

HUMAN RESOURCE AND OTHER  
OPERATIONAL POLICIES OF  
EQUIVOICE ALLIANCE  
FOUNDATION

AS APPROVED ON 22 AUGUST 2024

# HR Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation

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# HR Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

We welcome you to this document, the Human Resources Policy of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. It is meant to make sure that our organizational values are in line with best practices in human resources management. This document serves as a road map for fostering an inclusive, equitable, and supportive work environment; it ensures all team members (irrespective of their roles) are empowered to contribute towards our mission on social justice and equality.

There are policies contained within this booklet that relate to every aspect of employment: from recruitment and hiring processes, through performance management, and conflict resolution. Every section has been carefully constructed to capture our dedication to non-hierarchical structures, participatory decision making processes, as well as the holistic well-being of our team. This guide does not just feature rules but also shows how dedicated we are in creating a workplace where everyone's voice counts.

Our HR policies will change along with us when we grow as an organization. Everyone is encouraged to actively engage with these policies by providing suggestions or feedback that could help us improve continuously. Together we can create a working atmosphere that supports individual development and drives collective influence within the communities we impact.

## 2. Organizational Structure

### 1. Board of Trustees (BoT):

- **Role and Responsibilities:**
  - The Board of Trustees heads the foundation and is responsible for providing strategic direction, policy oversight, and governance.
  - The Board ensures that the foundation's mission and objectives are effectively pursued and oversees the financial integrity and sustainability of the foundation.
  - The Board has an Advisory Group composed of experts to provide specialized knowledge and guidance on specific matters relevant to the foundation's work.

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<sup>1</sup> In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the provisions of this policy and the Trust Deed of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, the provisions of the Trust Deed shall prevail. The Trust Deed shall supersede all organizational policies, procedures, and guidelines, which shall be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the Trust Deed.

- **Composition:**
  - The Board is composed of a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 11 trustees.
  - The Trustees are responsible for electing the office bearers, including the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Executive Director, from among themselves.
  - The number of trustees and their roles may be adjusted as the organization grows or as funding levels change.

## 2. Office Bearers:

- **President:**
  - Guides the board as a visionary leader in shaping and fulfilling the foundation's strategic direction.
  - Presides over board meetings and represents the foundation at every high-level forum.
  - Fosters relations with key stakeholders, partners, and communities.
  - Ensures high governance standards that would see the board propel the mission forward.
  - Implements board decisions through management of operations toward realizing long-term impact and sustainability.
- **Secretary:**
  - Represents the cornerstone of governance and effective operation.
  - Records information, prepares the agenda for meetings, and facilitates clear communication between the Board members and staff.
  - Exerts strategic leadership over the organization's documentation and knowledge management.
  - Shares and delegates some responsibilities with other trustees or the staff to maximize resource use and effectiveness.
- **Treasurer:**
  - Assumes the responsibility of steward of the organization's financial health and integrity.
  - Manages financial records, prepares the budget, and provides leadership in financial planning and risk management.
  - Advises the Board on fiscal matters and in guiding sound financial decisions.
  - Directs financial operations and accountability, working with finance professionals or experts outside the organization based on the foundation's financial capacity..
- **Executive Director:**
  - Serves as the chief executive by leading the mission of the foundation and strategic goals.
  - Directs day-to-day operations and leads programs and organizational development.
  - Cultivates a culture of excellence, innovation, and inclusivity within the foundation.
  - Adapts leadership approach as the organization evolves, delegating operational tasks while maintaining overall accountability.

- Navigates complex challenges and fosters collaborative partnerships to amplify the foundation's impact
- The Executive Director's role is adaptable based on the foundation's size and available funding, with the possibility of delegating specific operational tasks to other leads or staff members.
- Shall be authorised for the financial approval and to do financial transactions as co-signatory with other delegated financial signatory.

**3. State Unit:** State Unit The state unit of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation will be a gathering of all Office Bearers from the Board of Trustees, leads in various domains and their representatives and Project Management Unit which includes a project as and when it is established for the state unit in question and corresponding strategic proposal. The organization will establish the following Domain Leads, with numbers of domains to be adjusted as necessary in the light of the organization's ever-changing requirements and strategic priorities.

- **Program Lead:**
  - Oversees the planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the foundation's programs, ensuring alignment with overall objectives and community needs.
  - The Programme Lead assesses the training and capacity-building needs of the team.
  - The programme lead ensures that the programme adheres to gender equality and social inclusiveness in all their programme and processes
  - Participatory processes, transparent tools, community-owned and led approaches and sensitive procedures should be the key ingredients of all the programme and its process
  - This role can be adjusted or merged with other leads if resources are limited.
- **People and Culture Lead:**
  - Manages all aspects of human resources, including recruitment, capacity building, and fostering an organizational culture that reflects the foundation's values of inclusivity, equity, and non-hierarchy.
  - It ensures the effective conflict management and grievance redressal systems in place ensuring safe and secure working space for women and other genders in minorities irrespective of their sexuality, faith, caste and class
  - The HR Lead's role may be shared with other leads or simplified based on funding and staffing levels.
- **Finance Lead:**
  - Responsible for financial planning, budgeting, and maintaining the foundation's financial integrity.
  - The lead will adopt a process to communicate with the team members and community members about the financial health of the project and organisation.
  - The lead will encourage the process of community audit/ social audit, and public display of income and expenditures regularly to maintain the utmost transparency and accountability.

- The lead will also coordinate with the programme team and other leads to plan for fundraising through innovative means.
- The lead will take all needful means to make the accounting process easier and simpler for all the concerned members
- The Finance Lead ensures compliance with statutory obligations and transparent financial reporting.
- This role can be adjusted to include external financial consultants if needed.
- **IT and MIS Lead:**
  - Manages the foundation's information technology infrastructure and Management Information Systems (MIS), ensuring efficient and secure operations.
  - The lead should be able to generate evidence of all expected outcomes and outputs through effective processes
  - The lead should be able to offer effective solutions to data security and should analyse the data as per the needs of the organisation or other stakeholders
  - The scope of this role may be expanded or reduced based on the organization's technology needs and budget.
- **Communication Lead:**
  - Anchors the foundation's communication strategies, including public relations, publicity, media outreach, SBCC, and stakeholder engagement.
  - Leads the organisation in developing a community communication system through innovative means like community journalism, and liaising with media houses for dedicated space for the marginalised voices.
  - The Communication Lead's responsibilities may be shared with other roles or external agencies, depending on the foundation's resources.

The State Unit shall have the liberty to expand its membership to include empaneled Resource Persons, Resource Organizations, and partners who can support its work. It may involve third parties, ad hoc members, service providers, and volunteers in the manner as it deems fit for fulfillment of the organisation's dynamic needs.

**4. Field Units:** Gram Panchayat is designated as a field unit within the foundation's operational framework and the villages of the GP are its sub-unit. Depending upon the size of the village, demography, geographies, and terrains, the number of subunits per village may vary. This structure allows the foundation to work closely with local communities and tailor its interventions to meet specific needs. The number of field units and their scope may vary depending on the available funding and project priorities.

- **Panchayat Facilitator:** Each field unit is led by a Panchayat Facilitator, responsible for coordinating and implementing the foundation's programs at the grassroots level. The Facilitator's role can be scaled up or down based on the foundation's operational needs and financial resources.
- **Village Facilitators and Resource Persons:** The Panchayat Facilitator identifies and collaborates with Village Facilitators, who are community members supporting local

activities. Resource Persons, who may be subject-matter experts or survivors of gender-based violence, are engaged to provide training and support. The number of facilitators and resource persons may be adjusted according to project scope and budget.

#### 5. Block and District Units:

- **Block-Level Units:** Where needed, additional units can be established at the block level to manage larger or more complex projects. These units will be led by Block Facilitators who will coordinate with Panchayat Facilitators and provide additional oversight and support.
- **District-Level Units:** For projects that span multiple blocks or have a wider impact, district-level units may be established. These units will be headed by District Coordinators, who will manage the implementation of projects across blocks and ensure alignment with the foundation's overall goals.
- **Project Management Units (PMUs):** Additional PMUs can be set up to manage specific projects, especially those with significant funding or broad geographic scope. These PMUs will be co-terminus with the project duration and will be scaled based on the needs of the project.

#### 6. Resource Pool:

- **Resource Persons and Organizations:** A pool of resource persons and organizations will be maintained to provide specialized expertise and support. This pool will include experts in gender-based violence, sustainable development, and other areas relevant to the foundation's work. These resources can be engaged on an as-needed basis, depending on the demands of specific projects or initiatives.
- The engagement of resource persons/organisations will be governed by a separate policy and on the terms of reference mutually agreed upon at the time of engagement.

## 3. Operational Structure and Governance Policy

### 3.1 Non-Hierarchical Structure

#### *Flat Operational Structure*

**Team-Based Units:** The organization is to be organized into small cross-functional teams in charge of specific areas of the organization, including but not limited to programs, finance, HR, communication, and field operation. Each unit must have autonomy to take decisions related to issues within their areas without the necessity of seeking permission from central departments.

**Delegating Authority:** The authority will be decentralized down to the teams, allowing them the responsibility for budgeting, project planning, and the formulation of operational strategies.

Cross-team meetings will be conducted regularly to ensure coordination, share updates, address challenges, and foster collaborative problem-solving in the project.

### **3.2 EquiVoice Alliance Foundation Collective Leadership Policy**

#### ***Rotation of leadership roles***

**Equity and Empowerment:** The model of rotating leadership is designed to bring equity with regard to the sharing of leadership responsibilities among all team members, irrespective of position, background, or seniority. This way, all individuals feel empowered, with a sense of shared responsibility and minimized power differences among them.

**Diverse Leadership Development:** Rotation of leadership provides every leader a long span of three years for developing and exercising leadership skills. It also ensures a wide scope for diverse caste-class backgrounds, including women, transgender, and other vulnerable groups.

#### ***Implementation***

**Three-Year Rotation Schedule:** Leadership within teams will be done on a three-year rotating basis. This will give enough time to the respective leaders to handle responsibilities and to implement initiatives in the long term; at the same time, the leadership roles are open to all team members over time.

**Inclusive Selection Process:** The process of assigning leadership roles will be participatory, with all team members having the opportunity to express their interest in taking on leadership responsibilities. The selection process will prioritize the inclusion of marginalized voices in leadership positions.

**Transitional Support:** Rotating leaders will mentor their incoming replacements to allow easy transitioning. It shall be done through the sharing of information, responsibilities, and insights with an emphasis on maintaining continuity and stability achieved over the last term.

### **3.3 Assessment and Feedback**

#### ***Mid-Term and Final Reviews***

**Mid-Term Reviews:** A peer review process at the mid-point of a three-year leadership term will take place to evaluate the effectiveness of the leader and provide positive feedback.

**End-of-Term Reviews:** At the end of a term, a complete review will analyze the leader's general performance and how they have affected the team and organization.

### **3.4 Consensus-Based Decision Making**

#### ***Purpose***

**Democratic and Inclusive Making of Decisions:** Consensus means that everyone's voice should be heard in the team. It has been inculcated from the tenets in which this foundation is established: an equitable, democratic, and sensitive organization for the marginalized and vulnerable sections of the community.

**Collective Ownership:** A decision that mirrors agreement from everyone within the team; therefore, it promotes shared ownership and accountability for results.

#### ***Implementation***

**Facilitated Discussions:** This is a way of holding meetings designed to make decisions; the facilitator in charge is a well-rounded facilitator, at times, a regular team member of the meeting. The individual who takes the leading role manages the discussion, outlines the



issues of disagreement, and seeks the team's agreement.

**Formalized Process:** Decisions will be made through a formalized process that includes:

- **Proposal:** A team member presents a proposal.
- **Clarification:** The team asks questions to clarify the proposal.
- **Discussion:** The team engages in a discussion, expressing support, concerns, and suggestions for improvement.
- **Modification:** The proposal may be modified based on feedback.
- **Check for Consensus:** The facilitator verifies consensus by asking if there are any objections to the proposal on the table. If there are, discussion and modification continue until consensus is obtained.
- **Inclusion in Decision Making:** The voices of the marginalized and vulnerable sections will be duly appreciated and valued during deliberations. The facilitator will insist on the voices of all members of the group being heard, especially those who are shy about expressing their ideas.

### 3.5 Training and Capacity Building

#### *Consensus Skills Training*

- **Training Areas:** All members will be trained in such areas as consensus-building techniques, active listening, conflict resolution, and negotiation. Training will be tailored so that it is relevant to and appropriate for all individuals of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- **Continual Support:** The teams, in their process of applying the consensus-based decision-making model, will receive support through resources, tools, and outside facilitators, if necessary, for difficult or sensitive decision management.

## 4. Leadership Development

### 4.1 Purpose

#### *Building an Inclusive Leadership Pipeline*

Leadership development at EquiVoice Alliance Foundation is aimed at developing a pipeline of leaders not only skilled but deeply committed to the values of equity, justice, and inclusivity. It includes making sure that people from marginalized and vulnerable sections have equal opportunities to develop their leadership potential.

#### *Creating an Equitable and Healthy Work Environment*

Objectives: Developing leadership skills and knowledge whereby the work environment would be free from discrimination, sexual harassment will not take place, and everyone, including women, transgenders, and all others, can experience a friendly, healthy workplace irrespective of their sexual orientation, class, or caste.

### 4.2 Implementation

#### *Comprehensive Training Program*

- **Conflict Resolution:** Training that enables one to manage and resolve conflicts in a way that is fair, inclusive, and respectful of all involved.

- **Facilitation Skills:** Training in how to facilitate meetings, discussions, and decision-making so that participation is fostered and consensus arrived at.
- **Cultural Competence:** Education on different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds of members of the team and the communities one is working with.
- **Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment:** There will be specialized training that centers on inculcating leaders with skills to avert and address discrimination and harassment in workplaces, specifically the creation of safe and inclusive environments.

#### *Mentorship and Peer Support*

- **Mentorship:** Each leader within the team will be paired with a mentor who has experience in leadership within the organization.
- **Peer Support Groups:** These activities will provide the basis for the creation of Peer Support Groups, which help in sharing experiences, challenges, and strategies for success between leaders.

### **4.3 Ongoing Development and Reflection**

#### *Leadership Reflection Sessions*

**Objective:** To conduct regular leader reflection sessions regarding their experience, challenges, and lesson learning in the journey, within a safe and supportive environment to express themselves, engage in honest conversations, and raise the bar on improving the practice.

#### *Feedback-Driven Enhancement*

**Objective:** A leadership development program that is constantly alive and adapted through input from participants to remain in tune with the current and future needs of both the Foundation and its leaders.

## **5. Participatory Decision-Making**

Participatory decision-making lies at the heart of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, ensuring our collective efforts are guided by diverse perspectives. This chapter illustrates how staff, volunteers, and stakeholders are engaged through key platforms like All-Staff Meetings, Samvad Sabha (Open Forums), and Working Groups to shape our common mission. These forums promote operational alignment, strategic clarity, and coordination across the organization. Additionally, roles and processes for facilitation, along with methods for reviewing facilitator performance, are outlined to ensure effective participation.

### **5.1 All-Staff Meetings**

#### *Purpose:*

**Objective:** All-Staff Meetings aim to get the entire organization up to speed with key operational and strategic matters. It is the platform for regular updates on projects in progress, operational issues of importance, administrative changes, and internal policy decisions.

#### *Scope:*

- **Operational Alignment:** Ensure all teams pull towards the same goal, understand their roles, and coordinate well.
- **Strategic Updates:** Updates regarding the overall strategic direction of the foundation will be shared at each meeting to ensure all staff are aware of any steps taken toward organizational goals.
- **Internal Communication:** Management's clear communication among their levels, and from them downwards, to avoid silos. This shall ensure that every employee is informed about important decisions and any changes within the organization.

*Participants:*

Full-time staff, management, and field staff, as well as all engaged volunteers in daily operations, will be present.

*Frequency:*

Such meetings take place frequently, either monthly or bi-monthly, depending on the organization's needs.

*Mode:*

Online, on-site, or hybrid.

*Structure:*

- **Agenda-Driven:** Each meeting has a set agenda that includes reports from different teams, a review of upcoming tasks, and time for Q&A or discussion of immediate operational concerns.
- **Facilitation:** A rotating facilitator, drawn from among the staff, ensures that every voice is heard and the meeting progresses within the desired agenda.

*Levels:*

- **State Unit:** Regular All-Staff Meetings at the State Unit level ensure alignment on strategic and operational matters.
- **District or Block Unit:** The workshop should be held at the District or Block Unit level to integrate the State Unit's regional teams and link them with more localized needs.
- **Field Unit:** Consideration is given to operational issues; field staff are coordinated with each other and with broader organizational objectives.

*Facilitator Review:*

- **Post-Meeting Feedback:** Participants provide feedback through surveys or open sessions.
- **Peer Review:** Instructors peer-reviewed for providing constructive feedback by their peers.
- **Supervisor Review:** Direct supervisors or their designees conduct performance reviews of facilitators.
- **Self-Assessment:** Facilitators engage in self-assessments as a form of reflection.
- **HR Review:** Overall effectiveness is reviewed by HR or Organizational Development teams to provide additional support.

- **Outcome-Based Review:** Assessment driven by the accomplishment of meeting intended objectives.

## 5.2 Samvad Sabha (Open Forums)

### *Purpose:*

Objective: The design of Samvad Sabha, or Open Forums, is such that broad-based dialogue and inclusive participatory decision-making may occur within the organization. These forums provide an expanded space for all staff, volunteers, and external stakeholders, including community representatives, to express their concerns, ideas, and feedback regarding projects, policies, and strategic direction taken by the Foundation.

### *Scope:*

- **Broad Participation:** These forums are designed to contain wide-ranging perspectives, especially those of the people directly affected by the foundation's work.
- **Central Feedback Mechanism:** Samvad Sabha will act as a central mechanism for feedback, allowing beneficiaries to share insights on how the foundation's work is progressing and what changes should be made.
- **Strategic and Policy Discussions:** While operational issues can be discussed, the focus is more on strategic direction, policy impacts, community engagement, and organizational values.

### *Participants:*

Open to all staff, volunteers, and key external stakeholders, including community members, beneficiaries, and partner organizations.

### *Frequency:*

These forums shall be held quarterly or as needed to address specific matters or to elicit general feedback.

### *Mode:*

Virtual, on-site, or hybrid.

### *Structure:*

- **Inclusive and Open:** An agenda is welcome, but the forum intends to open up for genuine open-ended discussions. About one-third of the time will be given to structured discussions, while two-thirds will be open to speakers from the floor.
- **Facilitated Discussions:** A facilitator, preferably from higher levels of management or a neutral source, will guide the discussion, ensuring productivity and inclusiveness of all viewpoints.
- **Documentation and Follow-Up:** Feedback and ideas arising from the forums will be documented, and action plans will be developed where necessary. Progress reports on these actions will be fed back to participants in subsequent forums.

### *Levels:*

- **State Unit:** Primarily conducted at the State Unit level, including participation from external stakeholders and community representatives.
- **District or Block Unit:** Held at the District or Block Unit level as needed, especially to address localized concerns or gather specific feedback.
- **Field Unit:** Field Units should have a role in the organization of District/Block or State-level Samvad Sabhas to highlight grassroots perspectives.

*Facilitator Review:*

Akin to All-Staff Meetings, post-meeting feedback, peer review, supervisor review, self-assessment, HR review, and outcome-based review would be the manners in which facilitator performance would be gauged.

### 5.3 Working Groups

*Purpose:*

Objective: Working Groups are specialized committees that focus on specific issues or areas critical to the foundation’s mission, such as gender equity, community engagement, or sustainability. These groups are tasked with researching, discussing, and developing recommendations to inform organizational decision-making.

