusive and equitable policy outcomes.

10.1.2 **Sustainable Energy Initiatives**: Promote the installation of solar power and other sustainable practices in county operations to reduce environmental impact and lead by example in energy conservation.

Objective 10.2: Conduct Environmental Justice Assessments

10.2.1 **Targeted Environmental Studies**: Use demographic and epidemiological data to conduct focused environmental justice assessments, addressing issues like water quality and disease mitigation in vulnerable communities.

Objective 10.3: Create Programs for Access to Green Spaces in Underserved Neighborhoods

10.3.1 **Expand Green Space Access**: Support programs that increase access to green spaces for youth and all other historically underserved groups, ensuring environmental benefits are shared equitably across all sections of the community.

10.3.2 **Environmental Education and Outreach**: Continue to provide comprehensive environmental education and outreach to all community members improving impact and outcomes.

10.3.3 **Designing Accessible Green Spaces:** Develop and retrofit County owned and maintained green spaces to be fully accessible, including features like wheelchair-accessible pathways and sensory-friendly areas for people with disabilities.

Objective 10.4: Implement Community-Based Environmental Monitoring Projects

10.4.1 **Local Water Quality Monitoring**: Conduct annual water quality tests at parks and campgrounds, ensuring all public facilities meet health standards and provide safe, clean water to visitors.

10.4.2 **Targeted Environmental Programs:** Support and promote environmental programs and initiatives that specifically address the environmental injustices faced by historically marginalized people, such as targeted green space improvements in underserved neighborhoods and pollution control measures.

APPENDIX – KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

This DEIB Report 2024 encourages all members of the La Crosse County community to take ownership for creating a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and supportive climate. To that end, everyone must operate from a common, shared understanding of DEIB. Within this DEIB Report 2024 and in the context of the community, the definition for each component of DEIB is identified below.

Ableism

Beliefs or practices that rest on the assumption that being able-bodied is "normal" while other states must be "fixed" or altered. This can result in devaluing or discriminating against people with physical, intellectual, or psychiatric disabilities. Institutionalized ableism may include or take the form of organizational barriers, both intentional and unintentional, that result in disparate treatment of people with disabilities (PwDs).

Accessibility

The "ability to access" the functionality of a system or entity and gain the related benefits. The degree to which a product, service, or environment is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessible design ensures both direct (unassisted) access and indirect access through assistive technology (e.g., computer screen readers). Universal design ensures that an environment can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people.

Authentic Self	Who an individual is as a person, demonstrating different experiences, perspectives, cultures, history, etc., without being forced to conform to the majority culture in the workplace. The work culture must value a wide range of talents, skills, and experiences to create a sense of belonging for everyone without causing harm to others.
Belonging	A feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you. A sense of belonging is one of humanity's most basic needs.
Bias	Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in an unfair or negative way. Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, is defined as "attitudes and stereotypes that influence judgment, decision-making, and behavior in ways that are outside of conscious awareness and/or control."
BIPOC	The acronym "BIPOC" stands for Black, Indigenous, and [All Other] People of Color. It's a term used to group together people with diverse cultural backgrounds who are often not of European descent. It highlights the unique histories, experiences, and challenges faced by these communities.
Cultural Competence	Behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable individuals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence promotes the respect for

and 5 understanding of diverse cultures and social groups as well as the unique attributes of each individual within a larger organization. Cultural competence is based on integrating the awareness and learned skills needed to educate, work with, and serve people from diverse backgrounds and social identities effectively and sensitively.

Culture

The values, attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and customs shared and communicated by a group of people that contribute to a person's sense of identity. Culture also includes the knowledge and collective experiences shared across generations within a cultural group.

Disability

Wisconsin Statute 111.32(8)

(8) "Disability" means:
(a) A physical or mental impairment which makes achievement unusually difficult or limits the capacity to work;
(b) A record of such an impairment; or
(c) Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Wisconsin Fair Employment Act (WFEA)

Provides a definition that is intended to be consistent with the ADA. It defines disability as:

- A physical or mental impairment which makes achievement unusually difficult or limits the capacity to work;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Disabled Veteran A person who has served on active duty in the armed forces, has separated under honorable conditions, and has established the present existence of a service-connected disability or is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension because of a public statute administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs or a military department.

Diversity The condition of being different or having differences. Differences among people occur in a variety of respects, such as age, class, ethnicity, gender, health, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, religion, physical size, education level, job and function, personality traits, and other human differences. Some describe organizational diversity as social heterogeneity.

Equity Consistent, systematic, fair, just, and impartial treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals, including individuals who historically have been denied such treatment, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that might prevent any employee's full and equitable participation in the workplace.

