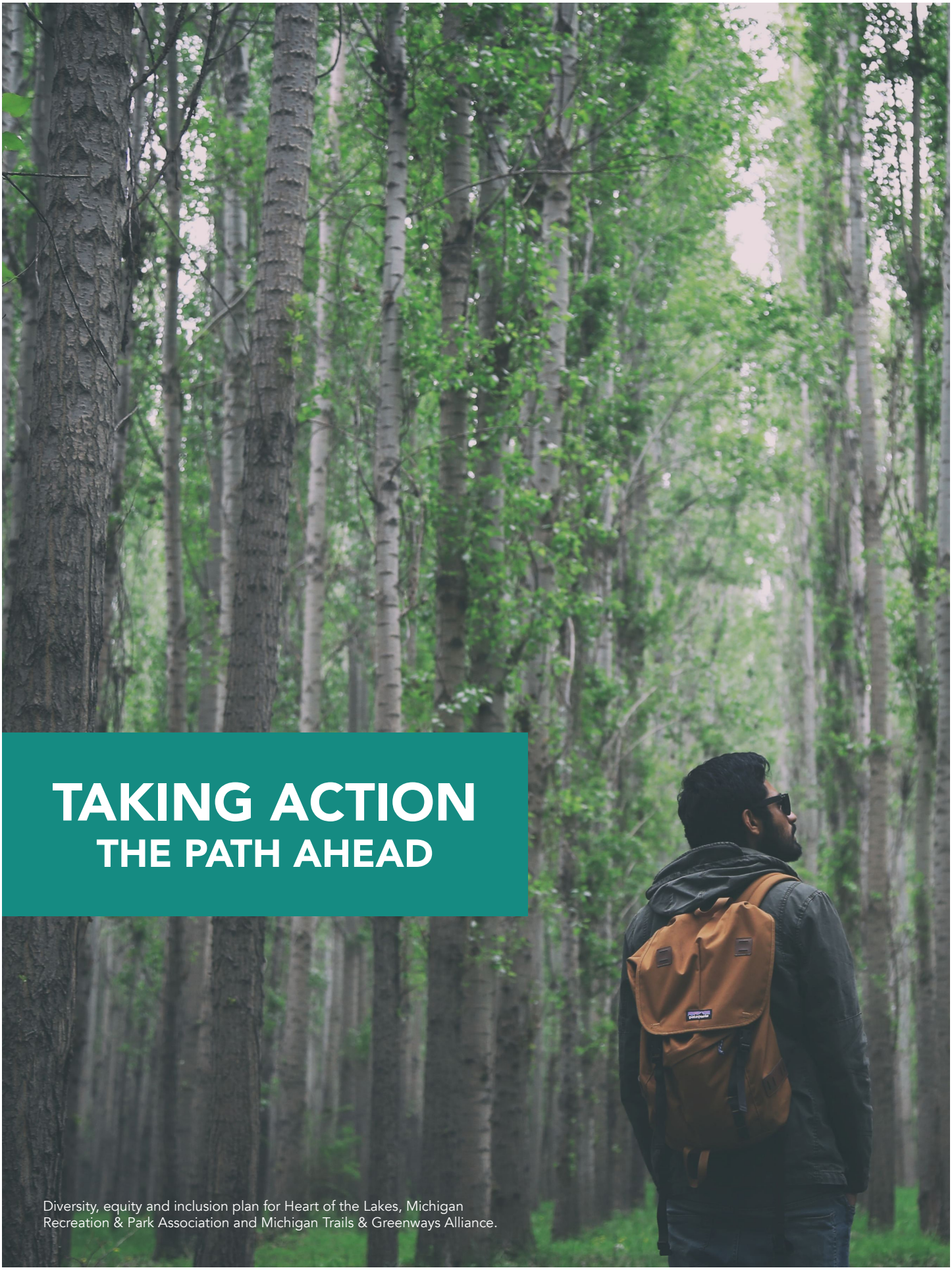


TAKING ACTION
THE PATH AHEAD

Diversity, equity and inclusion plan for Heart of the Lakes, Michigan Recreation & Park Association and Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance.