*Scope:*

- **Areas of Focus:** Each Working Group will concentrate on a specific area, allowing for in-depth analysis and focused efforts. Examples include gender equity, community development, environmental sustainability, and employee well-being.
- **Policy and Strategy Development:** Working Groups will contribute to policy and strategy development by providing well-researched recommendations on various focused fields.
- **Cross-Organizational Collaboration:** These groups will invite representatives from various teams and organizational levels to ensure diverse perspectives inform their work.

*Participants:*

Members of Working Groups will be chosen from different teams and levels of the organization, and if appropriate, include external stakeholders. Representation from marginalized groups is encouraged to ensure diverse input.

*Frequency:*

Working Groups meet as needed, based on the complexity of the issue addressed. Regular updates from these groups will be shared with the broader organization.

*Mode:*

Virtual, on-site, or hybrid.

*Structure:*

- **Defined Goals:** Each Working Group will have clearly defined goals and deliverables, along with timelines for achieving them.
- **Collaborative Process:** Group work involves collaboration in researching issues, gathering input from the broader organization, and developing recommendations.

- **Reporting and Implementation:** The group’s findings and recommendations will be presented to relevant decision-making bodies within the organization for implementation. Regular reports on the progress of these recommendations will be shared with the entire organization.

*Levels:*

- **State Unit:** Primarily formed at the State Unit level, focusing on statewide strategic issues and policy development.
- **District or Block Unit:** Localized Working Groups can be established at the District or Block Unit level to address specific regional concerns or projects.
- **Field Unit:** Field Units can provide input but typically do not form their own Working Groups.

*Facilitator Review:*

The evaluation of facilitators in Working Groups will continue to follow a structured review process, ensuring continuous improvement and effectiveness in facilitation.

## 6. Inclusive and Democratic Governance

### 6.1 Inclusive Governance Bodies

#### Diverse Board or Advisory Group Representation

Purpose

- **Ensuring Diverse Perspectives:** Given the Board’s limited membership, the foundation will ensure that representatives from marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as women, transgenders, and members of PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups), are included either on the Board of Trustees or in the Advisory Group. This ensures that these critical perspectives are integrated into the highest levels of decision-making.
- **Advisory Group Integration:** The Advisory Group, which provides expert opinions to the Board, will also be structured to include representatives from these communities, ensuring that their insights influence the board’s deliberations and decisions.

Implementation

- **Targeted Inclusion:** When appointing members to the Board or Advisory Group, priority will be given to individuals from underrepresented groups. This can be achieved through targeted outreach and recruitment efforts aimed at identifying qualified candidates who can bring these essential perspectives to the table.
- **Rotational Representation:** Where direct board membership is not feasible due to limited slots, a rotational system could be implemented within the Advisory Group,

allowing different representatives from marginalized communities to serve on the Advisory Group at different times.

- **Collaboration Between Board and Advisory Group:** The Board will regularly consult with the Advisory Group on matters related to marginalized and vulnerable communities, ensuring that their input is integral to the decision-making process.

## 6.2 Community Representation

### Purpose

- **Incorporating Community Voices:** Including representatives from the communities served by the foundation in governance roles ensures that decisions are informed by those who are directly impacted by the foundation's work. Whether as board members or advisors, these representatives provide valuable insights into the needs and concerns of the communities they represent.
- **Empowering Local Leaders:** By elevating community representatives to governance roles, the foundation empowers local leaders to actively shape the organization's strategies and policies.

### Implementation

- **Selection for Advisory Roles:** In addition to formal board roles, community representatives may be appointed to the Advisory Group, ensuring their voices are part of strategic discussions.
- **Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** Community representatives, whether on the Board or Advisory Group, will be responsible for maintaining regular communication with their communities, gathering feedback, and reporting back to the foundation. This ensures that governance decisions remain closely connected to the realities of the communities served.

## 6.3 Inclusive Nomination Process

### Purpose

- **Transparency and Participation:** The nomination and election of board members will be conducted through a transparent and participatory process, ensuring that all organizational levels have a voice in selecting the foundation's leaders. This approach promotes fairness, accountability, and inclusivity in governance.
- **Prioritizing Equity and Inclusion:** The nomination process will prioritize candidates who demonstrate a commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice, aligning with the foundation's mission and values.

### Implementation

- **Open Call for Nominations:** The foundation will issue an open call for nominations whenever board positions or advisory roles become available. This call will be widely

circulated within the organization and among its partners, encouraging nominations from a diverse range of candidates.

- **Participatory Selection Committees:** A Selection Committee will be formed by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director and other key leadership roles within the organisation. The selection committee composed of representatives from various organizational levels, including marginalized groups, will review nominations and make recommendations for board and advisory appointments. This committee will ensure that the nomination process is inclusive and that all voices are considered.
- **Transparent Voting Process:** Once candidates are vetted, a transparent voting process will be conducted with all eligible members of the organization having the opportunity to vote. The results of the election will be publicly announced, and feedback from the selection committee will be provided to all candidates.
  - **Eligible members:** All regular staff and field cadres, who have been engaged with the organisation for a minimum of six months are eligible to participate in the voting process.
  - **Additional Members:** On a case to case basis the Board of Trustees may empower certain Part-Time staff, consultants, long-term volunteers, or resource persons to participate in the voting processes This will be based on their level of engagement, contributions to the foundation and understanding of the Foundation’s mission and values.

#### **Criteria for Exclusion:**

- **Conflict of Interest:** Individuals with personal, financial, or other conflicts of interest related to the candidates or the voting process will be excluded to ensure impartiality.
- **Disciplinary Reasons:** Members who are under disciplinary action or investigation may be excluded from voting to uphold the integrity of the process.
- **Other Reasons:** Additional exclusion criteria may include short-term engagement (less than six months) or any other reasons deemed necessary by the BoT to maintain fairness and transparency.

#### **Publication of Voter List:**

- The BoT will publish a list of eligible voters, including any additional members empowered to vote, as well as those excluded based on the criteria above, ensuring transparency and accountability in the selection process.

## **6.4 Democratic Policy-Making**

### **Purpose**



- **Inclusive Policy Creation:** The foundation is committed to developing policies through a consultative process that involves input from all organizational levels. This ensures that policies are not only reflective of the foundation’s values but are also responsive to the needs and experiences of all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders.
- **Fostering a Culture of Participation:** By engaging the entire organization in policy development, the foundation fosters a culture of participation where everyone feels ownership over the policies that guide their work.

## Implementation

- **Surveys and Focus Groups:** When developing new policies or revising existing ones, the foundation will conduct surveys and organize focus groups to gather input from staff, volunteers, and stakeholders. These tools will help identify key issues, challenges, and suggestions for policy improvement.
- **Open Forums for Discussion:** The foundation will hold open forums (Samvad Sabha) to discuss proposed policies and gather feedback in real-time. These forums will be structured to encourage broad participation, particularly from marginalized voices.
- **Iterative Drafting Process:** Policy drafts will be shared iteratively with opportunities for feedback at each stage. This process ensures that the final policy reflects the collective wisdom of the organization.

## 6.5 Policy Review Committees

### Purpose

- **Ongoing Evaluation and Improvement:** Policy Review Committees will be established to continuously review and improve the foundation’s policies. These committees will ensure that policies remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the foundation’s mission, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** By including representatives from different teams and marginalized groups, these committees will ensure that policy reviews are inclusive and that all perspectives are considered.

### Implementation

- **Diverse Committee Composition:** Each Policy Review Committee will include members from various teams, organizational levels, and marginalized groups. The composition of these committees will be reviewed regularly to ensure diversity and inclusivity.
- **Regular Review Cycles:** Committees will operate on regular review cycles, assessing specific policies at predetermined intervals (e.g., annually or bi-annually). This systematic approach ensures that all policies are regularly evaluated and updated as needed.
- **Authority to Recommend Changes:** Committees will have the authority to recommend policy changes based on their reviews. These recommendations will be

presented to the board or relevant decision-making bodies for approval and implementation.

## 6.6 Working Committees for Special Issues

### Purpose

- **Focused Discussion on Key Issues:** The Board may form specialized working committees to address specific issues of concern, particularly those that require in-depth discussion about special groups or emerging challenges. These committees will bring together experts, community representatives, and stakeholders to focus on targeted areas of interest.
- **Responsive and Dynamic Governance:** By forming working committees as needed, the Board ensures that the foundation remains responsive to evolving issues and can effectively address the needs of specific communities or challenges.

### Implementation

- **Formation of Working Committees:** When a particular issue or group requires focused attention, the Board will establish a working committee composed of relevant experts from the advisory group or otherwise, community representatives, and stakeholders. The scope and duration of the committee's work will be clearly defined.
- **Regular Reporting:** Working committees will report their findings and recommendations to the Board on a regular basis. These reports will be used to inform decision-making and policy development.
- **Integration with Broader Governance:** The work of these committees will be integrated into the broader governance structure of the foundation, ensuring that their insights and recommendations are aligned with the organization's overall mission and goals.

## 6.7 Transparent Drafting Process

### Purpose

- **Open and Collaborative Policy Development:** The foundation is committed to a transparent drafting process for new policies, where drafts are shared with the entire organization for review and comment. This openness ensures that all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders have a chance to contribute to the policies that affect their work.
- **Building Trust and Accountability:** By making the drafting process transparent, the foundation builds trust and accountability within the organization, reinforcing its commitment to democratic governance.

### Implementation

- **Draft Sharing and Feedback:** Drafts of new policies or revised policies will be circulated organization-wide with clear instructions on how to provide feedback. Adequate time (e.g., two weeks) will be given for all members to review and comment on the drafts.
- **Feedback Integration:** Feedback received during the review period will be carefully considered and integrated into the final draft where appropriate. The rationale for any major decisions or changes will be communicated back to the organization, ensuring transparency in how feedback is used.
- **Final Review and Approval:** The final draft, incorporating feedback, will be reviewed by the relevant committees or decision-making bodies before being formally adopted. This step ensures that the policy has undergone thorough vetting and reflects the collective input of the organization.

## 6.8 Feedback and Review Processes

### Purpose

- **Continuous Improvement and Responsiveness:** To ensure that the foundation's policies remain relevant and effective, formal feedback mechanisms and regular reviews are essential. These processes enable the organization to respond to emerging challenges and evolving needs, particularly those affecting marginalized and vulnerable groups.

### Implementation

- **Feedback Loops:** Formal feedback loops will be established, allowing staff to provide ongoing input on policies and practices. This feedback will be collected through surveys, suggestion boxes, regular meetings, and other participatory methods. All feedback will be reviewed regularly, and the results will be communicated back to staff along with any actions taken in response.
- **Annual Policy Reviews:** All major policies will undergo an annual review to ensure they remain aligned with the foundation's values and the needs of its members. This review process will be participatory, with opportunities for all staff members to contribute. The findings of the review, along with any proposed changes, will be shared with the entire organization.

# 7: Recruitment and Selection

- **7.1 Introduction to Staff Categories:** At EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, our team is composed of diverse groups, each with specific roles and responsibilities that contribute to the foundation's mission. The recruitment and selection processes are tailored to meet the unique needs of each group while ensuring alignment with our values of inclusivity, equity, and community empowerment.

- **Regular Professional Staff**  
Full-time employees responsible for strategic direction, operational management, and program development. These roles require a high level of expertise and commitment to the foundation's goals.  
*Key Roles:* Project Managers, HR Officers, Financial Analysts, Program Coordinators.
- **Field Cadres**  
Staff members who work directly in the field, particularly in rural areas, engaging with local communities to implement grassroots initiatives. These roles demand strong community engagement skills and a deep understanding of local contexts.  
*Key Roles:* Panchayat Facilitators, Village Facilitators.
- **Volunteers and Part-Time Staff**  
Individuals who contribute to the foundation on a part-time or voluntary basis, supporting various programs and initiatives. These roles are flexible and cater to individuals who may have limited time but are committed to the foundation's mission.  
*Key Roles:* Community Volunteers, Interns, Event Coordinators, Part-Time Project Assistants.

## 7.2 Common Guiding Principles for Recruitment

- **Inclusivity**  
The foundation's recruitment process is designed to be inclusive, prioritizing gender sensitivity, empowerment of marginalized groups, and equitable access for all candidates. We actively seek to engage individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from underrepresented or vulnerable communities, ensuring that our team reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.
- **Transparency**  
Transparency is a core principle in our recruitment process. All stages of the process, from announcement to final selection, are conducted openly, with clear communication to all stakeholders. This approach ensures that the process is fair, accountable, and subject to community scrutiny.
- **Participation and Empowerment**  
We engage candidates in a participatory selection process that values their experiences, perspectives, and potential contributions, especially those from underrepresented groups. Our approach is designed to empower candidates, providing them with opportunities to demonstrate their skills in real-world scenarios and ensuring that their voices are heard throughout the process.

## 7.3 Selection Process Overview for Regular Professional Staff

- **Announcement and Outreach**  
Job openings for Regular Professional Staff are announced through a variety of platforms, including digital job boards, professional networks, social media, and local newspapers. We place special emphasis on targeted outreach to marginalized communities, partnering with NGOs and community organizations to reach potential candidates who may not have access to traditional recruitment channels.

- **Application and Screening**  
Applications are submitted through accessible platforms, ensuring that all candidates have an equal opportunity to apply. Basic eligibility screening is conducted with a focus on inclusivity, ensuring that candidates from diverse backgrounds are considered fairly.
- **Assessment Challenges**  
To assess candidates' capabilities, we use a series of innovative challenges that simulate real-world scenarios they would face in their roles. These include:
  - **Case Study Analysis:** Candidates are provided with a relevant case study and asked to analyze it, propose solutions, and present an implementation plan.
  - **Community Engagement Task:** Candidates participate in or observe community engagement activities, reflecting the foundation's commitment to grassroots participation.
  - **Adaptability Tests:** Candidates may be asked to stay in remote villages for a few days to assess their adaptability, resilience, and ability to work in challenging environments.
- **Panel Interviews and Community Feedback**  
Candidates are interviewed by a diverse panel that includes senior management, representatives from relevant departments, and community members. This participatory approach ensures that the interview process reflects the needs and values of the communities we serve. Community feedback is solicited, particularly for senior roles, to gauge how well candidates align with local expectations.
- **Final Selection and Appointment**  
Candidates are evaluated through a transparent scoring system that considers their performance in assessment challenges, interviews, and peer/community reviews. Preference is given to candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to gender sensitivity, empowerment of marginalized groups, and the foundation's mission. Successful candidates receive an offer letter outlining their role, responsibilities, and terms of employment.

#### **7.4 Selection Process Overview for Field Cadres (Panchayat Facilitators and Village Facilitators)**

- **Announcement and Outreach**  
Recruitment for Field Cadres is conducted through diverse channels, including community networks, local NGOs, and public announcements in local languages. We place particular emphasis on reaching underrepresented groups, such as survivors of gender-based violence and members of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), ensuring that these communities are well-represented among the candidates.
- **Application and Screening**  
Applications are accepted through multiple accessible methods, including verbal applications, community nominations, and digital submissions. The screening process is designed to be inclusive, focusing on candidates' lived experiences and their potential to contribute effectively to community-based initiatives.

- **Village-Based Task Assessments**

Candidates are asked to engage in practical, community-focused tasks that reflect the day-to-day responsibilities of Field Cadres. These tasks include:

- **Organizing Community Meetings:** Candidates organize and facilitate a village meeting on a relevant issue, such as gender-based violence or economic empowerment.
- **Community Mapping Exercise:** Candidates conduct a mapping exercise with local residents, identifying key resources, challenges, and opportunities within the village.

- **Role-Playing Scenarios**

Role-playing scenarios are used to assess candidates' interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. For example, candidates may participate in a scenario where they must mediate a dispute between community members, demonstrating empathy, fairness, and the ability to build consensus.

- **In-Depth Interviews and Community Involvement**

Candidates are interviewed by a panel that includes community representatives, ensuring that the selection process is aligned with local needs and values. These interviews focus on the candidates' experience, commitment to the community, and ability to empower marginalized populations.

- **Final Selection and Appointment**

The final selection process includes public presentations where candidates present their proposed plans for community engagement or development. Community feedback is a key component of this process, ensuring that the selected candidates are those who best align with the needs and expectations of the local population. Successful candidates are appointed through a transparent and fair process.

## 7.5 Selection Process Overview for Volunteers and Part-Time Staff

- **Announcement and Outreach**

Volunteer opportunities are widely announced through community networks, local NGOs, social media, and public forums. Outreach efforts are particularly focused on engaging individuals from marginalized communities, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the foundation's mission.

- **Application and Screening**

The application process for volunteers and part-time staff is simplified and accessible, allowing candidates to apply verbally, digitally, or through community referrals. Screening focuses on the candidates' commitment to the foundation's mission, their availability, and their potential to grow within their roles.

- **Interviews and Orientation**

Informal interviews are conducted by team leads or volunteer coordinators to assess candidates' motivation, alignment with the foundation's values, and their understanding of the role. Following selection, volunteers and part-time staff participate in orientation sessions that cover the foundation's mission, values, operational procedures, and the specific expectations of their roles.

- **Final Selection and Assignment**

Candidates are matched with roles that align with their skills, interests, and availability. Assignment letters are provided, clearly outlining their responsibilities,

expected duration of engagement, and the support available to them during their time with the foundation.

- **Recognition and Development**

The foundation values the contributions of volunteers and part-time staff, recognizing their efforts through certificates, public acknowledgments, and opportunities for skill development. Volunteers and part-time staff are encouraged to participate in training programs that enhance their skills and experiences, contributing to both their personal growth and the foundation's mission.

## **8: Resource Persons Selection, Empanelment, and Engagement**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Resource Persons play a crucial role in enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation's initiatives. These individuals bring specialized knowledge, skills, and experiences that support the foundation's mission of promoting equity, gender justice, and community empowerment. This chapter outlines the principles and processes for the selection, empanelment, and engagement of Resource Persons, ensuring alignment with the foundation's values of inclusivity, transparency, and participation.

### **8.2 General Principles**

- **Inclusivity**
  - The foundation prioritizes inclusivity in the selection of Resource Persons, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from marginalized communities, are considered. Survivors of gender-based violence are given special consideration and support, with opportunities to be groomed into Resource Persons based on their interest and skills. This approach empowers survivors to use their lived experiences to contribute meaningfully to the foundation's work.
- **Transparency**
  - The selection, empanelment, and engagement of Resource Persons are conducted transparently, with clear communication and documentation at every stage. The process is open to scrutiny, ensuring fairness and accountability.
- **Participation and Collaboration**
  - The foundation values the collaborative nature of working with Resource Persons. We view these individuals as partners in our mission, fostering a non-hierarchical relationship that encourages shared learning and mutual respect. Resource Persons are engaged in a participatory manner, contributing to the co-creation of solutions and strategies.
- **Capacity Building and Empowerment**

- The foundation is committed to supporting the ongoing development of Resource Persons, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Survivors of gender-based violence who express interest are groomed and supported to become Resource Persons, utilizing their unique insights and experiences to drive impactful initiatives. We provide opportunities for skill enhancement, knowledge sharing, and professional growth, ensuring that Resource Persons are empowered to contribute effectively to our initiatives.

