



POAH'S INITIATIVES ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

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Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) is committed to creating housing, programs, and policies that support diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workplaces and in our communities. We are committed to working affirmatively to empower the diverse communities we serve and to continue to build a staff and board that reflects that diversity.

These commitments embrace a broad definition of diversity, including race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, and others. As affordable housing providers, however, we believe we have a special obligation to overcome decades of structural racism in United States housing and economic policies.



Below are the highlights of our accomplishments in recent years:

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Internal Working Group: In 2018, POAH formed an internal working group on DEI to guide initiatives across the organization and to evaluate implementation. This voluntary group is comprised of 12 staff representing several departments; most participants serve for three years to encourage broad-based participation. The group, which meets regularly, reflects the diversity of staff across race/ethnicity, age, disability, status, gender, sexual orientation, and others. It also includes representation across seniority levels and from each of our primary departments.

Strategic Plan: POAH's most recent strategic plan (2022-2026) integrates DEI action steps in all departments and establishes ambitious goals during the five-year plan. During the formulation of the plan, each department was charged with furthering DEI within their focus area. This work is supported at the highest level of our organization and includes periodic checkpoints for the senior staff to review progress and strategize about how their teams can continue to support DEI goals across the organization.

Staffing and Capacity: In 2021, POAH hired a full-time Human Resources professional to help coordinate DEI activities across all departments, to focus on diverse hiring and retention, and to centralize and add capacity to the efforts of the DEI working group. This role offers assistance on DEI projects across the organization; however, departments identify, initiate and carry out much of the priorities in our strategic plan.

Trainings and Learnings: Each year, POAH sponsors multiple DEI trainings for its staff. We partner with the consultant firm [Building for Mission](#) to develop customized trainings to meet the interest and needs of our staff. Key topics have included: psychological safety in the workplace; inclusive leadership; tending and healing for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color) staff; unconscious bias; microaggressions; and internalized oppression.

Additionally, POAH provides non-work opportunities for staff to connect across demographics through social gatherings, book clubs, and volunteer opportunities.

DEI Virtual Roundtables: Periodic roundtables give employees a safe forum in which people of color can discuss their feelings and current concerns about events that impact our families and communities.

Staff Onboarding: POAH has strengthened its onboarding process to ensure everyone has the tools and supports to succeed in the workplace. Supervisors undertake specific activities and protocols to ensure a successful transition during the first several months of employment. A robust intranet (SharePoint), which we update regularly, provides online tools and resources for each department.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Exit and "Stay" Interviews: POAH holds exit interviews with employees who are leaving the organization. The use of exit interviews has proven instrumental in understanding the experiences of departing employees, contributing valuable insights to enhance training offerings for managers, and ensuring that the organization remains responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of its workforce.

In 2023, POAH started conducting "stay interviews," engaging employees who have been with POAH for 2 and 5 years, respectively. These interviews serve as a tool for gauging employee satisfaction, identifying areas for improvement, and refining retention strategies.

Mentorship Program: POAH's mentorship program pairs interested staff with more experienced peers and senior colleagues who serve as their mentors. The program supports professional development, internal navigation, and other mutually defined growth goals. Mentor-mentee pairs meet regularly for one year with support and trainings.

Annual Employee Survey: POAH's annual employee survey includes a series of questions to obtain employee views on DEI progress and suggestions for improvements. We use this feedback to make changes in DEI activities each year and share the results of the survey with the board of directors and all employees.

Equitable Compensation: POAH conducts a comprehensive compensation study every three years (it is updated annually) and incorporates a DEI screen to ensure equity in pay and promotions, including race and gender.

Staff and Board Diversity: POAH has greatly increased its staff and board diversity. The percentage of people of color for central office staff has grown from 28% in 2017 to 42% in 2022 and the proportion of POAH's new annual hires who are people of color has steadily increased from 29% in 2017 to 63% in 2022. People of color and women now comprise a majority of POAH's 11-member board of directors. POAH shares annual demographic data updates with the board of directors and all employees.

