

Commitment to Diversity

Winter 2022-2023

Prior to our update, this is a good time to share that CRI has functioned for some time with policies and approaches to ensure we are a welcoming and safe workplace. And, over the past three years due to COVID, re-opening, and staff supported changes to workplace expectations, we have regularly and consistently updated our handbooks and policies. We feel this is a helpful time to remind our community that our workplace commitments include the following among other important aspects of employment at CRI:

- Equal Opportunity Employment Policy
- Open Door Policy
- Harassment and Discrimination Zero Tolerance Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblower Policy

If anyone has questions about our commitment to safety or community standards, please reach Ted Benford, Executive Director, at ted@communityrowing.org.

The winter has been a time for us to reflect and renew before the new program year.

Financially, CRI remains on a solid foundation to continue our work to be ever more inclusive and equitable. We have examined the investments made last year in our community. With the generosity and engagement from the CRI and greater Boston philanthropic community, we believe there are pathways toward sustaining these efforts—they are not possible without considerable investment in our time and resources, but we believe they are an organizational priority.

A common dialogue in the evaluation of our efforts has been “how did we get here” and with that, “where are we going from here?” or “want to go?” For 2023, we have looked at two key

facets of our decision making over the past two years—how have mindsets changed toward more authentic actualization of our mission, values, and impact, and then from awareness of those changes, have our actions meaningfully reflected these changes in our organizational behaviors?

In short, we followed a process of intentional reflection and dialogue that informed our organizational “mindset” and then addressed how shifts in our thinking could be actualized through programmatic and operational “behaviors.” Recall that at the beginning of 2020, CRI took some time to absorb the magnitude of the changes made around revision of our mission, values, and strategic plan in addition to the sudden and profoundly challenging events that involved social and racial justice that occurred over that summer. In late 2020 and throughout 2021, we focused on the mindsets of our community—engaging YW Boston through their Inclusion Boston program to support dialogue among our board, senior staff, and all staff through a series of 15 dialogues and many ad hoc discussions around how our staff and leadership address bias, privilege, and outlook based on our personal backgrounds and life experiences. And, importantly, how our backgrounds (*where we’ve come from*), informed our assumptions/decision making about how to address meaningful change (*where we are going*). Then last year, we made a number of organizational/operational changes based on what we learned through these dialogues.

One of the most visible examples of this process can be viewed through our transportation and fueling station (healthy snacks) pilots. Discussions about CRI’s role in the lives of disenfranchised, under-resourced people led to creative thinking about how to restructure programming to coordinate with the bus schedule that would give youth especially, a free ride to CRI from downtown Boston. And when they arrived, a free snack before getting out on the water or into a rowing activity. With staff buy-in, we piloted activities that were the first steps in significant and incremental change. This type of decision making has extended across the organization—it not only includes the transportation, fueling station, and programming revision, but CRI also purchased 30 \$400 power megaphones for free access by our part time staff to provide equitable access to high level coaching equipment, conducted two pay equity analysis to ensure all full time staff can earn a minimum of \$50,000 annually—from our cleaning staff to coaches to admin and facility staff—and much more.

And, that gets us to this winter when we reviewed these initiatives: how we are measuring their performance and how they have impacted our community. We are encouraged to see our efforts are gaining traction—and we believe part of making meaningful, sustainable, and long-term change is through this type of incremental decision making that builds upon success and is informed by shortcomings, failures, etc. that are manageable. The process is backstopped by the embrace of learning (growth through rowing) vs. “all or nothing”/zero sum thinking and behaviors.

As we enter 2023, we are coming back to address some “simple” questions. Over the past 30 months, CRI has implemented 10 performance measures across our community—rowers, donors, and staff—to track how we are doing with shifts in mindsets and behaviors. Over the coming months we will be looking critically at our measurement tools to ensure they capture the feedback needed to continue to learn from what we have done, and how this feedback can effectively reflect mindset change and/or changes in behaviors that will help lead us toward more fulfilling outcomes and impact for our community in the future.