### **8.3 Selection Process Overview**

- **Identification and Outreach**
  - Potential Resource Persons are identified through community referrals, professional networks, and recommendations from existing partners. The foundation actively seeks individuals who have demonstrated expertise in relevant fields and a commitment to the foundation's values. Survivors of gender-based violence are also identified and encouraged to apply, with tailored support provided to help them transition into these roles.
  - In addition to targeted outreach, the foundation issues open calls for Resource Persons. These calls are publicized through digital platforms, professional associations, and community networks, encouraging a broad range of candidates to apply.
- **Application and Preliminary Screening**
  - Interested candidates are invited to submit applications that include their resume, a statement of interest, and examples of previous work. Survivors of gender-based violence may receive additional guidance during this stage to help articulate their experiences and skills effectively. The application process is designed to be accessible, with options for digital or physical submission.
  - Applications are screened for basic eligibility, focusing on the candidate's relevant experience, alignment with the foundation's mission, and potential to contribute effectively. The screening process prioritizes inclusivity, ensuring that candidates from diverse backgrounds, particularly survivors of gender-based violence, are fairly considered.
- **Detailed Assessment and Interviews**
  - Shortlisted candidates undergo a detailed assessment of their expertise, which may include reviewing their past work, conducting reference checks, and assessing their understanding of the foundation's core areas of focus, such as gender justice and community engagement. Survivors who are transitioning into Resource Person roles are given additional support during this phase to help build their confidence and readiness.
  - Candidates participate in interviews conducted by a panel that includes foundation staff, community representatives, and, where applicable, beneficiaries of the foundation's programs. These interviews are designed to be participatory and conversational, exploring the candidate's approach to collaboration, their understanding of local contexts, and their ability to contribute to the foundation's mission.
  - Depending on the role, candidates may be asked to complete a practical task or demonstration, such as facilitating a workshop, developing a training



module, or leading a community engagement session. These tasks are assessed for their relevance, innovation, and effectiveness.

- **Empanelment of Resource Persons**

- Successful candidates are empaneled as Resource Persons with the foundation. This empanelment includes formal recognition and the creation of a database of Resource Persons that the foundation can call upon for specific projects or initiatives. Empanelment is based on a transparent and merit-based process, with input from all relevant stakeholders.
- Empaneled Resource Persons are provided with a formal agreement that outlines the terms of engagement, including roles and responsibilities, duration of engagement, expected deliverables, and compensation. The agreement is co-designed to ensure mutual understanding and flexibility.

- **Ongoing Engagement and Collaboration**

- Resource Persons are engaged on a project-by-project basis, depending on the needs of the foundation and the specific expertise required. Engagements are designed to be collaborative, with Resource Persons working closely with foundation staff, volunteers, and community members.
- Throughout the engagement, Resource Persons receive continuous feedback from the foundation and the communities they work with. This feedback is used to adapt and improve the work being done, ensuring that it remains relevant and impactful.
- The foundation provides ongoing capacity-building opportunities for Resource Persons, including access to training, workshops, and professional networks. This support is particularly focused on empowering Resource Persons from marginalized backgrounds and survivors of gender-based violence to enhance their skills and leadership capacities.
- Empaneled Resource Persons are encouraged to participate in a broad range of foundation activities, including strategic planning, knowledge sharing sessions, and community events. This participation fosters a deeper connection with the foundation's mission and allows for the continuous exchange of ideas and best practices.

- **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

- The foundation conducts regular evaluations of the work of Resource Persons, focusing on the quality of their contributions, the impact on the communities served, and their alignment with the foundation's values. This evaluation is participatory, involving input from all stakeholders, including community members and foundation staff.
- Feedback from evaluations is shared openly with Resource Persons, and opportunities for reflection and learning are provided. This process is designed to be constructive, helping Resource Persons to grow in their roles and contribute even more effectively to future projects.
- Based on performance and ongoing alignment with the foundation's needs, Resource Persons may be re-empaneled for continued engagement. The foundation values long-term relationships with Resource Persons who consistently demonstrate excellence and commitment to our shared mission.

# 9. Employment Terms

## 9.1 Employment Terms for Regular Staff

### Contracts and Terms

#### Collaborative Contract Formation

- **Process:** All regular staff will participate in a collaborative contract formation process. This process will involve consultations with employees to ensure that their roles, responsibilities, and terms of employment are clearly understood, equitable, and reflective of their individual needs. Contracts will be gender-sensitive, offering flexibility for those with caregiving responsibilities, disabilities, or other special needs.

#### Inclusive Participation

- **Review Process:** Before finalizing contracts, regular staff will engage in a participatory review process where they can discuss and negotiate terms with HR. This ensures that every employee has a voice in defining their employment conditions, making the process transparent and democratic.

### Probation Period

#### Supportive and Flexible Probation

- **Duration:** A six-month probationary period will apply to all new regular staff, but this period will be characterized by support and flexibility. Employees will receive regular, constructive feedback and will be encouraged to provide their own feedback on how they are adapting to the role and what additional support they may need.

#### Participatory Feedback Mechanism

- **Feedback Sessions:** The probationary period will include structured two-way feedback sessions where employees can express their experiences, suggest improvements, and discuss challenges. This participatory approach ensures that the probation process is as much about supporting the employee as it is about evaluating their performance.

### Performance Evaluation

#### Democratic and Transparent Performance Reviews

- **Process:** The concerned employee will participate in a performance evaluation process that is democratic and transparent. Employees will be evaluated not only on their individual performance but also on their contributions to the foundation's

mission and their efforts to support marginalized communities. The evaluation process will include self-assessments, peer reviews, and supervisor feedback, ensuring that the assessment is comprehensive and fair.

#### Collaborative and Inclusive Goal Setting

- **Objective Setting:** Performance goals will be set through a collaborative process where employees are actively involved in defining their objectives. This ensures that goals are aligned with both the foundation's mission and the personal and professional aspirations of the employee. Regular follow-up meetings will provide opportunities to review progress, address challenges, and adjust goals as needed.

## 9.2 Employment Terms for Volunteers

### Agreements and Terms

#### Co-Created Volunteer Agreements

- **Process:** Volunteers will engage in a co-creation process to develop their volunteer agreements, ensuring that their roles, responsibilities, and the duration of their engagement are clearly defined and agreed upon. This participatory approach ensures that volunteers have a say in their commitments, fostering a sense of ownership and inclusion.

#### Flexible and Accessible Roles

- **Design:** Volunteer roles will be designed to be flexible and accessible, accommodating the diverse needs and schedules of volunteers. This inclusivity ensures that volunteering opportunities are open to individuals from all backgrounds, including those with caregiving responsibilities or other commitments.

### Orientation and Support

#### Comprehensive and Inclusive Orientation

- **Training:** Volunteers will participate in a thorough orientation process that includes training on gender sensitivity, community engagement, and working with marginalized groups. This orientation will be tailored to meet the needs of volunteers, ensuring that they feel prepared and supported in their roles.

#### Ongoing Participatory Support

- **Check-Ins:** Volunteers will have regular check-ins with their mentors to discuss their experiences and receive support. A feedback mechanism will be in place, allowing volunteers to share their insights and suggestions for improving volunteer management practices.

### Recognition and Development

## Transparent and Equitable Recognition

- **Acknowledgment:** The foundation will recognize volunteers' contributions through transparent and equitable methods such as certificates, public acknowledgments, and opportunities for skill development. Recognition efforts will be inclusive, ensuring that all volunteers feel valued regardless of the nature or duration of their involvement.

## Participatory Skill Development

- **Opportunities:** Volunteers will have access to training and development opportunities that are collaboratively designed to enhance their skills and experiences. This participatory approach ensures that volunteers can contribute meaningfully to the foundation's mission while also gaining valuable personal and professional growth.

## 9.3 Employment Terms for Resource Persons

### Contracts and Terms

#### Collaborative and Flexible Contracts

- **Development:** Resource persons will be involved in a collaborative process to develop contracts that clearly outline their roles, deliverables, and engagement duration. These contracts will be flexible, allowing for adjustments based on project needs and the resource person's availability, ensuring that their expertise is utilized effectively and fairly.

#### Inclusive Contract Negotiation

- **Process:** Resource persons will have the opportunity to negotiate their contract terms in an inclusive environment, ensuring that their specific needs and preferences are taken into account. This process promotes fairness and transparency in the engagement of external expertise.

### Project-Based Engagement

#### Democratic Project Role Definition

- **Role Definition:** Resource persons will work with the foundation to define their project roles in a democratic manner. This ensures that both the resource person and the foundation have a shared understanding of the project's goals, timelines, and expectations, fostering a collaborative and equitable working relationship.

#### Participatory Performance Evaluation

- **Evaluation:** The performance of resource persons will be evaluated based on the successful completion of project deliverables and their contribution to the

foundation's mission. Feedback will be gathered from project leads, partners, and community stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is participatory and inclusive.

## **Professional Development and Collaboration**

### **Inclusive Capacity Building**

- **Participation:** Resource persons will be invited to participate in professional development workshops, particularly in areas that align with the foundation's mission, such as gender sensitivity and community engagement. These opportunities will be co-designed to meet the needs of resource persons, ensuring their continued growth and effectiveness.

### **Collaborative Working Environment**

- **Collaboration:** Resource persons will be encouraged to collaborate with regular staff and volunteers in a democratic and inclusive environment, fostering knowledge sharing and mutual support. This collaboration ensures that all contributors to the foundation's mission are valued and supported in their roles.

## **9.4 Equity Across All Roles**

### **Commitment to Equity and Inclusion**

- **Objective:** The foundation is committed to creating an equitable working environment where everyone, regardless of their role, has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully and grow personally and professionally. This commitment to equity and inclusion is reflected in every aspect of the employment terms, ensuring that all individuals engaged with the foundation are treated with respect and fairness.

### **Participatory Feedback Mechanism**

- **Continuous Feedback:** A continuous feedback loop will be maintained across all roles, allowing for regular assessment of the terms of engagement and making necessary adjustments to ensure fairness and inclusivity. This approach ensures that the foundation remains responsive to the needs of all individuals engaged in its work, fostering a culture of transparency, participation, and democratic decision-making.

# **10. Capacity Building**

## **10.1 Training and Development**

### **Core Training Areas**

## Gender Sensitivity and Inclusivity

- **Objective:** To ensure all staff, volunteers, and resource persons understand and embody gender sensitivity, recognizing and respecting the diverse identities and experiences of all individuals, regardless of gender, sexuality, caste, class, or background.
- **Content:** Training will cover topics such as gender identity and expression, the spectrum of sexualities, intersectionality, and the impact of systemic discrimination. Case studies and role-playing scenarios will be used to explore real-world challenges and develop practical strategies for promoting inclusivity.
- **Outcome:** Participants will become advocates for gender equity and inclusivity within the foundation and the communities they serve, ensuring that all organizational processes are free from discrimination and bias.

## Participatory Processes and Community Engagement

- **Objective:** To equip staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively engage communities in participatory decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices of marginalized and vulnerable groups are heard and valued.
- **Content:** Training will include methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), community mapping, and inclusive meeting facilitation. Emphasis will be placed on creating safe spaces for dialogue, particularly for marginalized voices.
- **Outcome:** Staff will be skilled in designing and implementing participatory processes that empower communities, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration in all foundation activities.

## Leadership and Ethical Conduct

- **Objective:** To develop leadership qualities in staff that are aligned with the foundation's vision of equity, justice, and humanity, while ensuring that all leaders model ethical behavior and integrity.
- **Content:** Training will focus on leadership styles that promote equity, decision-making processes that are transparent and democratic, and ethical dilemmas in leadership. Additionally, there will be a focus on fostering a culture of accountability and responsibility.
- **Outcome:** Leaders within the foundation will be role models of ethical conduct, driving the organization towards its mission while maintaining a commitment to fairness, transparency, and social justice.

## 10.2 Specialized Training for Field Staff and Resource Persons

### Working with Vulnerable Populations

- **Objective:** To ensure field staff and resource persons are equipped with the specialized skills needed to effectively support and advocate for vulnerable populations, including survivors of gender-based violence, PVTGs, and other marginalized groups.

- **Content:** Training will cover trauma-informed care, legal rights and protections, culturally sensitive approaches, and techniques for empowering survivors. Practical sessions will include simulations and role-plays to prepare staff for real-world scenarios.
- **Outcome:** Field staff and resource persons will be able to provide compassionate, effective support to vulnerable individuals and communities, helping them to access resources, assert their rights, and build resilience.

### **Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment and Discrimination**

- **Objective:** To create a work environment that is intolerant of sexual harassment and discrimination, ensuring that all staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities in maintaining a safe and respectful workplace.
- **Content:** Training will cover the foundation’s policies on sexual harassment and discrimination, legal frameworks, reporting mechanisms, and bystander intervention strategies. Workshops will include scenarios and discussions to deepen understanding and prepare staff to respond appropriately to incidents.
- **Outcome:** A zero-tolerance culture towards harassment and discrimination will be established, with staff empowered to identify, prevent, and address such behaviors swiftly and effectively.

## **10.3 Skill Development**

### **Mentorship Programs**

- **Objective:** To provide ongoing support and development opportunities for survivors and marginalized individuals employed by the foundation, ensuring their personal and professional growth.
- **Content:** The mentorship program will pair experienced staff with mentees, focusing on skill development, career guidance, and personal empowerment. Mentors will receive training on providing effective, empathetic support, while mentees will be encouraged to set and pursue personal goals.
- **Outcome:** Mentees will gain confidence and skills, enabling them to take on more significant roles within the foundation and their communities, while mentors will develop their leadership and coaching abilities.

### **Continuous Learning and Development**

- **Objective:** To promote a culture of continuous learning, ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and resource persons have access to ongoing professional development opportunities.
- **Content:** The foundation will offer regular workshops, webinars, and training sessions on emerging topics relevant to its mission, such as new participatory methods, advances in gender equity, and innovations in community engagement. Staff will be encouraged to participate in external training and conferences to broaden their perspectives and bring new ideas back to the organization.

- **Outcome:** A dynamic, knowledgeable workforce that is continually enhancing its skills and expertise, contributing to the foundation’s innovation and effectiveness in achieving its mission.

### **Cross-Functional Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing**

- **Objective:** To break down silos within the organization, encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing across different teams and functions.
- **Content:** Regular cross-functional workshops and team-building activities will be organized to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration. Staff from different departments will work together on joint projects, sharing insights and best practices.
- **Outcome:** A cohesive, collaborative work environment where knowledge and expertise are shared freely, leading to more innovative and effective solutions to the challenges the foundation seeks to address.

## **10.4 Creating a Progressive, Equitable, and Just Organization**

### **Organizational Culture and Values**

- **Living the Mission:** The foundation will actively promote its mission, vision, and values in all aspects of its work, ensuring that every staff member understands and is committed to these principles. This will be reinforced through regular reflections, discussions, and evaluations of how well the organization is living up to its ideals.
- **Inclusivity and Equity as Core Values:** Inclusivity and equity will be embedded in the foundation’s culture, guiding all policies, practices, and interactions. Regular audits of organizational practices will be conducted to ensure that these values are being upheld and that any barriers to inclusivity are identified and addressed.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- **Ongoing Assessment:** The foundation will implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of its capacity-building initiatives. This will include regular feedback from staff, volunteers, and resource persons, as well as impact assessments of training and development programs.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Based on feedback and assessments, the foundation will continuously refine and improve its capacity-building programs, ensuring they remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the organization’s evolving needs and objectives.

## **11. Performance Management Policy**

### **11.1 Introduction**

- **Purpose:** The purpose of this Performance Management Policy is to establish a collaborative and supportive approach for evaluating and enhancing the contributions of all members at EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. This policy is designed to empower everyone within the foundation, foster an environment of



mutual growth, and align individual and collective efforts with the foundation's mission of equity, justice, and community empowerment. The performance management process will be participatory, transparent, and focused on collective progress rather than individual competition.

- **Scope:** This policy applies to all contributors, including full-time and part-time members, volunteers, and those in temporary roles. The policy is inclusive and recognizes the diverse roles within the foundation, ensuring that the performance management process is equitable and supportive for all.

## 11.2 Objectives

### Goal Alignment

- **Collective Purpose:** To ensure that individual and team contributions are aligned with the organization's strategic goals and priorities, reinforcing the foundation's commitment to equity and social justice. Goals will be set collaboratively, ensuring that they reflect both individual aspirations and the collective mission.

### Development

- **Holistic Growth:** To provide ongoing, collaborative feedback and support that fosters the professional and personal growth of all members. This approach will emphasize skill development, learning, and the holistic well-being of all contributors, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

### Accountability

- **Shared Responsibility:** To establish clear, equitable expectations and accountability mechanisms that are mutually agreed upon and understood by all members. Accountability will be seen as a shared responsibility, promoting a supportive and just work environment.

## 11.3 Performance Management Process

### Goal Setting

#### Objective Setting

- **Collaborative Goal Setting:** All members, in partnership with their teams and leads, will collaboratively set clear, achievable, and meaningful objectives. These objectives will be aligned with the organization's strategic goals and the needs of the communities served. Objectives will be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), with a focus on collective impact and personal growth.

## Development Plans

- **Inclusive Development Plans:** Individual Development Plans (IDPs) will be created to address skill gaps, support growth, and enhance the capacity to contribute to the foundation's mission. These plans will be dynamic and regularly reviewed to reflect evolving goals and needs.

## Performance Monitoring

### Regular Check-ins

- **Participatory Check-ins:** Regular informal check-ins will be conducted within teams to review progress, provide feedback, and address any challenges. These sessions, which should occur at least quarterly, will be designed to be supportive, focusing on collaboration and problem-solving rather than criticism.

### Performance Tracking

- **Transparent Tracking:** Progress will be tracked through a transparent and accessible system that allows all members to document achievements, track progress, and identify areas for improvement collectively. This system will be open to input from all relevant stakeholders, including peers and community representatives.

## Performance Reviews

### Annual Review

- **Inclusive and Reflective Reviews:** A formal performance review will be conducted at least annually. This review will evaluate contributions against set objectives, development plans, and overall impact on the organization and its mission. The review process will be inclusive, incorporating feedback from peers, teams, and where relevant, community stakeholders.

### Self-Assessment

- **Empowering Self-Reflection:** All members will complete a self-assessment as part of the performance review process, reflecting on their achievements, challenges, and areas for growth. This self-assessment will be a tool for empowerment, encouraging everyone to take ownership of their development journey.

### Feedback

- **Constructive and Collaborative Feedback:** Feedback provided during the review will be constructive, focusing on strengths, areas for improvement, and future goals. Feedback will be specific, actionable, and centered on contributions rather than personal attributes, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect.

## Performance Ratings

### Rating Scale

- **Inclusive Rating System:** A standardized rating scale will be used to assess contributions, with categories such as Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Needs Improvement. This scale will be applied equitably, with an emphasis on growth potential and contribution to the collective mission.

### Documentation

- **Transparent Documentation:** Ratings and the rationale behind them will be thoroughly documented, with evidence and specific examples supporting all ratings. Documentation will be shared openly, ensuring accountability and clarity.

## 11.4 Development and Support

### Training and Development

#### Professional Development

- **Equitable Development Opportunities:** The foundation will identify and provide training and development opportunities to address skill gaps and support growth. All members will be encouraged to participate in relevant training programs, workshops, and peer learning sessions, with a focus on building skills that contribute to both individual and organizational growth.

#### Mentorship

- **Supportive Mentorship Programs:** The foundation will offer access to mentorship programs that support development and career advancement. Mentors will be chosen based on their ability to provide guidance in a supportive, non-hierarchical manner, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds.

### Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs)

#### Implementation

- **Collaborative Improvement Plans:** If contributions are not meeting expectations, a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) will be collaboratively developed. The PIP will outline specific issues, improvement goals, and a timeline for achieving these goals. The process will be supportive, focusing on identifying and overcoming barriers to success.

#### Follow-Up

- **Ongoing Support and Monitoring:** Progress on the PIP will be monitored through regular check-ins with teams, providing support and resources to help achieve

improvement. The focus will be on growth and development rather than punitive measures.

## 11.5 Recognition and Rewards

### Recognition Programs

#### Acknowledgment

- **Equitable Recognition:** Contributions and achievements will be recognized through formal and informal recognition programs. Recognition will be inclusive, ensuring that contributions at all levels are valued, particularly those that align with the foundation's mission of supporting marginalized communities.