Inclusion

A value supported by incorporating diverse perspectives and practices to promote, develop, evolve, and implement an organization's culture, policies, systems, and norms. An inclusive environment is one where people encourage and embrace different perspectives, ideas, and experiences to create meaningful opportunity, interaction, communication, information, and decision-making prowess. An inclusive workplace is one where people not only feel included, but also where people recognize when workplace traditions and events may result in the exclusion of individuals.

Individual/ Person with a Disability

A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as walking, talking, seeing, hearing, or learning), has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment unless the impairment is both transitory and minor.

Intersectionality

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, and their multiple effects on the same individuals or groups. Also refers to the view that overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and inequality can more effectively be addressed together.

Privilege

An unearned, sustained advantage that comes from race, gender, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status, age, and other differences. For example, readers are invited to "unpack" white and male privilege by Wellesley College's Peggy McIntosh.

Racism

A belief that racial differences produce or are associated with inherent superiority or inferiority. Racially based prejudice, discrimination, hostility, or hatred. Institutionalized racism, also known as systemic racism, refers to forms of racism that are engrained in society or organizations. It is when entire racial groups are discriminated against, or consistently disadvantaged, by larger social systems, practices, choices, or policies.

Reasonable Accommodation

A change in the environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to have equal opportunity, access, and participation.

Talent Acquisition

Long-term human resources planning and finding appropriate candidates for positions that require specific skillsets to fulfill a business need.

Targeted Disability

Specific, severe disabilities targeted for emphasis in affirmative action planning that include, but are not limited to, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury, deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, epilepsy, intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, dwarfism, and significant disfigurement.

Underserved Communities

Populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civil life.

Unseen Diversity Characteristic

Non-visible personal characteristics such as background, culture, and personality, as well as protected classes such as disability, sexual orientation, and religion and belief.

APPENDIX – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Principles

Introduction

The following principles represent broad best practices in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). These principles are designed to guide organizations in creating and maintaining a work environment that values and leverages diversity, ensures equitable treatment and opportunities, fosters inclusion, and promotes a sense of belonging for all employees.

1. Commitment to Diversity:

Representation: Strive for diverse representation across all levels of the organization, including leadership and decision-making roles.

Recruitment and Hiring: Implement inclusive recruitment and hiring practices to attract a diverse pool of candidates. This includes using unbiased job descriptions, diverse interview panels, and equitable selection processes.

2. Equity:

Equal Opportunities: Ensure all employees have equal access to opportunities for advancement, training, and professional development.

Fair Treatment: Address and eliminate disparities in treatment, compensation, and access to resources within the organization.

Support Systems: Provide support systems, such as mentorship and coaching, to help underrepresented groups succeed and thrive.

3. Inclusion:

Inclusive Culture: Foster a culture where all employees feel valued, respected, and included. Encourage the expression of diverse perspectives and ideas.

Accessibility: Ensure that all organizational communications, facilities, and resources are accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

Inclusive Leadership: Train leaders to recognize and mitigate their biases, promote inclusive practices, and actively seek input from diverse voices.

4. Belonging:

Sense of Community: Create a sense of belonging by building a supportive and welcoming environment where all employees feel connected and appreciated.

Recognition: Acknowledge and celebrate the unique contributions of individuals

and diverse groups within the organization.

Engagement: Encourage active participation and engagement from all employees in organizational activities, decision-making processes, and DEIB initiatives.

5. Accountability and Transparency:

Measurement and Reporting: Regularly measure and report on DEIB metrics to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Use data-driven approaches to inform DEIB strategies.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish channels for employees to provide feedback on DEIB-related issues and ensure that their concerns are addressed promptly and effectively.

Continuous Improvement: Commit to ongoing learning and improvement in DEIB practices. Stay informed about best practices and emerging trends in DEIB and adjust strategies accordingly.

6. Education and Training:

Continuous Learning: Provide ongoing DEIB education and training for all employees, including topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, and inclusive leadership.

Customized Programs: Develop customized training programs that address the specific needs and challenges of different departments and employee groups.

Resource Availability: Make DEIB resources, such as toolkits, guidelines, and best practices, readily available to all employees.

7. Community Engagement:

Partnerships: Build partnerships with external organizations, such as advocacy groups and educational institutions, to enhance DEIB efforts and support the broader community.

Outreach: Engage with underrepresented communities to understand their needs and perspectives and incorporate their feedback into organizational DEIB initiatives.

Social Responsibility: Commit to corporate social responsibility by supporting initiatives that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the wider community.

By adhering to these principles, we can create a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive environment. These principles serve as a foundation for fostering a culture of diversity, ensure fairness, promote inclusion, and nurture a sense of belonging for all.

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THE LA CROSSE COUNTY COMMUNITY

On behalf of La Crosse County, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the community for their unwavering support and active participation in our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Initiative. Your commitment to fostering an inclusive environment is crucial to our collective endeavor to build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. We deeply appreciate your continued dedication to creating a supportive and vibrant community for all. Together, we are making significant strides towards a more equitable and connected La Crosse County.

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