EXTERNAL IMPACTS

Contracting and Partnerships: POAH has established an annual goal of spending 35% of its real estate development dollars with minority-owned business (MBE), and 10% with women-owned businesses (WBE), and a five-year goal of forming partnerships with at least 10 BIPOC-led developers. In 2022, POAH met its goal for MBEs, contracted 7% with WBEs, and worked in partnership with seven BIPOC-led developers.

POAH Communities, our property management company, has also engaged minority-owned vendors, allocating approximately \$15.3 million across 2,000 such businesses in 2023, which accounts for 8% (MBE) and 6% (WBE). We continue to form partnerships, particularly in regions where access to suppliers is more challenging.

Project Selection: POAH articulates a mission statement for each real estate development project it undertakes and evaluates new opportunities based on a DEI lens. POAH also includes DEI questions on all Requests for Proposals (RFPs) that it issues to potential financing and investment entities.

Neighborhood Redevelopment: POAH undertakes numerous comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment initiatives that seek to overcome long-standing racial and social inequities. This has included multi-year efforts in Chicago, Boston, Washington, DC, St. Louis, Miami, and other communities. POAH engages with low-income residents and partners to preserve and create new housing opportunities, foster commercial development for minority-owned business, bring new recreational, child-care, and job opportunities to the neighborhood, and enrich the cultural environment.

Diversity in the Housing and Planning Fields: POAH is a founding financial sponsor of Tufts University's Racial Equity Policy and Planning Fellowship and the Housing Partnership Network's/Project Destined Affordable Housing Bridge Program and provides placement opportunities or supports for each program. POAH staff across the country actively participate in groups seeking to diversify the real estate field, such as the African American Real Estate Professionals and Women of Color in Community Development in Washington, DC.

National Racial Equity Pledge: POAH participates in a Racial Equity Pledge with two different national organizations: Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future and the Housing Partnership Network. These commitments involve specific action steps that POAH will take in concert with our peers in the housing field across the country.

RESIDENT VOICE, ENGAGEMENT, AND ASSET-BUILDING

Resident Survey: POAH surveys its residents every two years and seeks additional feedback through pulse surveys, focus groups, and other techniques. It uses this feedback to bring specific program initiatives to each property.

Advisory Board: In 2021, POAH formed a resident advisory board that meets quarterly with senior leadership and includes representation from each of the states in which we operate.

Voter Engagement: POAH sponsors a national voter engagement initiative (POAH Votes) among our residents. Over the past two years, POAH staff have helped over 1,000 residents register to vote and get to the polls on election days. And in the lead up to last year's election, we held more than 265 voter events at our properties.

Trauma-Informed Housing: POAH's idea to design a new trauma-informed model for rental housing was recognized with a \$2.5M grant from the national Housing Affordability Breakthrough Challenge. We used these resources to directly engage residents and staff to reimagine their communities to be more welcoming, compassionate, and successful. And now we are working with staff across the organization to put their ideas into practice – from investing more time in resident leadership, to standardizing trauma-informed design, to changing management policies so that residents have more flexibility and control.

Digital Equity: POAH has also played a leadership role in advancing digital equity for residents of affordable housing. POAH has launched a major initiative to bring high-speed, affordable internet to at least 25 properties. Over the past year, POAH has implemented resident wireless at three properties and is in the active planning stages for 10 additional properties.

Asset and Wealth-Building: POAH was the first private owner to launch the Family Self-Sufficiency Program in 2017, and we now runs the largest multifamily program in the country. We have expanded the program to 49 properties which serves residents in 100% of our eligible properties.

More than 700 families have saved \$2.5M collectively. On average, families that complete the program save more than \$10,000, many of whom entered the program with incomes of just \$10,000-\$15,000. Most have dramatically increased their income since enrolling.

In early 2024, POAH launched the POWER Initiative (Providing Opportunities for Wellbeing and Equity for Renters). This innovative program, available to all families, provides free personalized financial coaching, enable rent reporting to build credit, support access to homeownership, and expand employment for residents through our GROW Centers.