#### Feedback

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Positive reinforcement and acknowledgment of outstanding contributions will be provided during regular check-ins and reviews. Recognition will be specific, focusing on how actions have positively impacted the organization and its mission.

### Rewards

#### Compensation

- **Fair and Transparent Compensation:** Contributions will be linked to compensation decisions, including salary increases and bonuses, in a manner that is fair, transparent, and aligned with the foundation's commitment to equity. Compensation policies will ensure that all members are rewarded equitably for their contributions.

#### Promotions

- **Inclusive Career Advancement:** High contributors will be considered for promotions and increased responsibilities as part of their growth. The promotion process will be transparent and equitable, ensuring that opportunities for advancement are accessible to all, particularly those from marginalized groups.

## 11.6 Addressing Performance Issues

### Performance Counseling

#### Informal Discussions

- **Supportive Interventions:** Minor issues will be addressed through informal, supportive discussions and feedback before escalating into formal processes. The focus will be on understanding challenges and providing the necessary support to overcome them.

## Formal Procedures

### Performance Improvement

- **Structured Support:** If issues persist, formal procedures will be initiated, including the implementation of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and a structured process for addressing continued deficiencies. The approach will remain supportive, with an emphasis on helping individuals succeed.

### Disciplinary Action

- **Equitable Disciplinary Measures:** If performance does not improve despite support and intervention, disciplinary action may be considered in line with the organization's policies. Measures will be applied fairly and equitably, with the member's well-being and dignity respected at all times.

## 11.7 Responsibilities

### All Members

#### Engagement

- **Active Participation:** All members are expected to actively engage in the performance management process, set and work towards achieving objectives, and seek feedback and development opportunities. Members are also encouraged to contribute to the collective growth of their teams and the organization.

### Leads

#### Support

- **Guidance and Facilitation:** Leads are responsible for providing clear guidance, regular feedback, and support. They will facilitate goal setting, reviews, and development planning in a manner that is inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the foundation's values.

### HR and Support Teams

#### Oversight

Ensuring Equity and Compliance: HR and support teams will oversee the performance management process, ensuring compliance with this policy and providing training and support to all participants. They will also be responsible for addressing related issues in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with the organization's commitment to non-discrimination and inclusivity.

# 12. Compensation Benefits and Participatory Budgeting Policy

## 12.1 Introduction

The Compensation Benefits and Participatory Budgeting Policy of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation outlines the comprehensive framework for providing fair, equitable, and transparent compensation, benefits, and resource allocation to all members. This policy is designed to uphold the foundation's values of gender sensitivity, equity, justice, non-discrimination, and non-hierarchical governance, while ensuring that resources are allocated in a way that supports the foundation's mission and the well-being of its members.

## 12.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish clear guidelines for determining compensation, benefits, and resource allocation for all contributors.
- Ensure fairness and equity in the distribution of compensation and resources.
- Promote transparency in the foundation's compensation, benefits, and budgeting practices.
- Empower teams to take ownership of their budgeting and resource needs through a participatory process.
- Align resource allocation with the strategic goals of the foundation and the needs of the communities served.

## 12.3 Scope

This policy applies to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time, part-time, volunteers, and those in temporary roles. It covers all aspects of compensation, including base stipends, bonuses, and other financial incentives, as well as the development of annual budgets, including action plans, HR needs, and financial requirements.

## 12.4 Compensation Structure

### 12.4.1 Stipend Framework

- **Equity and Competitiveness:** The foundation's stipend structure is designed to be competitive with cooperative sector standards and reflective of the organization's financial capabilities while ensuring equity among all members.
- **Stipend Bands:** Stipends are determined based on defined bands that correspond to roles, responsibilities, and levels of contribution within the foundation.
- **Periodic Reviews:** The stipend structure is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains equitable, competitive, and aligned with the organization's values and goals.

#### 12.4.2 Role Evaluation and Classification

- **Role Evaluation:** All roles within the foundation are evaluated based on responsibilities, required skills, experience, and contributions to the foundation's mission.
- **Role Classification:** Roles are classified into different levels, with each level corresponding to a stipend band that reflects the relative value of the role within the foundation.

#### 12.4.3 Pay Band Structure

- **Definition:** Pay bands are defined ranges of compensation for each role level or classification. They are designed to offer flexibility in stipend decisions while maintaining internal equity and alignment with the foundation's values.
- **Components of Pay Bands:** Each band consists of a minimum, midpoint, and maximum stipend. The midpoint represents the standard for the role, while the minimum and maximum allow for variations based on experience, contributions, and other factors. The structure will include basic components such as Basic Pay, Housing Allowance, Travel Allowances, other allowances, and statutory components.

#### 12.4.4 Determining Individual Stipend

- **Starting Pay:** The starting pay for new members is typically set between the minimum and midpoint of the band for their role level, depending on their qualifications and experience.
- **Contribution-Based Adjustments:** Increases within a band may be awarded based on regular evaluations of contributions, with those who exceed expectations being eligible for higher increases.
- **Market Adjustments:** Periodic reviews may lead to adjustments in bands to ensure alignment with cooperative sector standards and the foundation's commitment to equity and fairness.

#### 12.4.5 Pay Equity

- **Equal Pay for Equal Contribution:** The foundation is committed to ensuring equal pay for equal contributions regardless of gender, race, religion, or other protected characteristics.
- **Pay Adjustments:** Adjustments in stipends may be based on performance, market changes, role reclassification, or cost-of-living considerations.

#### 12.4.6 Stipend Reviews and Adjustments

- **Annual Reviews:** Stipends are reviewed annually during the contribution evaluation process, taking into account individual contributions, market conditions, and the foundation's budget.
- **Role Transition Adjustments:** When a member transitions to a new role, their stipend will be adjusted according to the new role and its corresponding band.

## 12.5 Benefits Package

### 12.5.1 Health and Wellness

- **Health Coverage:** The foundation provides comprehensive health coverage, including medical, dental, and vision plans for all eligible members.
- **Wellness Programs:** Members have access to wellness programs, including mental health support, gym memberships, and health screenings, reflecting the foundation's commitment to holistic well-being.

### 12.5.2 Future Security

- **Retirement Plans:** The foundation offers a retirement savings plan with contributions to help members plan for their future.
- **Financial Planning Support:** Members can access resources and counseling to manage their retirement savings effectively.

### 12.5.3 Time Off

- **Annual Leave:** Members are entitled to 20 days of paid annual leave per year, which accrues on a monthly basis.
- **Sick Leave:** Members are entitled to 10 days of paid sick leave per year. Unused sick leave may be carried over to the following year, subject to a maximum accrual limit.
- **Parental Leave:** The foundation provides 12 weeks of paid leave for new parents, supporting them during the birth or adoption of a child.
- **Public Holidays:** Members are entitled to paid leave on all recognized public holidays.

### 12.5.4 Additional Benefits

- **Professional Development:** The foundation supports growth by providing financial assistance for courses, certifications, and conferences that contribute to professional development.
- **Education Assistance:** Members pursuing higher education or job-related courses may be eligible for tuition reimbursement, subject to approval.
- **Security and Protection:** The foundation offers life insurance and short-term/long-term disability insurance to provide financial protection for members and their families.
- **Support Programs:** Confidential counseling and support services are available to members and their immediate family through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

## 12.6 Participatory Budgeting Process

### 12.6.1 Team-Led Budget Development



- **Collaborative Planning:** Each team or unit, led by their team lead, will engage in a collaborative planning process to identify their annual needs. This process will include input from all team members and will consider the specific needs of their area of focus, whether thematic or operational.
- **Inclusive Participation:** The budgeting process will be participatory, ensuring that all team members have a voice in identifying priorities, setting goals, and determining the resources needed to achieve them. This participatory approach reflects the foundation's commitment to equity and non-hierarchical decision-making.

### 12.6.2 Components of the Annual Budget

- **Action Plan:** Each team will develop an action plan outlining their objectives and the activities they plan to undertake in the coming year. This plan should be aligned with the foundation's strategic goals and the specific needs of the communities they serve.
- **HR Needs:** Teams will assess their HR needs, including the roles and contributions required to implement their action plan. This assessment will include considerations for compensation, training, and other support needed to empower team members to succeed.
- **Financial Requirements:** Teams will identify the financial resources required to implement their action plan, including compensation, operational costs, program expenses, and other necessary expenditures. These financial needs should be clearly documented and justified.

### 12.6.3 Presentation and Negotiation in Open Forums

- **Presentation of Budgets:** Once the annual budgets have been developed, each team or unit will present their proposed budget in an open forum (Samvad Sabha). This presentation will include an overview of the team's action plan, HR needs, and financial requirements.
- **Open Discussion:** The open forum will provide an opportunity for all members of the organization to discuss and negotiate the proposed budgets. This discussion will be guided by principles of transparency, equity, and collaboration, ensuring that all voices are heard.
- **Consensus-Building:** The goal of the open forum is to build consensus on the allocation of resources across the foundation. Teams will work together to prioritize needs, make trade-offs, and ensure that resources are distributed in a way that aligns with the foundation's mission and values.

### 12.6.4 Finalization and Approval

- **Final Adjustments:** Based on the discussions and feedback from the open forums, teams may make final adjustments to their budgets. These adjustments should reflect the collective input and consensus reached during the forum.
- **Approval Process:** Once the final budgets are agreed upon, they will be submitted for approval by the relevant decision-making body within the foundation. This

approval process will be transparent and consistent with the foundation's governance policies.

## **12.7 Incentives and Recognition**

### **12.7.1 Contribution-Based Incentives**

- **Annual Bonuses:** Members may be eligible for annual bonuses based on individual and collective contributions to the foundation's mission.
- **Incentive Programs:** The foundation may offer additional programs to recognize and reward exceptional contributions.

### **12.7.2 Recognition**

- **Recognition Initiatives:** The foundation has various initiatives to recognize contributions, such as Member of the Month, service acknowledgments, and peer recognition.
- **Non-Monetary Rewards:** Members may also be recognized through non-monetary rewards such as additional leave days, public acknowledgment, or gift vouchers.

## **12.8 Monitoring and Evaluation of the Budgeting Process**

### **12.8.1 Ongoing Monitoring**

- **Continuous Oversight:** The foundation will establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of budget implementation, ensuring that resources are utilized effectively and in alignment with the approved plans. Each team will be responsible for tracking their expenditures and progress towards their objectives.
- **Regular Check-Ins:** Teams will conduct regular check-ins, possibly quarterly, to review budget performance, assess if adjustments are needed, and ensure that spending remains on track. These check-ins will be documented, and any significant deviations from the budget will be discussed openly with the relevant stakeholders.

### **12.8.2 Participatory Review Sessions**

- **Mid-Year Review:** A mid-year participatory review session will be held to assess the progress of the annual budgets. This session will involve all teams and allow for the collective evaluation of how resources are being allocated and used.
- **Feedback Integration:** Feedback from the mid-year review will be integrated into the ongoing budget management process. Adjustments may be made to address any challenges or opportunities identified, ensuring that the foundation remains responsive and adaptive to changing circumstances.

### **12.8.3 Annual Evaluation**

- **Year-End Evaluation:** At the end of the fiscal year, a comprehensive evaluation of the budgeting process will be conducted. This evaluation will assess the overall

effectiveness of the participatory budgeting process, including how well resources were aligned with strategic goals and the needs of the communities served.

- **Outcome Reporting:** The results of the annual evaluation, including key learnings and recommendations, will be reported to the entire organization. This transparency ensures accountability and provides a foundation for improving the budgeting process in future cycles.

## 12.9 Transparency and Accountability

### 12.9.1 Financial Reporting

- **Open Financial Statements:** The foundation will maintain transparency by providing regular financial reports that are accessible to all members. These reports will include detailed information on budget allocations, expenditures, and financial health.
- **Public Disclosure:** Key financial information, particularly concerning the allocation and use of funds, will be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability to the communities the foundation serves.

### 12.9.2 Accountability Mechanisms

- **Grievance Mechanisms:** Members who have concerns about the budgeting process or resource allocations can raise these through established grievance mechanisms. These concerns will be addressed transparently and fairly, with outcomes communicated clearly.
- **Audits:** Regular financial audits will be conducted to ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards. The results of these audits will be shared with the entire organization and, where appropriate, with external stakeholders.

# 13. TRAVEL POLICY

**13.1 Introduction** The EquiVoice Alliance Foundation Travel Policy sets out clear guidance on issues relating to all travel that members may undertake in pursuance of their duties. This policy highlights matters pertaining to cost-effectiveness, safety, and compliance with the values espoused by the foundation so that travel is conducted responsibly, is equitable to all, and supports the mission of the foundation.

**13.2 Policy Objective** This policy aims to ensure:

- That the foundation carries out all travel that is necessary and justified in relation to the realization of organizational goals.
- Clear procedures concerning travel authorization, booking, and expense reimbursement are provided.
- The safety and well-being of traveling members are guaranteed.
- The adoption of sustainable and ethical travel practices is promoted.

**13.3 Scope** This policy applies to all EquiVoice Alliance Foundation members, whether full-time, part-time, volunteer, or resource persons, whenever required to travel in the course of organizational activities. It covers transportation, accommodation, meals, and any other related expenses.

## **13.4 Travel Authorization**

### **13.4.1 Pre-Approval Process**

- **Authorization Required:** Every travel must have the necessary prior approval of the concerned team lead or any other delegated authority to ensure its alignment with organizational priorities and budget provisions.
- **Travel Request Submission:** A Travel Request Form must be submitted, detailing the purpose, itinerary, estimated costs, and justification of the travel. This form must be submitted no later than two weeks before the intended travel date, or as soon as possible in the case of urgent trips.

### **13.4.2 Travel Justification**

- **Alignment with Mission:** Travel should be directly related to the foundation's mission and strategic goals. The justification should clearly explain how the travel will serve these goals.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** It should be checked that the travel is the most appropriate and cost-effective means of achieving the desired outcome. Alternative means, such as virtual meetings, should be considered whenever applicable.

## **13.5 Booking of Travel**

### **13.5.1 Booking Procedures**

- **Preferred Vendors:** The foundation will have some preferred vendors for travel in the form of transportation and accommodation. Members are encouraged to adhere to such vendors to maintain uniformity and enjoy the benefits of cost savings and quality service.
- **Self-Booking:** When there is no preferred vendor for a particular travel, members are open to plan the travel on their own within the foundation's guidelines around cost, safety, and sustainability. Members should obtain pre-approval before making any such bookings.

### **13.5.2 Class of Travel**

- **Transport:** The class of travel should be affordable and appropriate to the requirement, typically involving economy class for flights and standard class for trains and buses. Exceptions, such as long-distance flights or specific health-related needs, will require prior approval.
- **Accommodation:** Accommodation should be simple, safe, and comfortable, typically in budget or mid-range hotels. The choice of accommodation must reflect the foundation's commitment to being cost-effective and ethical, supporting the local economy where possible.

### 13.5.3 Sustainable and Ethical Travel

- **Environmental Impact:** Members are encouraged to choose travel options that minimize environmental impact, such as using public transportation, carpooling, or selecting eco-friendly accommodations.
- **Support to Local Economies:** Members should prioritize booking with local vendors and businesses whose values align with the foundation's, such as equity, social justice, and sustainability. This not only supports local businesses but also enriches the cultural experience. Examples include:
  - **Local Restaurants and Cafés:** Use family-run, locally-operated restaurants that serve authentic, homemade cuisine. Alternatively, dine at street vendor outlets offering traditional dishes.
  - **Boutique Hotels and Guesthouses:** Where available and feasible, opt for small, independently-owned hotels that have a direct impact on the local economy.
  - **Artisans and Craft Markets:** Purchasing from local artisans helps preserve traditional craftsmanship and supports small businesses.
  - **Local Transportation Services:** Using local transportation, like auto-rickshaws, cycle rickshaws, or community-based taxi services, supports local drivers and reduces environmental impact.
  - **Social Enterprises:** Support women's cooperatives or non-profit businesses that reinvest profits into community development or social ventures.

### 13.6 Travel Expenses

#### 13.6.1 Reimbursable Expenses

- **Reimbursable Expenses:** The foundation will reimburse members for reasonable and necessary travel expenses, including transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, and incidental expenses incurred during authorized travel.
- **Documentation Required:** Members requesting reimbursement need to include receipts and full documentation of the expenses incurred. This typically includes the date, amount, and nature of each expense, including justification where warranted.

#### 13.6.2 Non-Reimbursable Expenses

- **Personal Expenses:** Expenses related to entertainment, alcohol, or other personal items are not allowable. Members should clearly distinguish between business and personal expenses when submitting claims.
- **Unapproved Upgrades:** Any upgrades in travel class, accommodation, or other services exceeding the foundation's guidelines will not be reimbursed unless they are pre-approved due to specific needs.

#### 13.6.3 Travel and Dearness Entitlement

- **Place-Based Entitlement:** Travel and dearness entitlements will not be based on designation but on the location of expenditure. For rural areas and different cities in India, specific rates will ensure that entitlements reflect the cost of living and other local factors.

- **Foreign Travel Allowances:** For international travel, the foundation will provide flexible allowances to cover potential expenses. These allowances will be pre-approved by the relevant authority and adjusted according to the destination's cost of living and specific requirements.

#### 13.6.4 Situations Without Proper Bills or Invoices

- **Rural Areas and Difficult Expenditures:** In cases where it is difficult to obtain proper bills or invoices, such as in rural areas or for certain types of expenditures, members should use the self-declaration process to provide a clear and accountable record of the expenses incurred.
- **Self-Declaration Process:**
  - **Self-Declaration Form:** Members will be required to complete a self-declaration form provided by the foundation. It should include:
    - **Description of Expense:** A clear description of the expense, including what was purchased or paid for, and the context in which the expenditure occurred.
    - **Reason for Lack of Documentation:** An explanation of why a valid bill or invoice could not be obtained, such as cash payments in areas without a formal billing system, transactions with small vendors who don't issue receipts, or emergency purchases.
    - **Expense Amount:** The exact amount of the expense.
    - **Date and Location:** The date and location where the expense was incurred.
    - **Supporting Information:** Where possible, members should attach any available supporting information, such as handwritten receipts, photographs, or witness statements/verification from another member or local contact.
  - **Approval Process:** The self-declaration form, along with any supporting information, should be submitted to the relevant team lead or designated authority. The authority will review the declaration and may request additional information or clarification if necessary. Reimbursement will be approved or denied based on the justification provided, with the foundation striving to be sensitive to challenges while maintaining accountability.
  - **Record Keeping:** Approved self-declarations will be kept on file as part of the official record for the trip, ensuring transparency and accountability for all expenses, even those without formal documentation.

#### 13.6.5 Documentation and Reimbursement with Local Vendors

- **Invoices and Receipts:** Members should request invoices or receipts wherever possible from local vendors. However, it is recognized that in some cases, particularly with small or rural vendors, formal documentation may not be available. In such cases, the self-declaration process should be followed.
- **Impact Reporting:** Members are encouraged to include in their travel report (section 13.8.1) a brief description of their interactions with local vendors, noting any positive impacts or challenges faced. This information will help the foundation assess the effectiveness of its policy on supporting local economies and refine its practices.

### 13.6.6 Expense Reporting

- **Timely Submission:** Expense reports must be submitted within two weeks of the completion of travel. Late submissions may result in delays in reimbursement or denial of claims.
- **Simplified Procedures:** The foundation will provide a standardized expense report template to streamline the submission process, ensuring clarity and ease of use for all members.

### 13.7 Travel Safety and Security

#### 13.7.1 Safety Precautions

- **Emergency Contacts:** Members must provide their emergency contact information and details of their itinerary to the foundation before departure. This ensures that the foundation can respond promptly in case of an emergency.
- **Health and Safety Guidelines:** Members must adhere to health and safety guidelines relevant to the destination, including vaccination requirements, travel advisories, and local laws. The foundation will provide necessary support and information to help members prepare for travel.

#### 13.7.2 Security Measures

- **Risk Assessment:** Before travel, a risk assessment should be conducted for destinations that may pose safety or security risks. This assessment will determine whether additional precautions or adjustments to the travel plans are necessary.
- **Security Support:** For travel to high-risk areas, the foundation may arrange for additional security measures, such as local guides, secure transportation, or communication tools to ensure the safety of members.

### 13.8 Post-Travel Procedures

#### 13.8.1 Reporting

- **Travel Report:** Upon returning, members are required to submit a brief travel report outlining the key activities, outcomes, and learnings from the trip. This report helps the foundation assess the value and impact of the travel and informs future decisions.
- **Expense Submission:** Members must also submit their expense report with all required documentation within two weeks of completing the travel.

#### 13.8.2 Feedback and Evaluation

- **Travel Experience:** Members are encouraged to provide feedback on their travel experience, including any challenges faced and suggestions for improvement. This feedback is valuable for refining the foundation's travel policies and practices.
- **Policy Review:** The foundation will periodically review the Travel Policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Feedback from members, including their experiences and suggestions, will be considered during these reviews.

### 13.9 Continuous Improvement and Policy Adaptation

- **Ongoing Monitoring:** The foundation will continuously monitor the effectiveness of its Travel Policy by gathering feedback from members and analyzing travel reports. This will help identify areas where the policy may need to be adjusted to better meet the needs of the foundation and its members.
- **Incorporating Best Practices:** The foundation is committed to adopting best practices in travel management, sustainability, and ethical considerations. As new practices emerge or as the operational context evolves, the foundation may update its travel policies to reflect these changes.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** Policy revisions will be made in consultation with key stakeholders within the foundation, ensuring that any changes are well-informed and broadly supported. This participatory approach aligns with the foundation's commitment to inclusivity and transparency.
- **Annual Review:** The Travel Policy will undergo a formal review at least once a year. During this review, all feedback, travel reports, and relevant data will be considered to make necessary adjustments. This ensures that the policy remains up-to-date and effective in supporting the foundation's work.

### 14.1 Introduction

The policy on leave at EquiVoice Alliance Foundation is carefully structured to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and transparency in outlining the various types of leaves available. It aims to provide all members—whether at the field level or in higher-level teams—with the time off they need for personal, health, and family reasons. This policy reflects the foundation's commitment to promoting work-life balance, gender sensitivity, and equity within a supportive and productive workplace.

### 14.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define the types of leave available to all members, including specific provisions for gender minorities and the unique challenges faced by field teams.
- Ensure equitable access to leave entitlements while maintaining organizational productivity across all levels of the foundation.
- Support the well-being of all members by providing adequate time off for rest, recovery, and personal matters, regardless of their role or location.
- Align with legal requirements and global best practices in employee welfare, while implementing safeguards to prevent misuse.

### 14.3 Scope

This policy applies to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time, part-time, volunteers, and resource persons, whether they are working in the field, in office-



based roles, or in higher-level management. It covers all forms of leave, including annual leave, sick leave, parental leave, menstrual leave, gender affirmation leave, and other special leaves, ensuring inclusivity for all genders and sexual orientations.

## 14.4 Types of Leave

### 14.4.1 Annual Leave

- **Entitlement:** All full-time members are entitled to 20 days of paid annual leave per year, accrued on a monthly basis. Part-time members will receive a pro-rated amount of annual leave based on their working hours.
- **Carryover:** Members may carry over up to 10 days of unused annual leave into the next calendar year. Any leave beyond this limit will be forfeited unless otherwise approved due to exceptional circumstances.
- **Scheduling:** Annual leave should be scheduled in advance and approved by the team lead, considering the operational needs of the foundation. Flexibility will be provided to accommodate the unpredictable nature of fieldwork while ensuring that both field and office teams are not unduly burdened.

### 14.4.2 Sick Leave

- **Entitlement:** All full-time members are entitled to 10 days of paid sick leave per year. Part-time members receive a pro-rated amount. Sick leave is intended to cover absences due to illness or injury.
- **Extended Sick Leave:** If a member requires more than 10 days of sick leave in a year, additional leave may be granted on a case-by-case basis, with appropriate medical documentation.
- **Reporting:** Members should notify their team lead as soon as possible when taking sick leave. For absences longer than three consecutive days, a medical certificate may be required, with consideration given to field staff who may face challenges in obtaining such documentation.

### 14.4.3 Maternity and Paternity Leave

- **Maternity Leave:** The foundation provides 26 weeks of paid maternity leave for birthing parents, which can be taken before and/or after the birth of the child. Additional unpaid leave may be granted for up to 12 weeks.
- **Paternity Leave:** Non-birthing parents are entitled to 6 weeks of paid paternity leave, which can be taken within the first year of the child's birth or adoption.
- **Adoption Leave:** Members adopting a child are entitled to the same leave as biological parents, depending on their role in the adoption.
- **Notification:** Members should inform their team and HR at least 6 weeks before the intended leave date. Flexibility is provided to adjust planning according to the needs of the family, particularly for field staff who may need additional time to coordinate leave with travel and work schedules.

### 14.4.4 Menstrual Leave

- **Entitlement:** All members who menstruate are entitled to up to 3 days of paid menstrual leave per month. This leave is provided in addition to sick leave and annual leave, recognizing the specific needs associated with menstruation, particularly for those in physically demanding field roles.
- **Flexibility:** Members may choose to take menstrual leave as full days or half-days, depending on their personal needs. No medical documentation is required for this leave.

#### 14.4.5 Gender Affirmation Leave

- **Entitlement:** Members undergoing gender affirmation procedures or related healthcare needs are entitled to up to 30 days of paid leave per year, which can be taken consecutively or in parts as needed. Additional unpaid leave may be requested, subject to approval.
- **Notification:** Members should provide notice and relevant medical documentation to HR and their team lead as early as possible to facilitate planning, with consideration for field members who may require extended leave due to the logistical challenges of their roles.

#### 14.4.6 Bereavement Leave

- **Entitlement:** Members are entitled to up to 10 days of paid bereavement leave following the death of an immediate family member (spouse, partner, child, parent, sibling). Additional leave may be requested in exceptional circumstances.
- **Extended Leave:** If additional time is needed, members may request unpaid leave or use their annual leave entitlement, with flexibility provided for those in remote or field locations where immediate return to work may not be feasible.

#### 14.4.7 Special Leave

- **Compassionate Leave:** Members are eligible to take up to 5 days' paid compassionate leave for situations like the serious illness of a family member or a personal crisis.
- **Unpaid Leave:** Members may apply for unpaid leave for personal reasons not covered by other types of leave when absolutely necessary. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with sensitivity to the unique needs of both field- and office-based staff.
- **Leave for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence:** Members who are survivors of gender-based violence are entitled to up to 10 days of paid leave per year for recovery, legal matters, or support services. Strict confidentiality will be maintained, with special considerations for the safety and privacy of field staff.
- **Mental Health Leave:** Members are entitled to up to 5 days of paid mental health leave per year to manage stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges. This leave can be taken flexibly and does not require medical documentation, particularly recognizing the mental health challenges faced by field teams in demanding environments.
- **Community Event Leave:** Employees belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), or Persons with Disabilities (PwD) can

avail themselves of up to 5 days of paid leave per year to participate in significant community events. These events may include cultural celebrations, advocacy-related activities, conferences, or other gatherings important for their identity and community engagement. This leave supports their active participation in their communities, promoting their well-being and sense of belonging.

#### 14.4.8 Menopause Leave

- **Legal Entitlement:** Members experiencing menopause are entitled to up to 5 days of paid leave per year to address the symptoms associated with menopause.
- **Flexibility:** Members can take menopause leave as full or half days based on their needs. The leave is designed to be flexible and supportive, with no requirement for medical documentation.
- **Field Staff Consideration:** Additional flexibility will be provided for field staff to accommodate the physical and emotional demands of their work, ensuring that menopause leave can be taken as needed.

### 14.5 Leave Application and Approval Process

#### 14.5.1 Application Procedure

- **Request Submission:** Leave requests should be submitted using the foundation's leave application form, ideally at least two weeks in advance for planned leave. For unplanned leave, members should notify their team lead as soon as possible.
- **Approval Process:** All leave requests are subject to approval by the team lead, who will consider the operational needs of the team and the foundation. In cases where leave is denied, alternatives such as rescheduling may be offered. The approval process will ensure fairness and consistency, taking into account the distinct challenges faced by field teams and office staff.

#### 14.5.2 Documentation Requirements

- **Medical Documentation:** For extended sick leave, maternity leave, or gender affirmation leave, members may be required to provide medical documentation to support their leave request. Flexibility will be provided to field staff who may have difficulty obtaining such documentation.
- **Other Documentation:** For special leave types, such as bereavement or compassionate leave, additional documentation may be requested to verify the circumstances. For mental health and menstrual leave, no documentation is required.

### 14.6 Mitigation and Misuse Prevention

#### 14.6.1 Monitoring and Leave Tracking

- **Leave Tracking Systems:** The foundation will establish an HR system that ensures no member's leave goes unnoticed, guaranteeing fairness and equality in leave tracking for everyone. This system will also ensure that leave is not misused, catering to the needs of both field and office-based staff.

- **Regular Audits:** Periodic audits of leave records will be conducted to ensure compliance with the policy and detect any misuse. These audits will be sensitive to the operational realities of fieldwork, ensuring that tracking does not impose an undue burden on field staff.

#### 14.6.2 Managerial Oversight and Training

- **Supervisory:** Team leaders will be responsible for reviewing and approving leave requests. They will be trained to enforce the policy fairly and consistently across all teams, while also recognizing and addressing the unique needs of both field and office-based staff, understanding the specific challenges faced by field teams.
- **Team Leads Training:** All team leads will receive training to raise their awareness of handling leave requests, recognizing possible indicators of misuse, and ensuring confidentiality and fairness. The training will be based on scenarios relevant to both field and office settings.

#### 14.6.3 Peer Accountability and Cultural Reinforcement

- **Fostering a Responsible Culture:** The foundation will promote a workplace culture where responsible leave usage is embraced, and where employees understand the potential impact of misuse on their colleagues and the organization, regardless of their role or location.
- **Peer Oversight:** Teams will be encouraged to communicate openly about workload distribution during leave periods, fostering a sense of shared responsibility, which is particularly critical for maintaining team cohesion in field settings.

#### 14.6.4 Consequences for Misuse

- **Consequences Clearly Defined:** The policy clearly outlines the consequences of misusing leave, including disciplinary action for those who take leave under false pretenses or without proper authorization. This applies equally to all members, whether in the field or in office roles.
- **Fair and Consistent Enforcement:** Disciplinary actions related to leave misuse will be applied fairly and consistently across all members, with transparency and consideration of the different challenges faced by field and office teams.

#### 14.7 Periodic Review of Policies and Feedback

- **Continuous Feedback Loop:** The foundation will regularly solicit feedback from members and team leads on the effectiveness of the leave policy and any issues observed with its implementation. This feedback will be used to make necessary adjustments, ensuring the policy meets the needs of all team members, whether in the field or office-based.
- **Policy Updates:** The Leave Policy will be reviewed and updated periodically to remain fair, effective, and aligned with the foundation's values. Updates will reflect emerging best practices, changes in legal requirements, or organizational needs, with particular attention to the evolving challenges faced by field teams and higher-level staff.

# 15. Conflict Resolution Guidelines

## 15.1 Introduction

The EquiVoice Alliance Foundation's Conflict Resolution Guidelines detail the procedures and principles for addressing and resolving conflicts within the organization. The foundation is fully committed to fostering a collaborative, respectful, and inclusive work environment, ensuring that conflicts are resolved fairly and justly.

## 15.2 Purpose

The guidelines aim to:

- Establish a structured process for resolving disputes fairly and quickly.
- Encourage open communication and mutual understanding among members.
- Ensure that conflicts are resolved in a way that aligns with the foundation's values of equity, justice, and non-discrimination.
- Promote a positive work environment where all team members feel valued and respected.

## 15.3 Scope

These guidelines apply to all members of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, whether full-time, part-time, volunteers, or resource persons. They cover all types of conflicts within the organization, including interpersonal disputes, professional disagreements, and conflicts related to organizational practices or policies.

## 15.4 Principles

### 15.4.1 Open Communication

- **Positive Conflict Addressing:** Members are encouraged to address conflicts directly and openly, engaging in honest and respectful dialogue. Open communication prevents misunderstandings and fosters a culture of transparency and trust.
- **Listening and Understanding:** Active listening is key to conflict resolution. Members are encouraged to listen empathetically to each other's perspectives and understand the underlying concerns.

### 15.4.2 Confidentiality

- **Privacy:** Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the conflict resolution process. Information shared during mediation or resolution efforts will be kept private and only disclosed with the consent of the involved parties, except where legally required.
- **Trust:** Maintaining confidentiality builds trust in the conflict resolution process and encourages members to engage openly.

### 15.4.3 Fairness and Equity

- **Unbiased Resolution:** Conflicts will be resolved impartially, free from favoritism. All parties involved in a conflict will have an equal opportunity to present their perspectives and be heard.
- **Equitable Solutions:** The foundation aims to resolve conflicts in a way that is fair and just to all parties, considering the impact on both the individuals involved and the organization as a whole.

## 15.5 Conflict Resolution Process

### 15.5.1 Informal Resolution

- **Direct Communication:** Members are encouraged to resolve conflicts informally through direct communication. This may involve a face-to-face discussion or a mediated conversation facilitated by a neutral third party.
- **Peer/Team Lead Support:** If direct communication does not resolve the conflict, members may seek support from a peer or team lead to facilitate further discussion and resolution.

### 15.5.2 Mediation

- **Neutral Mediator:** If informal resolution is unsuccessful, a neutral mediator may be appointed to assist in resolving the conflict. The mediator's role is to facilitate communication, clarify issues, and help the parties reach a mutually acceptable solution.
- **Mediation Process:** The mediation process involves structured meetings where the mediator helps the parties explore their concerns, identify common ground, and develop potential solutions. Mediation is voluntary, and all parties must agree to participate.

### 15.5.3 Formal Resolution

- **Escalation:** If mediation does not result in a resolution, the conflict may be escalated to a formal resolution process, involving a formal review by a designated conflict resolution committee or HR team.
- **Investigation:** The committee will conduct a thorough investigation of the conflict, including interviews with the involved parties and any witnesses, a review of relevant documentation, and an assessment of the situation.
- **Decision and Action:** Based on the investigation, the committee will make a decision and recommend actions to resolve the conflict. This may include corrective measures, policy changes, or other interventions. The decision will be communicated to all parties involved.

## 15.6 Post-Resolution Follow-Up

### 15.6.1 Monitoring and Support

- **Ongoing Support:** After a conflict has been resolved, the foundation will provide ongoing support to the involved parties to ensure that the resolution is effective and

sustainable. This may include follow-up meetings, additional mediation, and access to counseling or other resources as needed.

- **Monitoring:** The situation will be monitored to ensure that the conflict does not resurface and that the relationship between the involved parties remains positive and productive. If any issues arise, additional steps will be taken promptly to address them.

### 15.6.2 Learning and Improvement

- **Reflective Learning:** The foundation will use resolved conflicts as learning opportunities to improve organizational practices and policies. The outcomes and processes from resolved conflicts may inform future training, capacity-building, and policy updates.
- **Gathering Feedback:** Feedback from the involved parties and the mediator will be collected to assess the effectiveness of the conflict resolution process. This feedback will be used to refine the foundation's conflict resolution guidelines and practices.

## 15.7 Responsibilities

### 15.7.1 All Members

- **Resolution Engagement:** All members are responsible for engaging in the conflict resolution process in good faith. This includes being open to dialogue, actively participating in mediation, and working collaboratively toward a resolution.
- **Respect and Integrity:** Members are expected to approach conflicts with respect for others and maintain the integrity of the process by upholding confidentiality and honesty.

### 15.7.2 Team Leads and HR

- **Facilitation and Support:** Team leads and HR are responsible for facilitating the conflict resolution process, providing support to members, and ensuring that conflicts are addressed promptly and fairly. They should also act as mediators or appoint neutral mediators when necessary.
- **Policy Implementation:** HR is responsible for implementing the conflict resolution policy, maintaining records of conflicts and resolutions, and ensuring consistent application of the policy across the organization.

## 15.8 Policy Review

### 15.8.1 Regular Review and Inclusivity

- **Periodic Review:** The Conflict Resolution Guidelines will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain effective, fair, and aligned with the foundation's values of equity, justice, and inclusivity. The review process will include an assessment of how well the guidelines address the needs and concerns of field staff, gender and sexual minorities, and PwD.
- **Inclusive Consultation:** During the review process, the foundation will actively seek input from a diverse range of members, including representatives from field staff,

gender and sexual minorities, and PwD. This will ensure that the guidelines are responsive to the unique challenges faced by these groups and that their perspectives are fully considered.

### 15.8.2 Responsiveness to Emerging Needs

- **Adaptation to Changes:** The foundation recognizes that the needs of its members may evolve over time, particularly for those in marginalized groups. As such, the Conflict Resolution Guidelines will be adapted as necessary to address new challenges, legal requirements, or best practices that may emerge, with particular attention to the evolving needs of field staff, gender and sexual minorities, and PwD.

### 15.8.3 Feedback-Driven Improvements

- **Continuous Feedback Loop:** The foundation will maintain an ongoing feedback loop where members can share their experiences with the conflict resolution process, especially those from marginalized groups. This feedback will be used to make continuous improvements to the guidelines, ensuring they remain inclusive and effective.
- **Learning from Experience:** The foundation will also review the outcomes of resolved conflicts, particularly those involving field staff, gender and sexual minorities, and PwD, to identify areas for improvement in the policy. Lessons learned will be integrated into future policy updates to enhance the overall conflict resolution framework.

### 15.8.4 Transparency and Communication

- **Clear Communication of Updates:** Any changes or updates to the Conflict Resolution Guidelines will be communicated clearly and promptly to all members of the foundation. Special efforts will be made to ensure that field staff, gender and sexual minorities, and PwD are fully informed about any changes that may affect them.
- **Training on Updated Policies:** Following a policy review, the foundation will provide updated training for all members, with particular focus on how the changes impact field staff, gender and sexual minorities, and PwD. This will ensure that all members are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the revised guidelines.

## 16. Grievance Procedure Guidelines

### 16.1 Introduction

The Guidelines for Grievance Procedures at EquiVoice Alliance Foundation establish a clear and fair process for addressing complaints regarding work conditions, policies, or interpersonal conflicts. The foundation is committed to providing an open and supportive mechanism for all members to raise concerns and seek resolutions.

### 16.2 Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to:



- Implement a formal process for members to raise grievances.
- Ensure that grievances are addressed without delay, discrimination, or unfairness.
- Provide a safe and confidential environment for members to express their concerns.
- Align the grievance resolution process with the foundation's values of fairness, justice, and non-discrimination.

### **16.3 Scope**

These guidelines apply to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time and part-time staff, volunteers, and resource persons. They cover grievances related to work conditions, policies, interpersonal conflicts, discrimination, harassment, and any other issues that may impact the work environment or member well-being.

### **16.4 Objectives**

#### **16.4.1 Fairness and Impartiality**

Objective: Ensure every grievance is handled fairly, impartially, and without bias. The grievance process should respect the rights of all parties involved and aim to achieve a just outcome.

#### **16.4.2 Timeliness**

Objective: Address grievances promptly to prevent escalation and minimize the impact on the individuals and the organization. Timely resolution is crucial to maintaining a positive work environment.

#### **16.4.3 Confidentiality**

Objective: Maintain confidentiality throughout the grievance process to protect the privacy of the individuals involved and to encourage members to come forward without fear of retribution or judgment.

#### **16.4.4 Transparency and Communication**

Objective: Ensure that the grievance process is transparent, with clear communication about the steps involved, timelines, and outcomes. Transparency builds trust in the process.

### **16.5 Grievance Procedure**

#### **16.5.1 Informal Resolution**

- **Initial Discussion:** Members are encouraged to resolve grievances informally by discussing the issue directly with those involved or with a supervisor or team lead. This approach often resolves matters quickly without the need for formal procedures.
- **Mediation:** If direct discussion is not feasible or does not resolve the issue, informal mediation can be sought. A neutral party can help facilitate a resolution.

#### **16.5.2 Formal Grievance Submission**

- **Written Submission:** If informal resolution is not successful, the member can submit a formal grievance in writing to HR or a designated grievance officer. The submission

should include details of the grievance, steps taken to resolve it informally, and the desired outcome.

- **Acknowledgment:** Upon receiving the grievance, HR or the grievance officer will acknowledge receipt and outline the next steps in the process. This acknowledgment should occur within five working days.

### 16.5.3 Investigation Process

- **Appointment of Investigator:** HR or the grievance officer will appoint an impartial investigator to conduct a thorough investigation of the grievance. The investigator may be internal or external, depending on the nature and severity of the grievance.
- **Fact-Finding:** The investigation will involve gathering facts, interviewing the involved parties and witnesses, and reviewing relevant documents or evidence to establish a clear understanding of the issue and its context.
- **Confidentiality Assurance:** Throughout the investigation, confidentiality will be strictly maintained, with information shared only among those directly involved in the resolution process.

### 16.5.4 Decision and Resolution

- **Report and Recommendation:** Once the investigation is complete, the investigator will prepare a report outlining the findings and making recommendations for resolution. This report will be reviewed by HR or the grievance committee.
- **Decision Communication:** The final decision, including any corrective actions or remedies, will be communicated clearly and in writing to the involved parties.
- **Implementation of Resolution:** The agreed-upon resolution will be implemented promptly, with HR overseeing the process to ensure compliance and effectiveness.

## 16.6 Post-Grievance Support

### 16.6.1 Monitoring and Follow-Up

- **Ongoing Monitoring:** HR will monitor the situation following the resolution of the grievance to ensure the issue has been fully resolved and no further conflicts arise.
- **Follow-Up Meetings:** Follow-up meetings may be scheduled with the involved parties to discuss how the resolution is working and address any ongoing concerns.

### 16.6.2 Counseling and Support Services

- **Access to Support:** Members involved in the grievance process will have access to counseling and support services if needed. These services can provide emotional support and help individuals process their experiences.

## 16.7 Appeals Process

### 16.7.1 Right to Appeal

- **Appeal Submission:** If a member is dissatisfied with the outcome of the grievance process, they have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of receiving the decision.
- **Review by Appeals Committee:** An independent appeals committee will review the appeal. This committee will consist of members not involved in the original grievance process to ensure impartiality.

### 16.7.2 Appeals Decision

- **Final Decision:** The appeals committee will review the case, considering all relevant information and any new evidence presented. The committee's decision will be final and binding, and it will be communicated in writing to all parties.

## 16.8 Responsibilities

### 16.8.1 All Members

- **Engagement in the Process:** All members are responsible for engaging in the grievance process in good faith, providing accurate information, and respecting confidentiality throughout the process.

### 16.8.2 HR and Grievance Officers

- **Facilitation and Oversight:** HR and grievance officers are responsible for facilitating the grievance process, ensuring it is conducted fairly and transparently, and providing support to all parties involved.

## 16.10 Review and Revision of Policies

### 16.10.1 Regular Review

- **Review Schedules:** The Grievance Procedure Guidelines will undergo regular reviews to ensure they remain effective, relevant, and aligned with the foundation's evolving needs and values. These reviews will take place annually or whenever significant organizational changes occur, or new legal requirements arise.
- **Inclusivity in Review:** The review process will involve consultations with a diverse group of members, including representatives from various departments, field staff, gender and sexual minorities, persons with disabilities (PwD), and other stakeholders. This ensures that the guidelines remain inclusive and responsive to the needs of all members.

### 16.10.2 Feedback-Driven Revisions

- **Member Feedback:** Feedback from members who have participated in the grievance process will be actively sought and considered during the review. This helps identify gaps or areas for improvement in the current guidelines.
- **Learning from Past Cases:** The foundation will analyze past grievances and resolutions to identify trends, common issues, or areas where the guidelines could

be enhanced. Lessons learned from these cases will inform any necessary revisions to the policy.

### 16.10.3 Legal and Organizational Changes

- **Legal Compliance:** The Grievance Procedure Guidelines will be updated as necessary to comply with changes in labor laws, workplace regulations, or other legal requirements. This ensures that the foundation's practices remain legally sound and protective of all members' rights.
- **Responding to Organizational Growth:** As the foundation grows and evolves, the guidelines will be revised to reflect any structural, procedural, or cultural changes within the organization. This ensures that the grievance process continues to be effective and relevant in a dynamic environment.

### 16.10.4 Communication of Updates

- **Revisions Openness:** Any changes or updates to the Grievance Procedure Guidelines will be clearly communicated to all members of the foundation. This includes providing detailed explanations of the revisions, why they were made, and how they will impact members.
- **Training on New Procedures:** Following any significant revisions, the foundation will provide training sessions to ensure all members, including HR, grievance officers, and team leads, fully understand the updated procedures. This helps maintain consistency and effectiveness in the grievance process.

### 16.10.5 Documentation and Accessibility

- **Accessible Documentation:** The most current version of the Grievance Procedure Guidelines will be readily accessible to all members. This may include posting the document on the foundation's internal portal, providing printed copies upon request, or offering alternative formats for members with disabilities.
- **Record Keeping:** HR will maintain records of all revisions made to the guidelines, including the rationale behind changes and the outcomes of the review process. This documentation will be available for reference in future reviews and audits.

## 17. POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work Place) Policy

### 17.1 Introduction

The purpose of this POSH Policy is to establish a safe, respectful, and equitable work environment free from sexual harassment. This policy provides a clear and effective process for addressing and resolving complaints related to sexual harassment, protecting all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including all genders, and ensuring compliance with

relevant laws, including the Protection of Transgender Persons Act and other protective legislation for vulnerable sections.

## 17.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define and prohibit sexual harassment in all forms within the organization.
- Establish a clear process for reporting and addressing incidents of sexual harassment.
- Provide education and training to prevent sexual harassment and promote a culture of respect.
- Ensure compliance with legal requirements and best practices in preventing and addressing sexual harassment.

## 17.3 Scope

This policy applies to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time, part-time, volunteers, resource persons, and anyone associated with the foundation's activities. It covers all forms of sexual harassment that may occur within the workplace, during work-related activities, or between members in a professional context.

## 17.4 Definition of Sexual Harassment

### 17.4.1 Sexual Harassment Includes:

- **Unwelcome Physical Contact:** Unwanted physical advances, touching, or any form of physical contact that makes someone uncomfortable.
- **Verbal Harassment:** Inappropriate comments, jokes, or remarks of a sexual nature, including those based on gender or sexuality.
- **Non-Verbal Harassment:** Gestures, displays, or visual materials of a sexual nature that create an uncomfortable or hostile environment.
- **Quid Pro Quo:** Situations where submission to or rejection of sexual advances is used as a basis for employment decisions, such as promotions, raises, or assignments.
- **Hostile Work Environment:** Conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, even if there is no tangible employment consequence.

## 17.5 Reporting Procedures

### 17.5.1 Reporting Channels

- **Multiple Reporting Options:** Members can report incidents of sexual harassment through various channels, including directly to HR, the designated POSH officer, a trusted supervisor, or anonymously via a confidential reporting system.

- **Open-Door Policy:** The foundation maintains an open-door policy, encouraging members to report any concerns without fear of retribution.

### 17.5.2 Anonymous Reporting

- **Confidentiality:** Members who wish to report harassment anonymously can do so through the foundation's anonymous reporting system. All reports will be handled with strict confidentiality to protect the identities of the complainants.

## 17.6 Investigation Process

### 17.6.1 Immediate Action

- **Prompt Response:** Upon receiving a report of sexual harassment, the foundation will take immediate steps to address the complaint, ensuring the safety and well-being of the complainant.
- **Interim Measures:** If necessary, interim measures such as temporary suspension or reassignment of the alleged harasser may be implemented to prevent further harassment during the investigation.

### 17.6.2 Investigation Procedure

- **Formation of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC):** The foundation will form an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) as required by law, consisting of a presiding officer (a senior woman employee), at least two members from within the organization committed to social justice, and one external member with expertise in sexual harassment matters.
  - **Inclusivity:** While the POSH Act mandates the formation of an ICC primarily for women, EquiVoice Alliance Foundation will extend its protection to all genders, ensuring that the ICC can address complaints from non-binary, transgender, and male members as well.
  - **Alternative Measures:** If the organization has fewer than 10 employees. In that case, alternative mechanisms will be established, such as forming a smaller complaints committee or partnering with external organizations for guidance and support in handling complaints.
- **Thorough Investigation:** The ICC will conduct a thorough investigation, interviewing all relevant parties, collecting evidence, and maintaining confidentiality throughout the process.
- **Fair Hearing:** Both the complainant and the respondent will have the opportunity to present their case, provide evidence, and call witnesses if necessary.

## 17.7 Decision and Disciplinary Action

### 17.7.1 Findings and Recommendations

- **ICC Report:** After the investigation, the ICC will prepare a report outlining their findings and recommendations. This report will be submitted to the foundation's management for review and action.

- **Possible Outcomes:** If the ICC finds that sexual harassment occurred, they will recommend appropriate disciplinary actions, which may include warnings, suspension, demotion, or termination of the harasser. In some cases, the foundation may also take legal action.

### 17.7.2 Disciplinary Actions

- **Implementation:** The foundation's management will promptly implement the ICC's recommendations, ensuring that disciplinary actions are enforced fairly and consistently.
- **Appeals:** Both the complainant and the respondent have the right to appeal the decision if they believe the process was flawed or the outcome unjust. Appeals will be reviewed by a separate, neutral body within the foundation.

## 17.8 Support for Complainants

### 17.8.1 Counseling and Support Services

- **Access to Support:** Complainants will have access to counseling and support services to help them cope with the emotional and psychological effects of harassment.
- **Workplace Adjustments:** If needed, the foundation will make reasonable adjustments to the complainant's work situation to ensure their safety and comfort, such as changes in reporting lines or work locations.

### 17.8.2 Protection Against Retaliation

- **Anti-Retaliation Policy:** The foundation strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against individuals who report sexual harassment or participate in an investigation. Any retaliation will be met with disciplinary action.

## 17.9 Education and Training

### 17.9.1 Awareness Programs

- **Mandatory Training:** All members of the foundation, including management, are required to participate in regular training on sexual harassment prevention, understanding the POSH policy, and promoting a culture of respect and dignity.
- **Workshops and Seminars:** The foundation will organize workshops and seminars led by experts to educate members on recognizing and preventing sexual harassment, understanding their rights, and the importance of bystander intervention.

### 17.9.2 Continuous Education

- **Ongoing Learning:** The foundation is committed to continuous education on issues related to sexual harassment, gender sensitivity, and creating a safe workplace. Regular updates and refresher courses will be provided to keep the topic at the forefront of organizational culture.

## 17.10 Monitoring and Review

### 17.10.1 Policy Review

- **Annual Review:** The POSH policy will be reviewed annually by the foundation's leadership and the ICC to ensure it remains effective and compliant with legal requirements. Feedback from members will be incorporated into updates and revisions.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Based on the review findings and feedback, the foundation will make necessary improvements to the policy, training programs, and reporting mechanisms to strengthen the prevention and handling of sexual harassment.

### 17.10.2 Reporting and Compliance

- **Compliance Reporting:** The foundation will maintain records of all sexual harassment reports and actions taken, ensuring compliance with legal obligations and providing transparency within the organization.
- **Regular Audits:** The ICC will conduct regular audits of the foundation's efforts to prevent and address sexual harassment, ensuring that the policy is being effectively implemented and that members are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

## 17.11 Conclusion

- The POSH Policy at EquiVoice Alliance Foundation underscores the foundation's commitment to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace. By implementing rigorous procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing sexual harassment, alongside comprehensive education and support systems, the foundation aims to foster a work environment where all members feel valued and protected.

# 18. Financial Fraud Prevention Policy

## 18.1 Introduction

### Purpose

This Financial Fraud Prevention Policy sets clear yet flexible guidelines for preventing, detecting, and responding to financial fraud within EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. The policy is designed to protect the organization's financial assets while being sensitive to the needs and realities of the marginalized communities that EquiVoice serves. It aligns with the foundation's values of transparency, inclusiveness, and respect for local contexts, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements without being overly complex or burdensome.

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time, part-time staff, volunteers, contractors, and others involved in the organization's financial activities.



## 18.2 Definition of Financial Fraud

### Financial Fraud

Financial fraud refers to any intentional act of deception or misrepresentation aimed at securing unlawful financial gain. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Embezzlement:** Misappropriation or theft of funds or assets.
- **Financial Misreporting:** Falsification of financial records or statements.
- **Expense Fraud:** Submitting false or inflated expense claims.
- **Procurement Fraud:** Manipulating the procurement process for personal gain.
- **Payroll Fraud:** Falsification of payroll records or inflating hours worked.
- **Bribery and Corruption:** Offering or accepting bribes or kickbacks.

## 18.3 Policy Statement

### Zero Tolerance

EquiVoice Alliance Foundation has a zero-tolerance policy towards financial fraud. All suspected cases of fraud will be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated, and handled in line with the foundation's values of fairness and justice.

### Ethical Conduct

All members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation are expected to act with integrity and uphold the highest standards of financial conduct. The foundation's flat structure emphasizes shared responsibility and collective oversight to prevent opportunities for fraud.

### Flexibility and Growth

This policy is designed to be flexible and adaptable as the organization grows. As EquiVoice expands, the policy will be reviewed and adjusted to ensure it continues to meet the organization's needs, remains practical in different contexts, and supports the foundation's mission of serving marginalized communities.

## 18.4 Prevention Measures

### Internal Controls

- **Shared Responsibility:** Financial responsibilities are distributed among team members to ensure that no single individual controls all aspects of financial transactions. This approach supports the foundation's non-hierarchical structure and fosters a culture of mutual trust and accountability.
- **Approval Processes:** Financial transactions and expenses are subject to clear, participatory approval processes. These processes are designed to be straightforward and accessible, particularly for members working in challenging environments. As the organization grows, these processes will be reviewed to ensure they remain effective and scalable.
- **Access Controls:** Access to financial systems and sensitive information is restricted to authorized members, with access rights regularly reviewed. As EquiVoice expands, access controls will be adapted to meet new security challenges while remaining user-friendly.
- **Regular Audits:** Regular internal and external audits are conducted to identify and address potential fraud risks. Audit findings are shared openly with the team to

promote collective understanding and trust. The frequency and scope of audits will be adjusted as the organization's financial activities grow in complexity.

## Training

- **Awareness Programs:** All members receive training on recognizing and preventing financial fraud. These sessions are designed to be participatory and are tailored to the diverse educational backgrounds of the members. As the organization grows, the training program will evolve to meet the needs of different teams and operational contexts.
- **Policy Dissemination:** The policy is shared with all members, and its principles are reinforced in regular team meetings. Updates to the policy are communicated clearly, ensuring that everyone remains informed and engaged.

## 18.5 Reporting and Detection

### Reporting Mechanisms

- **Whistleblower Protection:** Confidential and secure channels are provided for members to report suspected financial fraud. Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation, and their concerns are treated with respect and urgency. The reporting mechanisms are periodically reviewed and adapted to ensure they remain effective and accessible as the organization grows.
- **Reporting Procedures:** Members are encouraged to report any concerns or suspicions of financial fraud through designated, user-friendly channels, especially for those working in remote or resource-limited areas.

### Detection Tools

- **Monitoring:** Financial monitoring tools and techniques are implemented in a way that is accessible and understandable to all team members. Regular reviews by different members help identify anomalies or irregularities in financial transactions. As EquiVoice grows, more advanced tools may be introduced, while maintaining simplicity for day-to-day operations.
- **Data Analysis:** Regular data analysis is conducted to identify unusual patterns or inconsistencies, with the scope and frequency adjusted according to the organization's needs and growth.

## 18.6 Investigation Procedures

### Initial Review

- **Assessment:** Upon receiving a report, a designated team (including members from finance and other relevant areas) conducts an initial assessment to determine if a formal investigation is warranted. The process is designed to be fair and considerate, ensuring that all voices are heard.

### Formal Investigation

- **Investigation Team:** The investigation team, which may include members from HR, finance, and other relevant areas, conducts a thorough and impartial investigation.

The team's composition reflects diverse perspectives, ensuring that the investigation is comprehensive and fair. External experts may be consulted as the organization grows and the need arises.

- **Evidence Collection:** Evidence is collected and documented carefully, with respect for the privacy and dignity of all involved.
- **Confidentiality:** The investigation is conducted with strict confidentiality, sharing information only with those directly involved to protect privacy and prevent any undue harm.

## 18.7 Resolution and Disciplinary Actions

### Outcome

- **Findings:** The investigation team determines the appropriate course of action based on the evidence. This may include corrective measures, disciplinary action, or legal proceedings. Decisions are made collectively, respecting the foundation's commitment to equality of voices.
- **Communication:** The outcome is communicated to relevant stakeholders with transparency, ensuring that corrective actions are understood and implemented effectively.

### Disciplinary Actions

- **Consequences:** Members found to have engaged in financial fraud face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Legal action may also be pursued if appropriate, ensuring that justice is served while maintaining respect for all involved.

## 18.8 Policy Review and Updates

### Review Schedule

- **Frequency:** The policy is reviewed annually by a designated team to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with current laws and best practices. The review process is participatory, involving input from across the organization.
- **Amendments:** As EquiVoice grows, the policy will be amended to address new challenges and needs. Updates are communicated clearly to all members, ensuring that everyone is informed and engaged.

## 18.9 Responsibilities

### Members

- **Compliance:** All members are expected to adhere to this policy and report any suspected financial fraud.
- **Integrity:** Financial activities should be conducted with integrity and transparency, in line with the foundation's values and commitment to serving marginalized communities.

### Team Leads and Finance Group

- **Enforcement:** Ensure the policy is upheld and support the reporting and investigation processes. Guidance is provided to members to ensure understanding and compliance with financial procedures.
- **Support:** Offer ongoing support and training to ensure that all members can engage with the policy effectively.

## HR Department

- **Investigation:** Manage the investigation process in coordination with the finance group, ensuring a thorough and impartial review. The process is designed to be sensitive to the needs and realities of the communities served by EquiVoice.
- **Training:** Provide training and support related to the financial fraud policy, ensuring that all members are informed and equipped to prevent fraud, with training tailored to different contexts and educational backgrounds.

# 19. Compliance and Legal Considerations Policy

## 19.1 Introduction

### Purpose

The primary objective of this Compliance and Legal Considerations Policy is to ensure that all activities, operations, and decisions within EquiVoice Alliance Foundation are carried out in accordance with applicable Indian laws, Jharkhand state regulations, and ethical standards. The policy incorporates provisions that emphasize the protection of fundamental rights, adherence to international treaties and conventions, and the promotion of scientific temper and inclusivity, particularly in preventing superstitions and harmful practices such as witch hunting. It also ensures respect for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

## 19.2 Legal Compliance

### 19.2.1 Compliance with the Law, Human Rights, and International Treaties

**Obligation:** All members must adhere to all existing laws, fundamental rights, and duties enshrined in the Constitution of India, as well as relevant international treaties and conventions that India is a part of. This includes:

- **Fundamental Rights:** Ensuring respect for the Fundamental Rights of all individuals as guaranteed under the Constitution of India, including the right to equality (Article 14), the right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19), the right against exploitation (Article 23), and the right to constitutional remedies (Article 32).
- **Fundamental Duties:** Encouraging members to follow the duties outlined in Article 51A of the Constitution, such as promoting harmony, protecting the environment, and developing scientific temper.
- **International Treaties:** Complying with international treaties and conventions ratified by India, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

- **Monitoring:** The designated Compliance Officer will monitor and track changes in laws, international treaties, and conventions that impact the Foundation, ensuring that policies are regularly updated, particularly those that protect marginalized groups and uphold fundamental rights.

### **19.3 Ethical Conduct**

#### **19.3.1 Code of Ethics**

**Compliance:** All members are required to adhere to the Foundation's Code of Ethics, which aligns with the Fundamental Rights and Duties outlined in the Constitution of India and upholds the principles of international human rights treaties.

**Inclusivity:** The Code of Ethics strictly promotes inclusivity, non-discrimination, and respect for all identities, including those related to gender, sexuality, caste, religion, disability, or other characteristics, in accordance with both national and international standards.

**Scientific Temperament:** The Foundation advocates for the development of scientific temperament as a fundamental duty, discouraging superstitions and harmful practices, particularly those that violate human rights, such as witch hunting.

#### **19.3.2 Conflict of Interest**

**Openness:** Members must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may affect their impartiality in dealing with issues related to gender, sexuality, caste, or other marginalized communities.

**Management:** The Foundation will implement measures to manage and mitigate conflicts of interest, ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the foundation and the communities it serves.

### **19.4 Anti-Corruption, Anti-Bribery, Anti-Harassment, and Anti-Superstition**

#### **19.4.1 Zero Tolerance**

EquiVoice Alliance Foundation upholds a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption, bribery, sexual harassment, superstitions, and any form of unethical behavior. This policy extends to all forms of harassment, discrimination, and support for superstitions, in alignment with both national laws and international human rights treaties.

**Prohibition:** Members are strictly prohibited from engaging in any form of harassment, particularly against women, transgender individuals, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, or other marginalized groups, in line with the Constitution of India and relevant international treaties. Encouragement of superstitious practices, especially those that infringe on fundamental rights, is also strictly prohibited.

#### **19.4.2 Reporting and Investigation**

**Reporting:** Any incidents of suspected corruption, bribery, harassment, or support for superstitions must be reported immediately to the Compliance Officer or through the whistleblowing mechanism. Special attention will be given to protecting the rights of vulnerable populations, including women, transgender individuals, and Scheduled Castes and Tribes, as mandated by both national and international legal frameworks.

**Investigation:** All reports will be thoroughly investigated with a focus on fairness and protecting the rights of all parties involved, especially those from marginalized groups, in accordance with both national laws and international human rights standards.

## **19.5 Data Protection and Privacy**

### **19.5.1 Data Protection Laws**

**Data Security:** The Foundation is committed to ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of personal data, in compliance with applicable data protection laws and international standards, with particular focus on sensitive data related to gender identity, sexual orientation, caste, and other protected characteristics.

## **19.6 Whistleblowing and Reporting**

### **19.6.1 Safe Reporting Environment**

**Encouragement:** The Foundation encourages members to report any concerns or violations, particularly those related to legal compliance, ethical conduct, superstitions, or discrimination against women, transgender individuals, or Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

**Protection:** Whistleblowers will be protected from retaliation, and their confidentiality will be maintained, with special provisions to protect individuals from vulnerable populations.

## **19.7 Legal Risk Management**

### **19.7.1 Risk Assessment**

**Periodic Assessment:** The Foundation will conduct periodic assessments of legal risks, including those related to fundamental rights, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, superstitions, and non-compliance with laws protecting transgender individuals, Scheduled Castes, and other marginalized groups, as well as international human rights obligations.

**Documentation:** All legal risk assessments, particularly those related to inclusivity and the protection of rights, will be documented and reviewed regularly, ensuring alignment with both national laws and international human rights treaties.

## **19.8 Non-Compliance Consequences**

### **19.8.1 Disciplinary Action**

**Breach of Policy:** Any breach of this policy, particularly those related to the protection of women, transgender individuals, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, or other marginalized groups, as well as the promotion of superstitions, will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or association with the Foundation.

**Legal Action:** The Foundation reserves the right to pursue legal action against individuals involved in activities that harm the organization's legal standing, reputation, or commitment to inclusivity and scientific reasoning.

## **19.9 Monitoring and Review**

### **19.9.1 Regular Audits**

**Internal Audits:** The Foundation will conduct regular internal audits to ensure compliance with this policy, with a focus on inclusivity, protection of rights, and discouragement of superstitions.

**External Audits:** Where necessary, external audits may be conducted to provide an independent assessment of the Foundation's compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, especially concerning laws protecting women, transgender individuals, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and marginalized communities.

# 20. Exit Policy

## 20.1 Introduction

### Purpose

The purpose of this EquiVoice Alliance Foundation Exit Policy is to ensure that separation from the organization is handled professionally, with respect, and in the light of equity, non-hierarchy, and inclusivity. It is established to ensure a fair and smooth exit process for members, free from any burden, while protecting the resources of the organization. The policy pays special attention to the unique challenges faced by field staff and during the probationary period.

## 20.2 Scope

This policy applies to all members of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, including full-time, part-time, contractual, and temporary members, with specific provisions for those in field positions and those serving probationary periods.

## 20.3 Types of Separation

- **Voluntary Resignation:** A member's act of leaving the organization by their own choice.
- **Voluntary Resignation During Probation:** Separation from the organization by an employee still within their probationary period.
- **Retirement:** Releasing a member from the organization after they reach retirement age or through mutual agreement.
- **Termination:** Separation initiated by the organization due to poor performance, misconduct, or other reasons.
- **Termination During Probation:** Termination of a member still under probation.
- **Redundancy:** When a position becomes redundant due to organizational changes.
- **End of Contract:** When a member's contract expires without renewal.

## 20.4 Notice Period

- **Voluntary Resignation:** Members are encouraged to provide a 30-day notice period. For field staff, this can be reduced to 15 days due to logistical challenges. The notice period can be waived or reduced by mutual agreement, especially in cases of personal hardship.
- **Voluntary Resignation During Probation:** Members are encouraged to provide a 15-day notice. For field staff, this period may be reduced to 7 days.
- **Termination:** The organization will provide notice or pay in lieu as specified in the member's agreement. Standard notice periods apply to those who have completed probation.
- **Termination During Probation:** A minimum 7-day notice is given, unless immediate termination is necessary, such as in cases of gross misconduct. For field staff, logistical challenges are considered to ensure a fair process.

- **Retirement:** Members should notify the organization three months before their planned retirement date.
- **Redundancy:** Notice will be given as per the member's agreement and legal requirements.

## 20.5 Resignation Process

- **Notice Submission:** Members must submit a written resignation letter to their immediate team lead or group, stating the reason for leaving and the proposed last working day.
- **Acknowledgment:** The team lead or group will acknowledge the resignation in writing and inform HR.
- **Exit Interview:** HR will schedule an exit interview to understand the member's reasons for leaving and gather feedback for organizational improvement.

## 20.6 Exit Interview

- **Purpose:** To gain insights into the member's experience, gather feedback, and identify areas for improvement within the organization.
- **Confidentiality:** All information shared during the exit interview will be kept confidential and used strictly for organizational development purposes.
- **Conducted by:** A representative from HR, with the option for the member to have a peer or team lead present if desired.

## 20.7 Handover Process

- **Work Handover:** Members must hand over responsibilities, projects, and ongoing work to a designated colleague or collective. For field staff, this may include handing over relationships and contacts with community members and local stakeholders.
- **Document Handover:** Members must hand over all organizational documents, both physical and electronic, ensuring continuity and security.
- **Asset Return:** Members must return all foundation property, including laptops, mobile phones, ID cards, and other equipment, in good condition.

## 20.8 Final Settlement

- **Salary and Benefits:** The final settlement will include the salary for the last working month, payment for any accrued but unused leave, and any other benefits owed.
- **Deductions:** Any outstanding loans, advances, or other dues owed to the foundation will be deducted from the final settlement.
- **Settlement Timeline:** The final settlement will be processed within 30 days of the member's last working day.

## 20.9 Confidentiality and Non-Compete

- **Confidentiality:** Members are reminded to maintain confidentiality regarding sensitive information, even after leaving the foundation.



- **Non-Compete Clause:** Members must adhere to non-compete clauses in their agreement, if applicable, to protect the foundation's interests.

### **20.10 Exit Clearance**

- **Clearance Form:** Members must complete an exit clearance form, including sign-offs from IT, Finance, and Administration.
- **Revocation of Access:** All access to foundation systems, email accounts, and databases will be revoked on the member's last working day.

### **20.11 References**

- **Reference Letters:** Upon request, the foundation may provide a reference letter detailing the member's role, tenure, and contributions.
- **Employment Verification:** HR will handle all requests for employment verification from future employers or other agencies.

### **20.12 Post-Exit Support**

- **Alumni Network:** Former members are encouraged to stay connected through the foundation's alumni network, offering resources, events, and community engagement.
- **Career Transition Assistance:** The foundation may offer support in career transitions, including job search guidance, resume writing, and interview preparation.

### **20.13 Legal Compliance**

- **Compliance with Labor Laws:** The exit process will comply with all applicable labor laws and regulations.
- **Respect for Member Rights:** The foundation will respect member rights while safeguarding the organization's resources, ensuring a fair and transparent process.

### **20.14 Retention Efforts**

EquiVoice Alliance Foundation values its members and is committed to retaining talent. If a member expresses an intention to resign, especially during probation, the foundation will make reasonable efforts to address their concerns and explore solutions to retain them, with special attention given to field staff.

### **20.15 Policy Review**

- **Periodic Review:** The Exit Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its relevance and alignment with the foundation's evolving needs and values.
- **Amendments:** Any amendments will be communicated clearly to all members and will reflect changes in labor laws, organizational structure, or other relevant factors.

# Chapter 21: Other Miscellaneous Policies

## 21.1 EquiVoice Alliance Foundation Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), and LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity Policy

### 21.1.1 Purpose

This policy articulates the commitment of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation to foster and sustain a diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture in which all persons, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, religion, or socioeconomic background, are respected, valued, and supported. It seeks to build a work atmosphere and community that recognizes diversity not just as a matter of policy but in a more meaningful sense where the dignity and rights of all, especially the transgender population, the LGBTQIA+ community, and other vulnerable groups are upheld with special safeguards.

### 21.1.2 Applicability

This policy applies to all persons related to or associated with the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation: employees, volunteers, resource persons, partners, and stakeholders. It governs all aspects of the foundation's operations, including recruitment, program implementation, partnerships, community engagement, and organizational culture.

### 21.1.3 Commitment to DEI and LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity

- **Non-Discrimination:** The foundation strictly prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment, or exclusion based on gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, religion, caste, or socioeconomic background. We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued.
- **Identity Affirmation:** The foundation acknowledges and respects the gender identity and expression of each person. All employees, volunteers, and participants have the right to be addressed using the name and pronouns that align with their gender identity. We support the autonomy of individuals in defining their own identity.
- **Diverse Representation:** Actively recruit, hire, and promote people from diverse backgrounds to have their representation at all levels of the organization, focusing on those who are from underrepresented, marginalized communities, including LGBTQIA+ persons. We believe diversity enriches our work and deepens our impact.
- **Safe Work Environment:** Preservation of a safe, supportive, and affirming environment for all, especially those who are transgender and LGBTQIA+, is our top priority. Any incidents of harassment, discrimination, or exclusion will be addressed immediately and with appropriate action.

### 21.1.4 Recruitment, Hiring, and Workplace Practices

- **Inclusive Hiring:** Our hiring processes are designed to eliminate biases and barriers; all candidates are reviewed under fair and level conditions. The foundation emphasizes outreach within underrepresented communities and job descriptions that encourage diverse applicants.
- **Inclusive and Gender-Neutral Restrooms:** All facilities include restrooms that are open for use by individuals of all gender identities. Any dress codes applied should be gender-neutral so that people can dress according to their gender identity and expression.
- **Health Benefits and Support:** The foundation's health insurance benefits cater to the needs of transgender and LGBTQIA+ employees, including coverage for gender-affirming treatments and access to mental health and specific healthcare needs. We also offer support through navigation services to help gain access to this care.
- **Reasonable Accommodations:** The foundation shall provide reasonable accommodations for employees and volunteers with disabilities or specific needs to enable them to fully undertake work in all its elements.

#### 21.1.5 Training, Development, and Awareness

- **Education and Sensitization:** The foundation holds regular training sessions on issues concerning DEI, such as unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusivity for LGBTQIA+ communities. These are meant to create understanding, break stereotypes, and encourage respectful and inclusive behavior across the organization.
- **Support Networks:** We encourage and support the formation of employee resource groups so that those who identify with marginalized communities have safe spaces for advocacy, support, and connection. These groups play a vital role in fostering an inclusive culture and advising on policies and practices.
- **Lifelong Learning:** We are committed to lifelong learning in diversity, equity, and inclusion. We actively seek out best practices and new strategies to ensure our policies and practices remain current and relevant.

#### 21.1.6 Confidentiality, Privacy, and Respect

- **Confidentiality:** The foundation respects the privacy of all individuals, especially regarding their gender identity, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics. Information about an individual's gender identity and sexual orientation is private and will not be shared without their express consent, except where legally required.
- **Respecting Personal Records:** Individuals have the right to update their records at the foundation to reflect their gender identity, name, and pronouns. The foundation will ensure such changes are reflected in all documentation and communication.
- **Informed Consent:** We will obtain informed consent before collecting or using personal data, particularly sensitive information about identity, so individuals know and have a say in how their information will be used.

#### 21.1.7 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

- **Regular Assessment:** The foundation regularly assesses the effectiveness of its DEI and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity efforts, making necessary adjustments to policies and practices to ensure they remain inclusive, equitable, and aligned with our values.
- **Complaint Mechanism:** A confidential and accessible reporting mechanism is available for employees, volunteers, and stakeholders to report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or other grievances related to DEI or LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. The foundation is committed to addressing complaints promptly and equitably, with a focus on resolution and restorative justice.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Leaders within the foundation are responsible for upholding this policy within their teams and departments. Regular reviews and assessments will monitor progress, address areas for improvement, and ensure accountability at all levels of the organization.
- **Community Engagement:** The foundation acknowledges the importance of community input in shaping our DEI and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity efforts. We actively seek feedback from our employees, volunteers, and the communities we serve to ensure that our policies meet their needs and experiences.

#### **21.1.8 Review and Continuous Improvement**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, or as required by changes in the law, emerging best practices, or organizational needs. Revisions will be made in consultation with stakeholders, including marginalized and underrepresented groups, to ensure the policy remains effective, relevant, and aligned with the foundation's commitment to equity, inclusivity, and justice.

## **21.2. Remote Work and Crisis Management Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

- **21.2.1. Purpose**
- The purpose of this policy is to guide our coordinated efforts towards the realization of continuity, care, and inclusiveness in our work, especially during challenging times. It provides a structure within which we may mutually support each other and our communities when working remotely or in times of crisis, ensuring our commitment to justice, equity, service to marginalized communities, and sustainability, even under duress.
- **21.2.2. Scope**
- This policy applies to all members of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation community, including full-time, part-time, contractual team members, volunteers, and interns. It covers our approach to remote work and our collective response to crises, such as natural disasters, health emergencies, and other disruptions that affect our operations in the field and beyond. This policy is inclusive of all gender minorities and persons with disabilities (PwDs), ensuring equitable access and participation for everyone.
- **21.2.3. Making Remote Work Accessible**

- Remote work arrangements can be made available for team members whose roles do not require constant physical presence in our office or field sites. Decisions about remote work should be made collaboratively, considering the nature of the work, the specific needs of gender minorities and PwDs, the requirements of our communities, and the well-being of all team members. We will ensure that these decisions are made with clarity and fairness, providing necessary accommodations for those who need them.
- **Work Hours and Communication**
- We acknowledge the diverse needs of our team members, particularly those from marginalized genders and individuals with disabilities. While embracing flexibility in work hours, we ask everyone to stay connected during agreed-upon core hours to ensure effective collaboration. Communication tools that are accessible and user-friendly for everyone, including PwDs, will be prioritized. Training will be provided to ensure all team members are comfortable using these tools.
- **Support and Encouragement**
- Supervisors will engage in regular check-ins with team members to offer support, discuss progress, address challenges, and ensure that everyone has the necessary resources. This approach will be based on mutual support rather than rigid oversight. Special attention will be given to field team members, gender minorities, and PwDs to ensure their well-being in remote work environments. Mental health support, including access to counseling services and mental health days, will be provided to address the unique stresses of remote work.
- **Community-Centered Data Security**
- We take the protection of our community members' information seriously. All team members should responsibly handle data, following simple and clear guidelines to ensure confidentiality and security, especially when working remotely. This includes using secure tools such as VPNs and encrypted communication channels, with regular training provided to reinforce these practices.
- **21.2.4. Crisis Management and Community Continuity**
- **Collaborative Crisis Team**
- A Collaborative Response Team (CRT) will be formed to navigate through difficult times together. This team will include members from different areas of our work, ensuring diversity in decision-making. The group will include gender minorities, PwDs, and field team members. The CRT will maintain community connections and ensure our work continues in ways that are safe, supportive, and inclusive.
- **Continuing Essential Community Services**
- Our first priority in times of crisis will be the well-being of the communities we serve, particularly those in marginalized and rural areas. We will focus on sustaining essential services and adapting our plans as needed to meet the most pressing needs. The CRT will engage in constant communication with field teams to ensure their perspectives and on-the-ground realities are integrated into our crisis response efforts.
- **Responsive Remote Operations**
- If operational fieldwork becomes difficult or dangerous, we will adjust to remote working conditions wherever feasible. This will ensure that no one, including gender minorities, PwDs, and field teams, is left behind. This includes providing necessary tools, addressing barriers to remote work, and setting up alternative communication

methods where connectivity is an issue. These remote operations will also consider environmental sustainability, aligning with the foundation's broader goals.

- **Community-Centered Recovery Plan**
- As a community, we will come together to restore our regular activities after a crisis, focusing on healing, learning from our experiences, and strengthening our preparedness for the future. The CRT will facilitate reflections on what went well and what could be improved, ensuring that our responses are always community-centered, inclusive, and equitable.
- **21.2.5. Preparedness, Learning, and Reflection**
- **Continuous Learning**
- Ongoing training sessions will be conducted for everyone, focusing on crisis response, remote work, maintaining strong connections with our communities, and ensuring inclusivity for gender minorities and PwDs. These sessions will be inclusive and participatory, encouraging everyone to share their knowledge and experiences. Topics covered will include digital literacy, mental health first aid, ethical decision-making, and environmental sustainability during crises.
- **Practice and Participation**
- We will conduct regular drills and simulations to practice our crisis response plans, ensuring that everyone feels confident and prepared. These activities will be designed to be inclusive, accessible, and sensitive to the diverse needs of our team, particularly field teams, gender minorities, and PwDs. Feedback will be gathered from all participants and used to refine our practices.
- **Regular Reflection and Adaptation**
- This policy will be revisited periodically to ensure it continuously adapts to meet our needs and reflects our values. We will establish a regular schedule for policy reviews, such as annually or bi-annually, with a designated team responsible for conducting these reviews. We will learn from each experience and adapt our approach to become more responsive, equitable, and just, ensuring that our preparedness truly includes everyone—environmentally friendly and all.

## **21.3. Data Protection, Privacy, and Confidentiality Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

### **21.3.1. Objective**

- Voice Alliance Foundation is protected so that their privacy and confidentiality are maintained in line with our core values of justice, equity, inclusivity, and transparency. The foundation is committed to the responsible treatment of personal data in accordance with data protection laws in force, which reflects our belief in the dignity and rights of every individual.

