

WEGE FOUNDATION DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

(Final – Approved April 12, 2017)

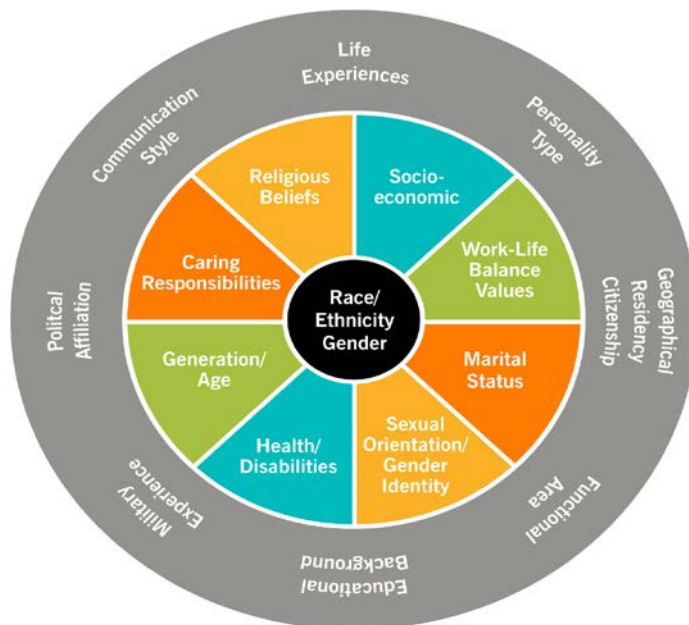
Origin & History

This policy is premised on the commitment by the Foundation’s founder, Peter M. Wege, to “ethics” and “empathy” as two of the “six Es” he used to explain the term “Economicology,” which he coined. (The other “Es” are Education, Environment, Ecology & Economy.) Mr. Wege was dedicated to Grand Rapids becoming “the best medium-sized city in the U.S.,” which is achievable only if all the metropolitan area population are fairly treated, have equitable opportunities, and if the continuing legacy of racism, disparities of power, discrimination and mistreatment of disadvantaged groups is honestly and effectively eliminated.

General Statement of Commitment

West Michigan’s spirit, vitality, success and character depend on the increasingly diverse mix of people who live and work in and who visit our community. The Wege Foundation recognizes that the future strength of our organization and our community rests firmly on its commitment to value, respect, and embrace the richness of a diverse population. The Foundation also recognizes the variety of motives, including faith perspectives, that animate an ongoing struggle for justice and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The Foundation seeks to enhance the quality of life for all residents and visitors in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area as this dynamic community continues to grow and change. The Foundation’s ability to achieve this goal and to foster a commitment to organizational excellence can best be pursued with intentional diversity among its governing body, workforce, grantees, donors, vendors and partners.

Defining Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



The Wege Foundation believes diversity encompasses, but is not limited to, ethnicity, race, color, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, immigration status, economic circumstances, physical and mental abilities and characteristics, faith tradition and philosophy (see, e.g. figure above; referred to below as “diversity characteristics”). The Foundation respects and celebrates all forms of diversity that contribute to a healthy, caring and thriving community. To this end, the Wege Foundation is committed to changing in order to become a more welcoming partner to groups with diverse cultures, philosophies, worldviews and experiences. The Foundation understands diversity, equity and inclusion to be interrelated as illustrated below:



Figures Above From “Building the Bridge for Diversity and Inclusion: Testing a Regional Strategy;” The Foundation Review 2:2 (2010)

Governance and Administration

The Wege Foundation is committed to fostering an organization that respects and appreciates diversity in its many forms. Consistent with its governing legal structure:

1. The Board of Trustees will seek to engage community representatives in decision-making and advisory roles who will bring diversity and varying points of view and life experiences to the Board;
2. The Board will hold itself and the CEO accountable for hiring professional staff that reflect the broad diversity of the community and will provide all staff members with opportunities to develop fully their work-related skills and talents;
3. The Foundation will offer a comparable package of benefits to all employees regardless of diversity characteristics, including benefits for domestic partners to the same extent as offered to married couples as allowed by law and as available through insurance providers and for adopted children and stepchildren to the same extent as biological children;
4. The Foundation will respect the observation of religious holidays and make reasonable accommodations for staff of all faith traditions to observe religious practice;