ENGAGE
TEAM & CULTURE

Develop and implement an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, respect, trust, engagement, cultural sensitivity and cultural humanity.

- Embolden/promote different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds to create stronger and more resourceful work.
- Implement policies, procedures and cultural norms that foster trust, open communication and accountability
- Ensure that equitable practices exist for recruiting, hiring, developing and promoting staff, interns and volunteers.
- Provide professional development opportunities for board, staff, interns and volunteers to learn to recognize unconscious biases and to develop and increase cultural humility.
- Conduct an annual review of board diversity, equity and inclusion composition and culture by the Executive Board Committee.

To be enagaged, you must feel included and valued.

CREATE
WELCOMING SPACES

Create a culture of recognition, respect and celebration for diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Promote equitable access to Michigan's public lands, trails, and parks and facilities as an engagement method to build relationships with partner organizations and under-served communities.
- Identify and implement community-oriented, cross-cultural programs and projects that provide multiple benefits that serve and represent Michigan.
- Identify acquisition and development projects that meet an established need for open space, parks or recreational facilities for areas lacking in these services.
- Apply outreach efforts and create opportunities to attract diverse employees, board members, interns and volunteers.

CONCEPTS
IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Allyship: A philosophy rooted in action; it demands doing what is necessary to recognize and subvert systems of oppression. Allyship is a process, is based on trust and accountability, looks different for everyone based on you identities, experiences, and spheres of influence and is not self-defined (i.e., you don't to label yourself as an "ally").

Cultural competence(y): The ability to interact effectively across various facets of diversity, to flex with differences. Cultural competence is what we need to be inclusive. It requires (1) being self-aware of your own culture, assumptions, values, styles, biases, attitudes, privilege, etc.; (2) understanding others' cultures, assumptions, values, styles, biases, attitudes, privilege, etc.; and (3) based on this knowledge, understanding your potential impact on others and interacting with them in a situationally appropriate way.

Colorblindness: The process by which a person attempts to ignore the existence of race or skin color in service of seeing past race and just seeing the person. This de-emphasizing of race, however, ignores the real, lived experience of people of color in the US and ignores their experience.

Confirmation Bias: Our tendency to interpret information based on a way that confirms our own previous beliefs and experiences.

Culture: A set of shared ideas, customs, traditions, beliefs, and practices shared by a group of people that is constantly changing, in subtle and major ways.

Diversity: The differences among us based on which we experience systemic advantages or encounter systemic barriers in access to opportunities and resources. Race and ethnicity is not the only way in which we are diverse as a group. There are countless visible and invisible facets of diversity. Furthermore, a person cannot be "diverse" (as in "diverse candidate"). Diversity is the outcome of inclusion and equity efforts.

Equity: An approach based in fairness to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources. In practice, it ensures everyone is given equal opportunity to thrive; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person can access an opportunity. Equity takes into account that people have different access to resources because of system of oppression and privilege. Equity seeks to balance that disparity.

Ethnicity: A group of people who identify with one another based on shared culture.

Inclusion: Celebrating, centering and amplifying the perspectives, voices, values and needs of people who experience systemic barriers, mistreatment or disadvantages based on their identities in order to ensure they feel a sense of belonging. Inclusion is not merely tolerating or accommodating differences; it's about actively valuing and honoring it. Inclusion is also not about surmounting, overcoming or transcending differences to focus on "our common humanity." Diversity is what we are and inclusion is what we do.

