Collective Governance and Organizational Accountability Policy

At The Marie Equi Center, we are committed to fostering a non-hierarchical, transparent, and accountable organizational structure that reflects our values of shared power, collective care, and equity. This policy outlines our approach to decision-making, financial transparency, and organizational governance, ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and community members have a voice in shaping the direction and priorities of our work.

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for collective governance and organizational accountability. This policy applies to all employees, board members, and stakeholders involved in decision-making at The Marie Equi Center and provides guidance on how we ensure inclusivity, transparency, and accountability in all aspects of our work.

2. Non-Hierarchical Decision-Making

We believe that decisions are strongest when they are informed by diverse perspectives and shaped through shared power. Our non-hierarchical approach to

decision-making is designed to promote collective ownership and ensure that all voices are heard and respected.

- **Participatory Decision-Making**:
  - We use participatory decision-making processes for organizational policies, strategic planning, and major programmatic initiatives. This involves consulting staff, volunteers, and, when applicable, community members to ensure that decisions reflect the needs and insights of those most impacted.
  - Participatory processes include all-staff meetings, collaborative working groups, and open forums where everyone has an opportunity to contribute ideas and feedback.
- **Shared Leadership**:
  - Leadership at The Marie Equi Center is shared across teams and roles, with responsibilities distributed according to expertise, interest, and capacity rather than hierarchy. Teams have the autonomy to make decisions relevant to their areas of work, within the framework of our organizational mission and values.
  - While certain roles, such as those in management or direct service, may have specific decision-making authority, we strive to create a culture where power is shared, and leadership is accessible to all.
- **Consensus-Building Models**:
  - When making significant organizational decisions, we prioritize consensus-building models that seek to create alignment and buy-in among all stakeholders. Consensus does not always mean unanimous agreement but reflects a commitment to finding solutions that meet the core needs of all involved.

3. Structures for Transparency

Transparency is essential to building trust and fostering accountability. We are committed to maintaining open communication and providing access to information about how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and policies are implemented.

- **Financial Transparency**:
  - **Open Books Policy**: We maintain an open books policy, ensuring that all employees have access to financial information, including revenue, expenses, and budgets. Financial statements are shared with staff during quarterly updates, and questions or concerns are welcomed. ○ **Budgeting Transparency**: The annual budgeting process is participatory and transparent. Staff are invited to provide input on budget priorities, and detailed information on how funds are allocated is shared during budgeting meetings. This process ensures that our financial decisions reflect the needs and priorities of the organization and the communities we serve.
- **Governance Reporting**:
  - We provide regular updates on key governance decisions, including policy changes, strategic planning outcomes, and board activities. These updates are shared through all-staff meetings, email communications, and our internal communication platform.
  - Staff are encouraged to engage with governance processes, ask questions, and provide feedback to ensure that decisions are being made in alignment with our values and commitments.

- **Compensation Transparency**:
    - We maintain a transparent salary structure that is shared with all staff. Compensation decisions, including wage adjustments and benefits, are based on objective criteria such as performance evaluations, experience, and role responsibilities. We regularly review our salary structure to ensure pay equity and consistency across the organization.

4. Organizational Accountability Mechanisms

Our approach to organizational accountability is built on the understanding that we are collectively responsible for upholding our mission and values. We have established internal and external mechanisms to ensure that we remain aligned with our commitments to staff, volunteers, and the broader community.

- **Accountability to Mission and Values**:
    - All staff and board members are responsible for upholding The Marie Equi Center's mission and values in their work. This includes regularly reflecting on how our practices align with our commitments to equity, anti-oppression, and transformative justice.
    - We use organizational retreats, strategic planning sessions, and annual reviews as opportunities to assess our alignment and make necessary adjustments.
- ***FUTURE* Community Review Boards and Advisory Committees**:

- To ensure that our work is responsive to community needs, we engage external stakeholders through community review boards or advisory committees. These bodies are composed of community members, staff representatives, and individuals with expertise relevant to our work. ○ Advisory committees provide input on strategic priorities, offer recommendations, and hold the organization accountable to its stated goals and values. They serve as a critical feedback loop to ensure that we remain grounded in the communities we serve.

- **Internal Feedback and Evaluation**:
  - Internally, we conduct regular feedback sessions where staff can speak openly about organizational strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. This includes staff surveys, focus groups, and feedback forms that are designed to be accessible and anonymous if desired.
  - We are committed to acting on the feedback we receive, using it to inform policy adjustments, leadership practices, and organizational culture.

5. Collective Growth and Continuous Improvement

We view collective governance and accountability as ongoing processes that require continuous reflection and adaptation. Our commitment to collective growth means that we are always seeking to learn from our experiences, refine our practices, and deepen our alignment with our mission and values.

- **Commitment to Learning**:
  - We provide regular training and education on collective governance,

anti-oppressive leadership, and participatory decision-making. These opportunities are available to all staff and are integrated into our onboarding and staff development.

- **Regular Policy Review**:
  - This policy, along with our other governance policies, will be reviewed annually to ensure that it reflects current best practices and the evolving needs of the organization. Staff and community members are encouraged to provide input on policy updates and revisions.

Commitment to Collective Accountability

By centering collective governance and transparency, The Marie Equi Center aims to create an environment where all staff are empowered to participate in decision-making, and where we are accountable to the communities we serve. We believe that shared power and mutual accountability are essential to building an organization that truly reflects our deepest commitments to social justice and liberation.