



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF GREATER LOWELL

Equity Action Plan

“It’s up to all of us — Black, white, everyone — no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out.”

— Michelle Obama

About this plan:

In June of 2020, the staff and Board of Directors at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell recognized the need to create a formalized plan to identify and take action towards ending systemic racism and inequity in our community.

We examined all aspects of our programming and business model to find areas where there were potential inequities and identify ways to remedy these. In addition, we have considered where we can amplify the lived experiences and voices of our Club members who come from marginalized communities in order to create a more equitable community where they can be seen and treated as the amazing individuals that they are.

The following plan is a working document that outlines the goals and strategies we will take in order to be part of the change that our youth deserve.

Core Principles that are universal to this plan:

Centering youth voice

Co-creating a safe and brave space

Using our privilege, individually and organizationally

Core Principles that are universal to this plan:

Centering youth voice: Ensure that youth priorities guide all staff implementation and all supporter investment.

Co-creating a safe and brave space: Encourage dialogue among youth, staff, and community that ensures learning and respect, recognizing that it may also cause discomfort.

Using our privilege, individually and organizationally: Understand how our identity may contribute to injustice, and use the power of our identity to work toward justice.

“The beauty of anti-racism is that you don’t have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it’s the only way forward.”

— Ijeoma Oluo



This plan is divided into 8 pillars of action, each with its own set of goals and strategies to achieve those goals. Those goals and strategies are shared on the following pages.

- 1) **Youth Support:** We honor our Club members' lived experience to ensure they are provided opportunities to share their experiences through various platforms. We will ensure that they have access to support from caring adults at the Club and through community resources.
- 2) **Youth Voice:** We create space for our teens, especially those from marginalized communities, to build both skills and confidence in order to amplify their voices. We increase their access to tools to effect systemic change, and we use our organizational access to connect members with representatives, attend community rallies, and strive for change.
- 3) **Brave Space:** We create an environment of inclusion, acceptance, kindness for our members, volunteers, staff and stakeholders. We ensure a space that has no room for racism or discrimination of any kind.
- 4) **Communications:** We seek out and share resources for dialogue on race, supporting trauma-informed mental health, and positive allyship. We use our platforms to amplify the voices of marginalized community members.

5) **Human Resources:** We examine our hiring practices, professional development, compensation, and promotion practices to minimize opportunities for bias to affect outcomes. We recruit team members who are representative of our community at all levels of the organization. We conduct more outreach to communities of color and make job opportunities more accessible to all. We ensure that our team has the proper cultural competency and anti-racism training.

6) **Volunteers:** We expand and ensure the diversity of volunteers on our boards, our committees, in program areas, and on our parent council. We prioritize volunteers who have similar backgrounds and experiences to the youth who we serve and refine our outreach practices to reach them.

7) **Social Connections:** We intentionally connect people of color / marginalized identities to power structures where we have influence (including fundraising events, committees, and task forces) to support power-building across the community.

8) **Fundraising:** We ensure that fundraising practices are fair and equitable, and we recognize our donors, staff, volunteers, and families as partners in our vision to end generational poverty.

Equity Action Plan Pillar #1

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Goal

Become a trauma-informed organization that takes into consideration the impact of trauma on behavior and youth development, especially as it relates to discipline, outreach, and referrals.

Provide opportunities for Club members to learn coping skills and 21st-century life skills that support outcomes toward breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

Ensure that all Club members feel represented, respected, and heard by peers, Staff, and volunteers when engaging in programs, embodying the Club Love intention.

Strategy

- Create a road map for becoming a trauma-informed organization
- Provide mentoring as appropriate for Club members based on need
- Incorporate specific ways to build diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging into ongoing programs
- Work with external facilitators who bring relevant professional and lived experience
- Participate in national BGCA Youth for Unity programming (CY2021)



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Goal

Ensure that all caregivers feel represented, respected, and heard by Staff, and volunteers through various platforms of communication that create positive relationships with the Club team and other parents. Relationships lead to referrals and connections with community partners to uplift families to their full potential.