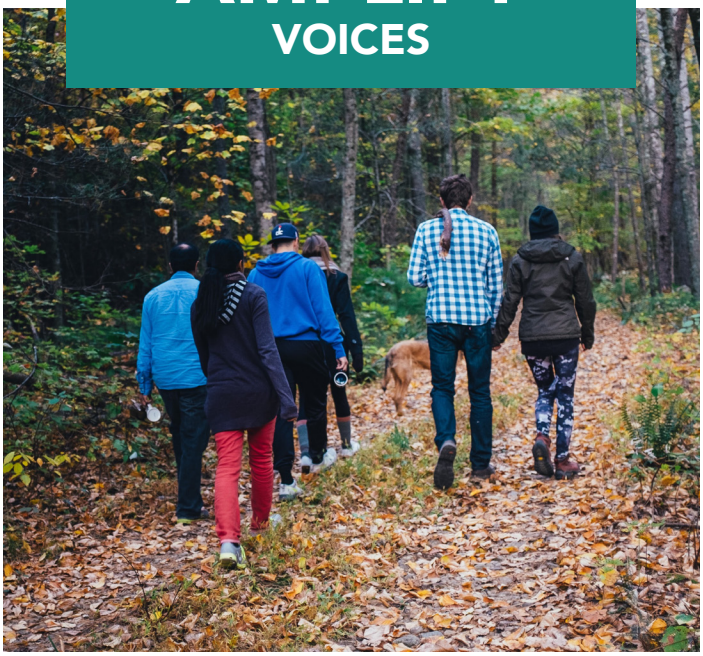
Indigenous: Also known as first peoples, aboriginal peoples, native peoples or autochthonous peoples, indigenous people are ethnic groups who are descended from and identify with the original inhabitants of a given region, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied or colonized the area more recently.

Justice: Justice involves dismantling systems of oppression and privilege that create systemic disadvantages and barriers to people's ability to access resources and opportunities (e.g., the "isms") or based on which people experience systemic mistreatment. Whereas equity is about reapportioning or redistributing resources so people can access opportunities, justice is about dismantling barriers to those opportunities.

People of color: This term is a blanket term to include those who do not identify as only white or Caucasian. This is the preferred and most inclusive term, currently.

Unconscious Bias: Unconscious, subtle, involuntary assumptions or judgments we make every day based on our prior experiences and culture.

AMPLIFY
VOICES



Communicate in a way that reflects our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Reflect our values of diversity, equity and inclusion in our work/actions/communications.
- Listen to and act on the needs and interests of audiences, key stakeholders and communities historically excluded from the conservation and recreation field.
- Build/grow/strengthen relationships with diverse community members to identify shared values.
- Appeal to diverse audiences by crafting inclusive messages.
- Craft inclusive messages and expand channels of communication to connect with diverse audiences.

TRANSFORM
& INSPIRE

Build and maintain strategic partnerships with community groups, organizations, businesses and individuals.

- Develop relationships with community partners who represent, serve and/or engage with Michigan's diverse residents.
- Provide equitable access to Heart of the Lakes', mParks and MTGA's resources and expertise.
- Collaborate with organizations in Michigan to undertake cultural resource protection
- Develop, modify or create programs and projects that serve diverse audiences.
- Engage multi-generational stakeholders and solicit feedback on the creation of a workforce development and talent pipeline.

OUR COMMITMENT

Michigan's public land and facilities are places for communities to gather and for people to exercise their bodies and minds. However, we recognize that these places can not serve their full duty if access is not equitable and representation is not diverse. Diversity in the outdoors goes beyond increasing user diversity, it starts with diversifying decision-makers, funders, stewards and programmers. We are committed to identifying these barriers to access no matter race, religion, sexual identity and orientation, age or physical ability.

Our work has been inspired by Sonoma Land Trust, Merrell, Avarna Group, diverse and powerful innovators.

Since 2017, Heart of the Lakes, Michigan Recreation & Park Association and Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance have coordinated our efforts to guide diversity, equity and inclusion for Michigan's public lands, trails, parks and recreation facilities. Together, we represent more than 2,000 organizations offering recreation services, maintaining trails and public spaces, and protecting farmland, wetlands and shoreline.

We are committed to:

- Developing and implementing an organizational culture of equity, inclusion, respect, trust, engagement, cultural sensitivity and cultural humanity.
- Creating a culture of recognition, respect and celebration for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Communicating in a way that reflects our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Building and maintaining strategic partnerships with community groups, organizations, businesses and individuals.

This work is important. It will be an ongoing endeavor and the path may not always be clear, but we are committed to meaningful change. We hope that our members, supporters, and friends will make a commitment to this change.

HEART OF THE LAKES

Parks
Michigan Recreation & Park Association

Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance