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**Join Us in Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Aging Services!**

**Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

At LeadingAge Massachusetts, we believe that every individual, regardless of background or identity, deserves equal opportunities to thrive in our aging services communities. Our strategic plan for 2022–2025 underscores our commitment to fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments where all older adults, employees, and stakeholders feel valued and respected.

**Why DE&I Matters**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) aren't just buzzwords; they are core principles that drive positive change and innovation. By embracing diversity in all its forms, promoting equity through fair and inclusive practices, and fostering a culture of belonging, we not only enhance the well-being of older adults but also create stronger, more resilient organizations that can effectively meet the evolving needs of our communities.

**Our DE&I Goals**

LeadingAge MA has set ambitious DE&I goals to be achieved by year three of our 2022 – 2025 strategic plan.  By year three, we aim for at least 50% of LeadingAge MA member organizations to formally commit to creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities where older adults and those who serve them can thrive.

**How You Can Get Involved**

We invite you to take an active role in formalizing your organization's commitment to DE&I by utilizing the template provided on the next page. By taking this step, you will be counted among your fellow LeadingAge MA members as a designated DE&I Champion. Once you have submitted your commitment, you will receive a communications toolkit from LeadingAge MA that you can use to showcase the impactful work happening in your community. Your commitments will be highlighted in member communications and will serve as an example when LeadingAge MA speaks about the work of our member organizations.

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Date

At [Organization Name], we are dedicated to fostering a culture that embraces diversity, promotes equity, and champions inclusion for both the older adults we serve and our employees. We recognize that every individual, regardless of age, background, or sexual and gender identity, brings unique perspectives and experiences that enrich our community and enhance the quality of the services we provide.

As such, we pledge to take the following steps towards our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion goals by June 2025:

*[Please outline the steps your organization plans to take, no matter how small they may seem.  If applicable, we encourage you to also include any steps already taken within your organization. This information will be shared publicly to promote the important work of LeadingAge MA members.  Please submit your completed letter to Sarah Lacasse at* *slacasse@leadingagema.org**.*

*Just getting started and need some inspiration?  See the next page]*

We understand that achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion requires ongoing commitment and collaboration at every level of our organization. We pledge to continuously evaluate our practices, listen to feedback from our stakeholders, and adapt our approach to ensure that we are fostering an environment where everyone can thrive and flourish.

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Signature of Organization’s Staff Representative

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Signature of Organization’s Board Representative**Embarking on Your Organization's DE&I Journey:**

**Ways to Foster Inclusion and Equity**

Fostering a community culture that embraces Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) isn't just a moral imperative—it's also a strategic advantage. As organizations seek to attract and retain top talent, drive innovation, and better serve diverse customer bases, prioritizing DE&I initiatives has become increasingly essential. Whether your organization is just beginning its DE&I journey or looking to enhance existing efforts, taking deliberate steps to cultivate a more inclusive workplace environment can yield profound benefits for both employees and the community as a whole. Here are ten actionable ideas to help kickstart your organization's DE&I efforts.

**Celebrate Diversity and Recognize Contributions:** Recognize and celebrate the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and contributions of employees through initiatives such as cultural heritage celebrations, diversity awards, and inclusive recognition programs.

**Leadership Commitment:** Gain buy-in and commitment from organizational leadership, including Board members, to prioritize DE&I initiatives and allocate resources towards fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

**Engage a DE&I Consultant or Specialist:** Bring in an experienced DE&I consultant or specialist to provide expertise, guidance, and support in developing and implementing effective DE&I strategies tailored to your organization's unique needs and challenges. A consultant can offer valuable insights, facilitate difficult conversations, and recommend best practices based on industry standards and research, helping your organization navigate its DE&I journey with confidence and purpose.

**Assessment and Benchmarking:** Conduct a DE&I assessment to evaluate the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization, establish baseline metrics, and identify areas for improvement.

**Establish DE&I Goals:** Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion to guide the organization's efforts and track progress over time.

**Create a DE&I Task Force or Committee:** Form a dedicated DE&I task force or committee comprised of representatives from across the organization to drive DE&I initiatives, develop action plans, and ensure accountability.

**Employee Training and Education:** Provide training and educational opportunities for employees and residents on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competency, inclusive leadership, and bystander intervention to raise awareness and promote understanding.

**Promote Open Dialogue and Listening Sessions:** Foster open dialogue and create safe spaces for employees to share their experiences, perspectives, and concerns related to diversity, equity, and inclusion through facilitated listening sessions, focus groups, or employee resource groups.

**Review and Update Policies and Procedures:** Review existing policies and procedures to ensure they align with DE&I principles and promote equity and fairness in areas such as recruitment, hiring, promotion, and disciplinary actions.

**Diversify Recruitment and Hiring Practices:** Implement strategies to attract, recruit, and retain diverse talent, such as expanding recruitment efforts to reach underrepresented groups, utilizing diverse interview panels, and implementing blind resume screening processes.

**Promote Inclusive Leadership:** Equip leaders and managers with the skills and tools to foster inclusive leadership practices, such as actively listening to diverse perspectives, providing equitable opportunities for growth and development, and advocating for inclusivity within their teams.