Strategy

- Establish systems that ensure continuity of support for families - both support by Club staff and peer/community support of one another

Equity Action Plan Pillar #2

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Youth Voice: We create space for our teens, especially those from marginalized communities, to build both skills and confidence in order to amplify their voices. We increase their access to tools to effect systemic change, and we use our organizational access to connect members with representatives, attend community rallies, and strive for change.

Goal

Ensure feedback loops and processes by which youth input evaluates and informs our programming and effectiveness.

Use the Club's platforms to elevate youth voices in external communications.

Use the Club's platforms to position and recognize youth as experts in identifying and offering solutions to issues that most directly affect them.

Strategy

- Use youth feedback in programming
- Use youth feedback in equity strategies and practices
- Identify opportunities to include youth voices directly in events, media and social media, and press coverage
- Increase the number of teens who have the opportunity to be “in the room where it happens” by serving on committees, task forces or events - both internally at the Club and externally in community and advocacy work

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

~Martin Luther King, Jr

Equity Action Plan Pillar #3

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Goal

Ensure that the Club's physical space is accessible and equitable, as well as safe, for all users.

Establish learning and development plans that build individual and collective understanding of key inclusion and equity issues.

Establish organizational policies and procedures that intentionally counter institutional discrimination, and instead promote inclusivity, diversity, and safe, brave space for all.

Strategy

- Conduct an accessibility audit and workplan to address any outstanding issues
- Establish on-boarding and annual staff training plans
- Audit and improve Human Resources policies - see separate section
- Ensure supervisor training in addressing concerns or complaints related to bias, harassment, or discrimination
- Establish an internal Equity Team that sets the equity agenda for the organization and holds the team accountable to both goals and behaviors



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Goal

Center youth and staff lived experiences in ongoing equity planning and policy work.

Strategy

- Conduct an annual survey of stakeholder groups: staff, youth, board, volunteer, and caregivers. Use this feedback to assess, improve, and enhance the annual equity workplan

Equity Action Plan Pillar #4

Communications: We seek out and share resources for dialogue on race, supporting trauma-informed mental health, and positive allyship.

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Goal

Use the Club's platform and reach to increase visibility of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ assets, resources, and expertise, as well as those of other marginalized communities.

Gather and share resources to keep equity-related education and momentum at the forefront of Club messaging.

Address equity priorities and values in highly-visible organizational collateral.

Strategy

- Create and execute a plan for regular, consistent and on-going sharing of resources and statements using our platforms - including social media, newsletters, and Board communications
- Create a space and organizational system on the drive where all can store and share resources. Collect a library of at least 100 resources, which would allow us to share 2x per week for a year
- Create a prominent / top-level page on website to share equity resources, including recommendations from youth, staff, and supporters
- Increase educational communications about broader topics - eg, how race and socioeconomics connect for our young people



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Goal

Portray Club members and families in respectful, empowering, and strengths-based stories and imagery.

Increase accessibility of our communications.

Strategy

- Co-create with youth a guide for ethical storytelling and communications
- Formalize a style guide that includes equitable language as well as storytelling guidance
- Improve policies and practices for online accessibility, in particular - eg, video captions, image descriptions / alt-text, transcripts



IN THIS TRUTH, IN THIS
FAITH WE TRUST.
FOR WHILE WE HAVE OUR
EYES ON THE FUTURE,
HISTORY HAS ITS EYES ON US.
—AMANDA GORMAN

Equity Action Plan Pillar #5

Human Resources: We examine our hiring practices, professional development, compensation, and promotion practices to minimize opportunities for bias to affect outcomes.

We recruit team members who are representative of our community at all levels of the organization.

We conduct more outreach to communities of color and make job opportunities more accessible to all.

We ensure that our team has the proper cultural competency and anti-racism training.



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Goal

Ensure that recruitment, hiring and retention policies reflect best practices for inclusive staffing at all levels of the organization.

Identify specific recruitment practices, networks, and advocates to reach target communities or skill sets (eg, language proficiency).

Establish shared training suite for onboarding staff at all levels.

Develop ongoing DEI education and training for all levels of the organization, from Board leadership to seasonal staff.

