

DEI Committee Charter

SOS promotes housing stability and family self-sufficiency through collaboration, care and respect

Adopted March 2nd, 2022

Purpose

The purpose of the SOS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is to promote a safe, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where all differences and identities are respected, valued, and included, and where representation is encouraged and celebrated.

Through the committee's work we aim to achieve the following:

- *Protect SOS community members from discrimination, oppression, and denial of their humanity and right to exist.*
- *Create an environment in which all members of our SOS community are able to nurture self and group identities, including but not limited to; race, gender, ethnicity, ability, socio-economic status, nationality and immigration status, age, religion, family status, sexual orientation, and gender identity.*
- *Foster a culture, through policy and practice, that reflects, contributes to, and celebrates the diverse communities we serve within the values of SOS.*
- *Advance institutional diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion in our community and in every action and branch of the organization.*
- *Strive to become a community leader in this space by committing to continually challenging ourselves to educate and advocate.*

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the DEI Committee include but are not limited to:

- o *Providing input on SOS policies, procedures and programs to help address diversity, equity and inclusion issues and recommend changes and/or new policies for board and Executive Director action that help fulfill the purpose of the Committee.*
- o *Develop and implement a section of the SOS Strategic Plan that focuses on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Furthermore develop metrics and use these for continued evaluation of agency progress.*
- o *Gather data on DEI best practices, community needs, and internal diversity at SOS.*
- o *Audit policies and practices through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.*
- o *At least every year the committee will seek feedback from staff members, Board members, volunteers, and consumers to inform decision-making and to guide opportunities for improvement.*
- o *Ensure the dissemination and use of best practices for diversity, equity, and inclusion in policies, teaching, training, hiring, retention, and community & culture building.*

- o Provide Board and staff professional development opportunities and training on DEI issues annually.*
- o Update the Board at each Board meeting on DEI progress, and provide the Executive Director with updates for the staff.*
- o Undertake an annual review of the DEI Committee Charter and recommend amendments to the full board.*
- o Serve in partnership with the Governance Committee and Board to support an annual review of key agency policy and procedures to ensure agency a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.*

Membership

- o The DEI Committee will have two co-chairs, elected by its members, one from the SOS Board and one from the SOS staff. Members will be volunteers approved jointly by the Executive Director and the Board chair. At any one time, the Committee composition should be at least two members of the Board and two staff members up to a total of 10 members. The committee will seek to maintain an equal balance of board and staff members (50/50 ratio), which will be reviewed on an annual basis. Community and consumer members are also encouraged to join the committee. All approved members will be voting members. An effort will be made to ensure the committee itself is representative and reflective of the community we serve. Non-member individuals may be invited to attend meetings as a function of their expertise but would not vote.*
- o The Board President and the Executive Director will be invited to all DEI Committee meetings but are not required to attend.*
- o DEI committee members will serve on the committee for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years. After a year's absence, they may once again serve.*

Duties of Committee Co-Chairs

- o Set up the schedule for, and facilitate, DEI Committee meetings, and provide agendas after soliciting issues from members.*
- o Establish a rotational schedule so that each member provides learning materials at least once per year for continuous development.*
- o Report progress, needs, and recommendations to the Board and/or Executive Committee and the Executive Director.*
- o Liaison with other community organizations' DEI Chairs.*
- o Ensure meeting agendas, minutes, and critical documents are archived correctly and accessible to the appropriate parties (i.e Executive Director, Board of Directors, Governance Committee, and Human Resources Manager/Director).*

Meetings and Decisions

- o The DEI committee will meet at least eight times per year. The committee may meet more frequently at the discretion of the committee and needs of the organization.*

- o Meetings of the Committee may be held remotely, using a means that allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear and speak to each other. In-person meetings will be at the discretion of the committee members.
- o A simple majority (51% or more) of Committee members will constitute a quorum at any point in time.

Reporting

- o The co-chairs will ensure that minutes are taken at each meeting and will include a summary report. These will be provided to the Board and Executive Director following each meeting.
- o Committee minutes may be taken by any committee member but must be submitted to the Board and Executive Director by the co-chairs.

Authority

- o The Committee shall have full access to books, records, facilities, and personnel of SOS as deemed necessary or appropriate by the Committee to discharge its responsibilities, and to investigate any matter brought to its attention within the scope of its duties. Personnel records, due to privacy issues, will be provided when necessary to the committee without names.
- o The Committee will strive to put emphasis on inclusion by encouraging the highest level of integrity and refusing to tolerate retaliation against people bringing forth concerns in good faith.
- o The Committee, when needed, and with the approval of the Board, may obtain advice and assistance from in-house or outside counsel, accounting and other advisors as the committee deems necessary.
- o Given that the DEI Joint Committee is a standing Committee of the Board, and composed of staff and Board members, when the DEI Committee makes a decision, it will be in the form of a recommendation to the Executive Committee and/or the Executive director. Recommendations that affect Board policy or actions will go to the Board through the Executive Committee who may request that the co-chairs present them to the full Board. Recommendations that affect Staff (including volunteers) policies, actions, and activities will be made to the Executive Director by the co-chairs or through a meeting with the full DEI Committee when appropriate. *Actions regarding the selection of DEI training are within the purview of the Committee.*

Definitions and Terminology

The terms below are given to create clarity around language used in the SOS DEI charter. This brief glossary is provided to recognize the need for common vocabulary and avoid misinterpretations as we aim to promote a safe, diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, as we recognize that language is continuously evolving.

- **Belonging:** is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work, school, and other environments.
- **Diversity:** Socially, it refers to the wide range of identities. It broadly includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. It also involves different ideas, perspectives and values.
- **Discrimination:** The unequal treatment of members of various groups, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favors one group over others on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, religion and other categories.
- **Equity:** The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is necessary to provide equal opportunities to all groups.
- **Inclusion:** The act of creating an environment in which any individual or group will be welcomed, respected, supported and valued as a fully participating member. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces and respects differences.
- **Multicultural Competency:** A process of embracing diversity and learning about people from other cultural backgrounds. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learn from them.
- **Social Identities:** can be defined as groups that are based on the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. They are sometimes obvious and clear– sometimes not–often self-claimed, and frequently ascribed by others. Examples of social identities are race/ethnicity, gender, social class/socioeconomic status, sexual orientation/attractiveness, (dis)abilities, and religion/religious beliefs.
- **Social Justice:** Social justice constitutes a form of activism, based on principles of equity and inclusion that encompasses a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others.