

## **Inclusion Diversity Equity and Accessibility (IDEA): LPA Assessment and Recommendations Board Summary**

We would like to start by acknowledging the courage, foresight and commitment of the LPA leadership team to recognize and fund our organizations' need to address diversity and inclusion. Very few family-based organizations have undertaken this kind of assessment and demonstrated dedication to addressing the needs of all members. We applaud this effort and thank you for entrusting us to collect this feedback and provide our unvarnished recommendations.

### **Highlights of What we Learned**

Everyone who participated in the survey and listening sessions experienced feeling marginalized or left out at LPA events at some point in time. According to the survey data, these feelings increased as the respondents got older. However, it is important to note that most participants also reported feeling neutral or positive about being part of LPA. Many mentioned that they were both hopeful and grateful that LPA undertook this process to better understand and enhance inclusion for all LP's.

### **Most respondents expressed the following concerns/challenges:**

- Expense of Conference precluding or limiting participation
- Concerns about cliques and lack of access to positive LP culture
- Lack of visible engagement of the board and staff to address IDEA concerns. No evidence of clear and/or decisive actions to combat bias, racism, ableism and sexism
- Tensions around engagement/role of average height members
- Need for enhanced cultural literacy for all members – concerns about intolerance and exclusion across multiple demographic groups
- Lack of inclusive locations and activities (particularly at local events) that consider and are accessible for people with mobility conditions
- All groups mentioned a need for greater inclusion and identity but also worried about splintering – clearly we will need to strike the right balance

### **Recommendations**

1. **Development of an Inclusion Council (IC) and designating an Inclusion Coordinator** – We suggest that this group be made up of a diverse group of LPA members including BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) as well as multiple dwarfism types from different generations. It is suggested the IC be led-supported by Inclusion Chair or co-Chairs who have a seat on the Board.
2. **Inclusion Caucus** – LPA could create an inclusion caucus as a part of the regular discussion groups at National Conferences. The purpose of this caucus would be for LPA members to discuss opportunities to enhance inclusion and/or

address issues of prejudice and/or bias felt by members within LPA and/or in their communities.

3. **Cultural Activities** – Use of the LPA Today, in person events and social media platforms to recognize cultural milestones, commemorations and events that will enrich all and that are important to the diverse members of LPA.
4. **Outreach and Collaboration** - with other family membership organizations – especially those that represent families of color and LGBTQ+, to learn about and consider adopting/adapting best practices that are used to enhance inclusion.

### **Staff and Board Role in Enhancing Inclusion and Belonging:**

Authentic and sustained leadership engagement will need to be a mainstay for positive cultural change at LPA. The Executive Director, staff and Board will need to commit to playing a vital and consistently visible role in written communications and during in-person events. IDEA principles and practices are recommended to be integrated into all images and text that go out to members.

#### **Significant time needs to be carved out at in-person events to:**

- Welcome and regularly check in with diverse members
- Attend caucus and cultural events
- Ensure diversity of who is presenting/speaking
- Address accessibility issues for members with mobility conditions
- Respond real time to concerns of marginalization or exclusion
- Act as liaisons with external organizations (we recommend that each Board member select one organization and one LPA demographic group to regularly engage with and determine opportunities for collaboration towards mutual benefit. Suggest that this ally outreach both be in same culture group, E.g Gay Lesbian Straight Education GLSEN and LPA Rainbow group)

### **Additional Recommendations:**

- **Engaging with Families**– LPA has a long tradition of creating socialization opportunities in safe spaces for LP's and their families. LPA had often relied on athletic activities and festive parties and gatherings. For communities of color there is also a desire for enriching family-based alternatives that also include opportunities for young LP's to learn and build self-esteem. Families of color would appreciate integrating developmental activities such as career exploration, college preparation, soft skill development, and/or mentoring. This would also create connections for new members of color to experience inclusion activities that are more rewarding than LPA's robust drinking and party scene. It is recommended that the Board work with the Inclusion Council to provide these kinds of recommendations and associated resources for local leaders.

- **Introducing New Members** – It is recommended that a new norm be introduced at local gatherings where new members/attendees are introduced to all attendees. This is a common practice in communities of color and ensures that everyone meets new members.
- **Older Wiser LP's** – the 60+ population of LP's is both underutilized and underserved. Many would be willing to be inclusion ambassadors for new members and others in their age range feeling isolated throughout the year. They would like to see conferences adjust what is provided such the Party room being open at 7pm instead of 10pm. Many have lost LP friends and need new connections and valued roles, especially those in rural communities who are struggling financially.
- **Oversight/engagement with DAAA Athletes** – Though DAAA is a separate organization, there is an opportunity to create better forms of encouragement and support for athletes of color who are joining LPA to participate in sports. Some BIPOC individuals have expressed feelings of marginalization or tokenism where they are accepted for their athletic prowess but not fully accepted into LPA's other cultural elements. We recommend working with the Inclusion Council and Patrick to develop/propose recommendations to DAAA, which of course while they are under no obligation to adopt, but are likely to be considered to enhance participation and align with their mission and values.
- **Adoptees** – LPA has a long and proud tradition of adoptees finding forever families and caring networks as a part of their participation in LPA. There is also an opportunity here to consider how LP's who found their family through LPA – especially international adoptees, are encouraged to continue to participate in and represent their personal culture while also contributing to the overall mosaic of identities in LPA. We suggest that the Inclusion Council include adoptee representation and that this individual engage in outreach and continuously welcome suggestions from this segment of LPA's membership.
- **Disability and Dwarfism types** – It will be essential that any work toward increasing equity and inclusion in LPA also address internal concerns about dwarfism types. The perception of preferential attention to individuals with achondroplasia will overshadow any forward movement to full inclusion if these concerns are not addressed. We suggest accessibility guidelines be provided to any LP affiliate hosting a gathering (perhaps a checklist). If they are unable to afford necessary accommodations (e.g. ASL interpreter, portable ramp, or CART services), national will offer access to a fund they can tap into for these resources.
- **English as a Second Language** – LPA should make it clear what they can and cannot afford to provide with regards to language translations. While ideally, we would provide alternate versions of publications and language interpreters for national and local gatherings, we do not have funding to guarantee this, and it is better to be honest vs. over-promise and under-deliver which due to good intentions we have done in the past.

- **Training** – We suggest virtual IDEA training sessions, tips and advice lines be offered to all local leaders. We may be able to identify a corporate partner to give us access to their IDEA training content, and Deb and Patrick can assist in developing plain language local guidance. The Inclusion Council Chair(s) might be able to staff the advice line as a source of insight for areas of focus.
- **Annual Pulse** – It would be wise to repeat an inclusion survey each year in some form to see if we are making progress.
- **Cadence of Communications** – Starting with a note to all members recommended to be sent on 2/12/21, the Board is strongly encouraged to let the members know they have been heard in both written communications and a virtual town hall. It is important to be transparent about what we learned and what we intend to do about it, as well as ask for patience, involvement and perhaps financial support.