5. The Foundation will retain a diverse group of product and service vendors, including investment advisers and managers, and will select vendors committed to promoting a diverse workplace and community; and,
6. The Board will work with the CEO to develop and regularly report on meaningful metrics and performance measures by which to assess progress in implementing this Policy.

Community Partners

The Wege Foundation values organizations within our community that share a commitment to promoting the diversity, equity and inclusion of all people – newcomers and long-time residents.

The Foundation will:

1. Seek partners in philanthropy, not-for-profit organizations, government, corporations and the private sector that incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into their missions and into their daily practice;
2. Actively encourage diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices among organizations with which the Foundation works, including in all affinity groups of which the Foundation is a member or in which Foundation staff participate; and,
3. Collaborate with donors of varying means and interests to promote a healthy, caring community committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Grantmaking

As provided in its Grantmaking Policy, the Foundation's grants will focus on the five strategic priorities, or "pillars," identified by the donor, Peter M. Wege: (1) Education; (2) Environment; (3) Arts and Culture; (4) Health; and (5) Community Service. This Policy also provides that 80% of the Foundation's grantmaking will be focused on the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The Foundation's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion will be an overarching theme across all of these topical and geographic priorities, with programmatic, convening and capacity-building support available for implementing this theme. The Foundation believes that organizations that are more diverse and inclusive are stronger and more likely to succeed in achieving their missions. The Foundation seeks to be an agent of change in working with and learning from its grantees in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion and its staff will be proactive in seeking out grant applicants dedicated to this goal.

Consistent with its Grantmaking Policy the Wege Foundation will require of all grant applicants:

1. Submission of board-approved diversity, equity and inclusion policies and a description of the ways in which the organization is continuously and intentionally enhancing its inclusive practices;

2. Submission of key demographic information about composition of the board, staff, volunteers and constituencies served unless precluded by individual privacy concerns;
3. Affirmation that no person is excluded from services based on the diversity characteristics described above; and,
4. Affirmation that no person is excluded from governance, employment or volunteer participation based on the diversity characteristics described above.

The Wege Foundation will strongly encourage *all* organizations to which it provides resources or support to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion as defined in this Policy. The Wege Foundation appreciates that faith-based organizations have played and continue to play important roles in delivering programs and services and in advancing the situation of disadvantaged groups and individuals. Some of these organizations require doctrinal alignment by staff, volunteers or those in governance and leadership positions, which includes views less inclusive than articulated in this Policy. While the Foundation will consider grant applications from such organizations, applicants will be evaluated based on the vibrancy of ongoing deliberations about these issues and on their ability to identify distinctive ways in which specific programs for which funding is sought implement the Foundation's mission and goals and advance the situation of disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Organizations that serve a specifically defined population at need or charitable class of persons are not considered non-inclusive or discriminatory.

Foundation staff will periodically evaluate the diversity, equity and inclusion practices of grantees and will report on the results to the Board of Trustees.

Communications & Perceptions

The Foundation will actively promote awareness of its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, including featuring it prominently on its web site and in other communications. The Foundation will regularly evaluate perceptions of its grantmaking – in general and, specifically – concerning its diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices.

Continuous Learning and Improvement.

The Wege Foundation is committed to rigorous review of and continuous improvement in its diversity, equity and inclusion practices. The Foundation will actively seek to learn from others and share what it learns. The Foundation staff will seek out learning opportunities about best practices in enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion. The Board of Trustees will regularly review progress in implementing this Policy based on meaningful metrics and performance measures, evaluate new learning and the practices of peer organizations, and will update this Policy as needed to incorporate best practices and continuously serve as a community leader in this important field.