



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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LOCAL ORGANIZATION LAUNCHES LEADERS OF COLOR FELLOWSHIP - A DIVERSE COHORT OF LEADERS WORKING TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE, JUST, AND EQUITABLE WASHTENAW COUNTY

Washtenaw County, MI – **NEW (Nonprofit Enterprise at Work)**, a local nonprofit organization, is launching the Leaders of Color Fellowship (LOC) as part of the Champions for Change initiative. Starting in September, LOC will be a six-month program that strives to advance racial equity by providing peer-centered leadership development for black, brown and other leaders of color in Washtenaw County. LOC was developed by people living or working in Washtenaw County, and seeks to bring together a diverse cohort of people of color to be champions of change in the county.

“Our community already has incredible leaders of color. However, of the over 2300 nonprofits in Washtenaw County, fewer than 1% were led by a person of color.” said Yodit Mesfin Johnson, Chief Operating Officer at NEW. “We developed the Leaders of Color Fellowship to begin to change this by providing a space for folks to strengthen professional networks, continue to develop leadership skills, and to elevate the work they are already doing. This program will give these leaders addition tools to have an even more meaningful and lasting impact on our community.”

The LOC program was developed after a year of focus groups and conversations with people who live and work across Washtenaw County. The results of these activities were clear: by identifying, cultivating, and investing in a diverse cohort of people of color dedicated to advancing racial equity, NEW will be able to empower a new generation of change makers in our community to assume leadership positions and launch innovative equity initiatives. Development and implementation of the program was, and continues to be, funded by Washtenaw Coordinated Funders.

“Washtenaw Coordinated Funders are aligned in supporting programs that advance racial equity and that makes me proud,” remarked Washtenaw County Commissioner Felicia Brabec. “From my lens, the Leaders of Color Fellowship is a perfect fit with the county’s racial equity policy. I’m happy to see this is a shared priority.”

The application will be open until July 12, 2019. All self-identifying persons of color, 18 years or older, living or working in Washtenaw County with a demonstrated a commitment to advancing racial equity or social justice is encouraged to apply. The program is free of charge and will cover some costs for participants, such as childcare and transportation. Leaders interested in the Champions for Change programs can learn more by visiting: www.new.org/championsforchange. Applications opened on June 17, 2019.

NEW works to maximize impact and performance of nonprofits by working alongside leaders to craft high-quality strategic solutions that advance their missions in our communities. Serving hundreds of nonprofits every year, NEW is the capacity-building and resource go-to for nonprofit management in Southeast Michigan. LOC is part of NEW's "Champions of Change" initiative, which also includes the Allies Academy that equips mid and senior-level leaders with skills to lead equity focused change initiatives within their organizations. Together, the two Champions of Change programs are laying the groundwork for systemic change in our community by empowering people of color, and training allies in power to support them in their efforts to transform systems and further NEW's vision of empowered leaders, flourishing nonprofits and vibrant communities.

Washtenaw Coordinated Funders is a collaboration between the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, the City of Ann Arbor, St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor, the United Way of Washtenaw County, and the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development that aims to prevent gaps and avoid redundancies in services while streamlining application and reporting procedures. This allows funding agencies to support program operations, capacity building, and systems change across 4 priority areas (aging, housing/homelessness, health/nutrition, and cradle to career) without increasing the burden on service organizations.

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