Strategy

- Implement best practices such as:
 - Uniform job posting template
 - Inclusion of compensation range
 - Resumes reviewed without applicant name



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Goal

Create a diverse, inclusive organization whose staff team reflects the service community.

Ensure a clear policy and process for any complaints or grievances.

Cultivate an organizational culture that does not accept any discrimination, and which acts immediately to support affected parties and to address responsible parties.

Establish ongoing demographic/self-identifying data collection processes, for internal benchmarking and external reporting when required.

Strategy

- Create a matrix of any key skills or competencies that are essential for team-level representation - eg, language proficiency, cultural context
- Create a concise process that allows for a phased approach to resolving situations and ensures safety for the person(s) issuing the complaint
- Develop and implement a supervisor training for very specific situational responses, to help managers identify, intervene, discipline and teach skills for interrupting bias

Equity Action Plan Pillar # 6

Volunteers: We expand and ensure the diversity of volunteers on our boards, our committees, in program areas, and on our parent council.

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Goal

Ensure that BIPOC/LBGTQIA+ folks have equal rights, power and influence in the governance of our organization.

Create education, systems or tools to reinforce the positives and improve on the places where we can do better.

Better engage and motivate diverse volunteers.

Strategy

- Empower the DEI Committee of the Board to use best practices, data and feedback to create DEI goals that the entire board will need to work to implement
- Update Board Member criteria to ensure proportional representation of key demographic groups including in board and committee leadership



“...to do nothing in the face of
injustice or inequity is to allow
the injustice and inequity
to persist.”

– Ibram X. Kendi

Equity Action Plan Pillar # 7

Social Connections: We intentionally connect people of color / marginalized identities to power structures where we have influence (including fundraising events, committees, and task forces) to support power-building across the community.



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Goal

Connect Club members, alumni, partners and staff of marginalized identities to the community.

Diversify the Club's vendors in order to distribute our financial resources more equitably.

Strategy

- Track, prioritize, and refer opportunities to attend events or represent the Club externally
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for staff, volunteers, partners and young alumni to build relationships with the Board of Directors and other community leaders
- Create internal guidelines for vendor selection that includes diversification
- Identify, use and share "minority-owned" business resources



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Goal

Create safe spaces for community members to diversify their social circles and build new relationships with people who have access to other networks, power, and resources.

Lead by example in systematizing board/leadership representation among other organizations, networks, and centers of social capital.

Strategy

- Recruit, refer and support diverse candidates for leadership and professional development opportunities beyond the Club
- Leverage the Club's network to increase representation on other community boards, task forces, and leadership development opportunities
- Assess and encourage the diversity of groups within the Club's network
- Reflect on roles that the Club's white leadership hold and opportunities to make space for leaders with most relevant lived experience or representative identities

Equity Action Plan Pillar # 8

Fundraising: We ensure that fundraising practices are fair and equitable, and we recognize our donors, staff, volunteers, and families as partners in our vision to end generational poverty.



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Goal

Ensure that policies and practices around donor relations leave no room for discrimination, harassment, or bias on the part of donors or staff.

Modify "traditional" fundraising practices to improve equity and strengths-based storytelling.

Strategy

- Establish a gift acceptance policy that affirms our ability to refuse a gift that is based on discriminatory practices or behaviors, or a gift from a source that acts against our organizational values
- Confirm that all HR practices and complaint procedures are clearly applicable to addressing discrimination or harassment by donors or volunteers, as well as other community members
- Establish guidelines for compensation of members' storytelling and fundraising event participation
- Develop a tour framework and talking points that position donors as partners rather than "saviors"
- Create equitable donor recognition policies that are not based on wealth or contribution levels



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Goal

Increase the diversity of our donor base to better reflect Club membership.

Use our resources to support the fundraising efforts of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ led organizations.

Strategy

- Expand our fundraising methods and asks to align with a wider range of donor needs and goals
- Advocate for and amplify BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ businesses, organizations, and community groups that also support our youth and families

None of us alone can save the nation or the world. But each of us can make a positive difference if we commit ourselves to do so.

Dr. Cornel West