

## **Moving Toward More Inclusive Volunteer Programs**

How do we create a welcoming and inclusive environment for volunteers? The working environment is important to potential volunteers, especially during times of uncertainty. Volunteers are looking for an organization that allows them to express themselves, be safe, and feel comfortable.

Below are some steps we can take to create this environment for our volunteers:

**Change the words we use to talk about volunteering.** To reach more people, you might want to use broader, easier to translate terms such as “help” or “support.”

**Build strong local connections.** Do the necessary groundwork to meet people in the communities you plan to work with. Attend community events such as cultural fairs, community concerts, and farmers markets to connect with local community leaders and groups.

**Recognize differences in socio-economic status.** To make your events more accessible to a diverse volunteer group consider implementing programs such as free childcare at the event, arranging transportation to and from the event location, as well as providing food at the event for all volunteers.

**Recruit volunteers from the groups that use your services.** People who directly utilize and benefit from your programs are more likely to want to help and participate in your organization. Also, this may help you to better match your programs to the needs of the community.

**Remove the existing inclusion obstacles.** Understand your volunteers’ priority and allow flexibility. Provide training opportunities for staff to improve their cultural awareness and understanding.