Wayside is objectively one of the most committed to diversity and inclusion organizations in our field. In fact Wayside ranks in the 88th percentile of agencies nationally in staff satisfaction with our commitment to diversity. However, there is no easy solution to ensuring equity in the workplace, and we have started the hard work of shaping our organization into a committed leader for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

**From the mind to the heart.** We aim support our staff learning and bringing learning to the community on topics such as:  defined racism, microaggressions (a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group), white privilege (the historical roots of systemic oppression), and white fragility (defense mechanisms to avoid dealing with racial stress).

Knowing the definition does not automatically enable folks to talk about experiencing these things, fixing them, providing a remedy, or connecting with someone who is living those experiences.  We need to offer training about learning how to feel rather than learning how to know. We believe the work of our VCR Champions in teaching and communication the work of Dr. Kenneth Hardy will help our teams at all our sites hold conversations and space to grow as an anti-racist anti- oppression agency. We understand that change often means to sit with emotion, to be uncomfortable, and learn how to slow down the conversation long enough to connect with the reality and totality of racism/systems of oppression.

**The framework.** DEI is Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. It outlines three phases of DEI through an organizational focus, leadership, and strategies, as follows:

• 101: Diversity - when leaders are awake to the importance of diversity, and the organization starts building a diverse workforce by focusing on recruitment and retention.

• 201: Inclusion - when leaders become woke about social issues and injustices, and the organization focuses on creating an inclusive culture by viewing and managing cultural change.

• 301: Equity - when leaders are doing the work to become anti-racist/anti-oppression, and the organization is driving equity inside and outside the organization by addressing structural and institutional oppression.

Examples Are:

* Wayside’s organizational strategy has vigorously embraced the importance of organizational diversity and inclusion and has focused on recruitment and retention efforts to build and develop our workforce (101).
* The leadership (through instituting and supporting the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee), has started looking towards ways of building an inclusive work environment (201).
* The strategic goal would be to move to equity and dismantling structural and institutional oppression (301).

**The circle of trust.** We support the work or creating a Brave Safe Space that honors the individual and the core values of our agency. We believe this effort will increase trust  we support a foundation of principals that inform our spaces :

1. We offer a Brave / Safe Space : we ask all folks to remain committed to work of change. The willingness to speak to all “ISMS” Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, Transphobia, Ableism etc.
2. Listen Actively (phone aside)
3. Respect Everyone’s voice
4. Speak from one’s own experience instead of generalizing (Use the “I message” instead of “they”. “we” & “you”
5. Be able to notice and change body language and nonverbal messages
6. Getting more comfortable with discomfort
7. Leave training or conversations about oppression with questions
8. “Turn the stone” : think of this work as a stone in your pocket you keep turning it to see all the side to notice all the parts to consider all the feelings
9. We offer something can be Both / And – at Wayside we are nuanced thinkers and know there are many parts
10. Step Up/ Step Back : Talkers can step back and listen and Quiet Ones we encourage you to step forward
11. We acknowledge and apply the Tasks of the Privileged and The Tasks of the Subjugated in all of our work
12. We agree with Dr. Hardy that the container of all this work exists in the relationship even if the relationship is small the work matters.

**The skunk at the garden party** starts the courageous conversation. We begin with a circle of trust and once established, then it becomes okay to be the “skunk at the garden party”. It feels safe to acknowledge the elephant in the room, and “call in” (challenge to participate and grow) when something seems wrong. A microaggression, diversity disparity, or even an incorrect administrative form, warrant a discussion. No matter how big or how small, if no one is willing to speak up and call it out, it could be overlooked. Wayside leadership is committed to addressing our community’s concerns, and hope that folks will speak up and engage us in discussion.

**We listen.** For some the “calling in” is the hard part, for others the listening to this feedback without rejecting it, offering back stories of intentions or motivations, or becoming “hurt” by honest appraisal of behavior. The ability to hear feedback is the sign of emotional intelligence.

**Social capital.** For Wayside, this refers to establishing trust-based networks of people to foster a culture of trust and reciprocity. We encourage folks to develop strong and high-quality relationships. There is a value to these networks (i.e. jobs, information, support, etc.), and Wayside supports the building of this social capital between our staff and our clients. Our goal is to build bridges between diverse people.

**An equity lens.** Wayside aims to evaluate our strategy and day-to-day activities through an equity lens. Are our forms in all our clients’ languages? Does our leave policy work for all of our staff? Do our performance evaluations guard against implicit bias? Does our Board of Directors reflect our clients and our staff? Who participates in decision-making? Are we willing to continuously do this work? Wayside’s goal is to work towards answering the above questions with equity always in mind.

**Data and accountability.** I need you, the members of the Wayside community, to hold me and every level of Wayside accountable to this work. Senior Team is taking stock of the work we have done so far, and we ask for your feedback and participation.

We need your voice at the table & these are the ways you can help:

* Take our surveys and answer honestly and directly
* Email me with suggestions
* Share what you are doing in your own life to become anti-racist.
* Tell us about a climate where there is of lack of trust.
* Engage in courageous conversations
* Report back the lessons learned.

Wayside can continue to grow into a strong, model organization that exemplifies Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the ultimate benefit of our clients, the community and ourselves.

Wayside will do the work to become an anti-racist, social justice, and advocacy organization that provides mental health services to children and families.