### **• 21.3.2. Scope**

- This policy shall apply to all employees, contractors, volunteers, resource persons, and partners who handle personal data on behalf of the EquiVoice Alliance

Foundation. It is applicable for all the processes of collecting, storing, using, sharing, and disposing of any personal data, whether in electronic or paper form, in both domestic and international operations.

#### • 21.3.3. Data Classification

- The foundation categorizes data into the following categories:
  - **Public Data:** Information that is public and does not need protection.
  - **Internal Data:** Non-sensitive data shared within the foundation.
  - **Private Data:** Personal information that is extremely sensitive and should not be accessed so easily.
  - **Sensitive Data:** This includes very sensitive information such as health, legal, and financial data that will always require special protection.
- All this data will be handled and taken care of according to its classification, ensuring that the security and confidentiality of the data are maintained.

#### • 21.3.4. Roles and Responsibilities

- At the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, data protection, privacy, and confidentiality are shared responsibilities among every member of staff and each unit head to ensure flexibility and adaptability as the organization evolves. Everyone at the foundation shares a commitment to data protection. The duty to protect personal data is the responsibility of everyone, and each person contributes to maintaining the integrity of personal data.
- **Mutuality of Responsibility:** It follows that every employee should be conversant with and adhere to this policy. Each staff member has a role in ensuring that personal data is handled with the highest discretion and privacy, and further complies with the law.
- **Unit Heads:** Unit heads have the accountability to practice data protection within their areas. It is necessary to continue increasing the awareness of all team members about their responsibilities under this policy and to ensure that they implement measures for the protection of data effectively.
- **Data Protection Lead:** This is a named individual, who may have other roles, responsible for taking the lead on ensuring that the foundation complies with its obligations under data protection law and this policy, including providing guidance and advice on these matters to staff where necessary. As the organization matures, this responsibility could change or become joint among several staff members.
- **Technical Oversight:** Every staff member who manages or accesses digital data will adhere to basic technical security measures, like using strong passwords, turning on data encryption when appropriate, and reporting any data security issues as soon as possible. In most cases, individual technical responsibilities will be coordinated among different staff members as designated and appropriate.
- **Program and Field Operations:** All program and field operation officials must secure informed consent from persons they are collecting or using information from. These officials also hold the responsibility of protecting and safeguarding the data acquired through fieldwork, ensuring its confidentiality is maintained.
- **Shared Approach:** Since it is an early phase towards the foundation formation, roles and responsibilities related to data privacy will be strengthened if needed. Staff will collectively attend to all aspects of data protection but will have the flexibility to delegate tasks to one or more staffers depending on the foundation's needs and current resources.

#### • 21.3.5. Data Collection and Use

- **Respect for Privacy:** The foundation is committed to collecting only the personal data that it requires to conduct its work, always respecting to the maximum the privacy of individuals. Personal data is collected fairly, lawfully, and in a transparent manner.
  - **Informed Consent:** Clear and explicit consent shall be obtained before collecting, storing, or using any personal data. Individuals shall be informed of all aspects concerning the data to be collected, its intended use, and their rights. Consent will be documented and can be withdrawn by the individual at any time.
  - **Purpose Limitation:** Data shall be used only for the purposes it was collected, and any further use for a different purpose will require renewed consent.
  - **Minimization:** Personal data shall be minimal, kept to what is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary for the purposes for which it is collected.
- **21.3.6. Data Security and Access**
- **Commitment to Confidentiality:** All personal data shall be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. The foundation shall implement appropriate technical and organizational measures in the processing of personal data to protect it from unauthorized access, loss, or damage.
  - **Access Control:** Access to personal data is restricted on a need-to-know basis; any individual has access only to the data necessary for their specific role.
  - **Data Integrity and Accuracy:** The foundation must ensure that it maintains accurate and up-to-date records. Regular reviews and updates of information should be conducted as necessary.
  - **Third-Party Data Handling:** Personal information will only be shared with third parties when necessary, in the course of their business engagement with the foundation. These third parties will be required to adhere to confidentiality agreements and data handling protocols similar to those of the foundation.
- **21.3.7. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA)**
- Before introducing new projects or initiatives that involve significant data processing, the foundation must conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) to identify and mitigate potential risks to individuals' privacy. DPIAs will be conducted with full regard to data protection laws and complete adherence to the foundation's ethical standards.
- **21.3.8. Rights of Individuals**
- **Right to Access Personal Data:** The foundation will grant individuals access to their personal data. Requests for access will be processed promptly, and individuals will be informed about how their data is being used.
  - **Rectification of Data:** Individuals can request corrections to inaccuracies in their personal data. The foundation will make these corrections without undue delay upon receiving such a request.
  - **Right to Deletion (Right to be Forgotten):** Individuals may request the deletion of their personal data, subject to legal or operational requirements. The foundation will honor such requests to the best of its capability, ensuring that data is retained only for the minimum time necessary.
  - **Data Portability:** Where technically feasible, individuals may request the transfer of their personal data to another organization in a structured, commonly used, and machine-readable format.



- **Transparency and Communication:** The foundation will maintain open communication regarding data protection practices and inform individuals of their rights through clear and accessible communication.
- **21.3.9. Data Breach Response and Incident Management**
  - **Immediate Action:** During a data breach, the foundation will take immediate action to contain and limit the breach, including identifying the cause of the breach, securing the data that has been affected, and preventing unauthorized access to other information.
  - **Notification:** In the event of a breach leading to a risk for the rights and freedoms of individuals, the foundation will notify these individuals and relevant data protection authorities about the breach and measures taken.
  - **Incident Response Plan:** The foundation shall maintain an Incident Response Plan identifying the steps to be taken to identify, classify, contain, eradicate, recover from, and review data breaches.
  - **Investigation and Prevention:** The foundation must, after a breach has occurred, conduct an intensive investigation to uncover the loopholes in securing data, with lessons drawn from this used to build stronger security measures.
- **21.3.10. Training and Awareness**
  - **Periodic Training:** All staff, volunteers, and affiliates involved in personal data handling should receive ongoing training on data protection, privacy, and confidentiality. Topics for their training include the significance of data protection, laws and regulations, and best practices.
  - **Awareness Campaigns:** Regular awareness campaigns will be carried out so that each person associated with the foundation is aware of their responsibility regarding data protection and confidentiality.
- **21.3.11. Complaints and Concerns**
  - **Appointed Data Protection Lead:** There will be an appointed Data Protection Lead responsible for overseeing the foundation's compliance with data protection laws, and specifically this policy, handling questions, complaints, or concerns raised.
  - **Complaints Handling:** The foundation is committed to responding to complaints within reasonable and feasible timeframes by handling them in a manner that is impartial, transparent, and just so that issues are satisfactorily resolved for the person making the complaint.
- **21.3.12. Data Sharing and International Transfers**
  - In case of sharing personal data with organizations located outside of the country, the foundation will ensure that international transfers are made within the requirements of law and with similar standards of data protection as in the home country. Partners in international data transfers must sign confidentiality agreements and comply with the data protection standards of the foundation.
- **21.3.13. Data Retention and Disposal**
  - **Retention Periods:** Personal data will only be retained for the necessary period of time to fulfill the purpose for which it was collected or in compliance with legal requirements. Clear retention periods for different categories of data will be established and communicated.

- **Secure Disposal:** Personal data will be securely disposed of when it is no longer needed, both in digital form through permanent deletion of data and in physical form by shredding or destroying records so that they cannot be reconstructed or retrieved.
- **21.3.14. Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

- The foundation will comply with all national and international data protection laws, including the Indian IT Act, GDPR (if applicable), and any other relevant laws. The foundation will ensure that it monitors and remains current on legal requirements, with practices being altered where necessary to maintain compliance.

**21.3.15. Monitoring, Review, and Improvement**

- **Continuous Improvement:** The foundation is committed to continuous improvement in its data protection practices. Regular audits and reviews will be conducted to ensure compliance with this policy and applicable data protection laws.
- **Annual Review:** This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to incorporate changes in laws, best practices, or operations within the foundation. Amendments will be made in consultation with stakeholders to enhance the relevance, efficiency, and congruence of the policy with the core values of the foundation.
- **Ethical Considerations:** The foundation should ensure all activities regarding data processing align with ethical considerations. This means avoiding data processing that may lead to irresponsible use, harm, or exploitation of vulnerable populations. The foundation is committed to promoting justice, equity, and inclusivity in all its operations, including the handling of personal data.
- **Policy Communication:** The foundation will ensure that this policy is communicated to all staff, volunteers, and partners on a regular basis. Whenever an update or change in the policy occurs, it will be promptly shared to keep everyone informed and aligned with the latest practices.
- **Stakeholder Involvement:** The foundation values input from all stakeholders, including its staff, volunteers, and the communities it serves. Regular feedback will be sought to refine and enhance data protection practices to meet the evolving needs of the organization and its beneficiaries.
- **Adaptability and Evolution:** Recognizing the dynamic nature of the organization, the foundation will remain flexible in its approach to data protection, privacy, and confidentiality. This policy will be reviewed and revised as new roles, responsibilities, and challenges emerge, ensuring it continues to reflect the foundation’s core values and operational realities.

## **21.4. Environmental Sustainability Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

**21.4.1. Objective** This policy outlines the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation’s commitment to reducing its ecological footprint and promoting sustainable practices across all its activities. Recognizing that environmental sustainability is closely linked with social justice, the foundation is dedicated to embedding sustainability into its operations, programs, and partnerships. This approach aligns with international frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The foundation also seeks to address the unequal

environmental burdens faced by marginalized communities, particularly in areas where it operates.

**21.4.2. Applicability** This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, resource persons, partners, and external stakeholders engaged in the foundation's operations and programs. It covers every aspect of the foundation's work, including daily operations, program implementation, procurement, travel, community engagement, and interactions with suppliers, contractors, and community partners.

#### **21.4.3. Sustainability**

- **Sustainable Practices:** The foundation is committed to incorporating sustainable practices into all its operations by setting measurable goals for reducing carbon footprints, minimizing waste, conserving energy, and maximizing the use of renewable resources. All staff and volunteers are encouraged to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors in both their work and personal lives. This commitment is reinforced through behavioral change initiatives, incentives, and ongoing education.
- **Awareness and Education:** The foundation will actively educate and raise awareness about environmental issues among its employees, volunteers, partners, and local communities. This includes providing training, resources, and guidance to help them make informed decisions that support environmental sustainability both at work and at home.
- **Equity and Environmental Justice:** The foundation acknowledges the need to address environmental justice by ensuring that its sustainability initiatives are inclusive and attentive to the disproportionate impact of environmental issues on marginalized communities. Efforts will be made to involve these communities in sustainability initiatives, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met.

#### **21.4.4. Key Focus Areas**

- **Energy Management:** The foundation will prioritize energy efficiency in its operations, focusing on reducing energy consumption in offices and other facilities, and opting for renewable energy sources wherever feasible.
- **Travel and Resource Use:** The foundation will minimize travel to reduce its environmental impact, prioritizing virtual meetings and remote collaboration to decrease the need for physical travel. When travel is necessary, the most environmentally friendly options will be chosen. Additionally, sustainable event management practices will be implemented, ensuring minimal resource use, reduced waste, and the selection of eco-friendly venues.
- **Waste Reduction:** The foundation will implement comprehensive waste reduction strategies, including recycling programs, minimizing the use of single-use plastics, and encouraging the reduction, reuse, and recycling of materials. All waste will be disposed of responsibly, with efforts to engage local communities in waste management initiatives.
- **Green Procurement:** The foundation will prioritize suppliers and products that demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. This includes choosing products that are energy-efficient, made from sustainable materials, and

have minimal environmental impact throughout their lifecycle. The foundation will also seek to collaborate with suppliers who adhere to environmentally friendly practices in their operations.

- **Biodiversity Protection:** The foundation commits to protecting biodiversity in all its activities, particularly in areas where program implementation might impact local ecosystems. Efforts will be made to ensure that activities do not harm local flora and fauna and that conservation practices are promoted.

#### 21.4.5. Staff Engagement and Green Challenges

- **Leadership and Role Modeling:** The foundation's leadership will visibly commit to sustainability, setting a strong example for all staff. Sustainability ambassadors may be appointed within the organization to motivate and guide colleagues in adopting green practices.
- **Workshops and Training Programs:** Regular workshops, training sessions, and webinars on sustainability topics will be provided to all employees and volunteers. Sustainability education will also be included in the onboarding process for new staff.
- **Recognition Programs:** The foundation may recognize and reward employees who actively contribute to sustainability goals through awards, public acknowledgment, and incentives.
- **Green Challenges:** The foundation will implement a series of green challenges to engage staff in sustainability efforts.
- **Communication and Feedback:** Regular updates on sustainability initiatives, progress, and achievements will be communicated to all staff. Open forums and surveys will be held to gather feedback and suggestions for improving sustainability practices.
- **Employee Involvement:** The foundation will form a sustainability committee that includes employees from different levels of the organization. This committee will guide sustainability efforts and ensure they reflect the needs and ideas of all staff.

#### 21.4.6. Monitoring, Reporting, and Advocacy

- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** The foundation will conduct regular assessments, including third-party sustainability audits, to measure the environmental impact of its activities. These assessments will guide the development of more sustainable practices and ensure transparency and accountability.
- **Sustainability Reporting:** The foundation will report on the progress of its sustainability initiatives annually. These reports will be shared with stakeholders and will include information on the foundation's environmental performance, achievements, and areas for improvement.
- **Partnerships and Advocacy:** The foundation will collaborate with environmental organizations, advocate for sustainability practices in the communities it serves, and engage in joint initiatives that promote environmental awareness and action. Local environmental projects will be supported, and efforts will be made to involve beneficiaries and partners in these initiatives.
- **Climate Resilience:** The foundation will develop and implement strategies for enhancing climate resilience in the communities it serves, ensuring that its

sustainability efforts contribute to both environmental protection and climate adaptation.

#### **21.4.7. Continuous Improvement**

- **Innovation and Best Practices:** The foundation is committed to continuous improvement in its sustainability efforts, staying informed about the latest innovations and best practices in environmental sustainability and integrating them into its operations.
- **Employee and Volunteer Engagement:** The foundation will actively engage employees and volunteers in sustainability efforts, encouraging them to contribute ideas and take ownership of initiatives that promote environmental stewardship. Regular feedback will be sought to improve and adapt the foundation's sustainability practices, and recognition programs will be established to reward significant contributions.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Formal channels will be established to receive ongoing feedback from employees, volunteers, and partners on sustainability practices, including regular surveys and suggestion platforms.

**21.4.8. Review and Amendment** This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in law, organizational needs, or emerging best practices in environmental sustainability. Amendments will be made in consultation with employees, volunteers, partners, and external environmental experts to ensure the policy remains relevant, effective, and aligned with the foundation's commitment to sustainability. The review process will be participatory, involving representatives from all levels of the organization.

## **21.5. Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

**21.5.1. Objective:** This policy ensures all children and vulnerable adults who participate in the activities or programs of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation are safe and well-protected. The foundation is committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults from all forms of harm, abuse, or exploitation, while respecting their dignity and empowerment.

**21.5.2. Scope:** This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, resource persons, and partners of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation who work directly or indirectly with children and vulnerable adults. It covers all interactions, in person, online, or using any communications medium, in relation to foundation works, which may include programs, research, community engagement, and advocacy.

#### **21.5.3. Principles of Guidance**

- 1. Child-Centered:** All actions and decisions affecting children shall prioritize their best interests. The children also have the right to be consulted and involved in decisions about their lives.
- 2. Respect and Dignity:** The dignity, privacy, and autonomy of the child and vulnerable adult shall be respected at all times. They must be respected, without prejudicing them in any way, to be duly recognized and appreciated for their own good and rights.

3. **Consent:** Children, vulnerable adults, as well as those representing them, must be informed of the objective, procedures, and outcome of the activity or intervention they are about to have conducted. They must duly give valid consent before a follow-up action is executed.
4. **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of children and vulnerable adults shall not be breached under any circumstances. Confidential information about the child or vulnerable adult should not be disclosed unless otherwise essential and with the consent of the respective person, except in cases when such disclosure is mandated by law.
5. **Non-Discrimination and Inclusivity:** All children and vulnerable adults must be treated equally and without discrimination on issues of gender, sexuality, caste, class, disability, or any other attribute. The needs of minority and vulnerable groups will especially be taken care of.
6. **Empowerment:** The foundation is dedicated to empowering children and vulnerable adults by giving them the confidence, resources, knowledge, and support to help them assert their rights and develop themselves to the best of their abilities.
7. **Safety and Security:** The physical and psychological safety of children and vulnerable adults comes first. The foundation will do all in their power to ensure that these are not subjected to harm, abuse, or exploitation.
8. **Cultural and Contextual Sensitivity:** All interventions should be adapted to respect and reflect on the cultural contexts of the children and vulnerable adults for relevance and effectiveness in support.

#### 21.5.4. Legal Compliance and Protection Guideline

1. **Adherence to Laws:** All actions and interventions must adhere to the requirements of national and international laws on the protection of children, including but not limited to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the applicable legislation at Central and State of Jharkhand level.
2. **Definition of Abuse:** The definition will include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and also neglect and exploitation. Definitions and examples of the different types of abuse are clearly defined and given to all staff, volunteers, and partners.
3. **Code of Conduct:** A clear Code of Conduct will be developed stating what constitutes acceptable behavior in contacts with children and other vulnerable adults, including the observance of professional boundaries, provision against one-on-one private contact, and requirements for the safe, respectful, and non-exploitative execution of all activities.
4. **Safe Recruitment Practices:** All recruiting processes for posts that will bring a person in contact with children and vulnerable adults shall have a direct inquiry on safeguarding during interviews. References taken shall also be referred to on the adequacy of the applicant's ability to work with children and vulnerable adults.
5. **Background Checks:** Stringent background checks through criminal record checks of all employees, volunteers, and partners working with or having

access to children and vulnerable adults. These checks will be carried out at the time of recruitment and updated regularly to ensure the maintenance of standards.

6. **Reporting Abuse:** There shall be in place a clear, confidential procedure for reporting any concern relating to suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation. All staff, volunteers, and collaborators must be aware of and clearly informed about the signs of possible abuse and neglect and what to do if they suspect a risk to a child or vulnerable adult. Any such reports will be made immediately to the designated safeguarding officer, who will ensure appropriate action in accordance with legal requirements and organizational policies.
7. **Crisis Intervention and Emergency Response:** The foundation shall provide immediate crisis intervention, including emergency shelter, medical care, and legal actions such as protection orders, in cases where children or vulnerable adults are in imminent danger.
8. **Whistleblowing:** The organization has a whistleblowing policy in place that encourages staff and volunteers to come forward and report their concerns regarding any type of safeguarding practice or misconduct without fearing retaliation.

#### **21.5.5. Engagement and Empowerment of Children and Vulnerable Adults**

1. **Participation of Children and Vulnerable Adults:** Children and vulnerable adults' participation must be enhanced in the development and review of policies and programs that involve them, and it would seek their voices and empowerment to affect decisions made on issues regarding their lives.
2. **Counseling and Psychological Support:** The foundation should offer continuing and expanded support for psychological counseling services to abused children, vulnerable adults, or any family who have suffered abuse or safeguarding concerns. These services are to be easily accessible and offered by professionals.
3. **Economic Empowerment:** Where possible, the foundation shall provide an opportunity for economic empowerment through skills training and job placements or self-employment support to enable older children or vulnerable adults to realize independence and resilience.
4. **Community Reintegration:** The foundation shall support the reintegration into their communities of children and vulnerable adults through awareness programs that demystify and dispel the stigma associated with such conditions and raise understanding. They should be actively involved in planning and implementation processes.
5. **Engagement of Parent/Guardian:** Parents or guardians will be involved in the process of safeguarding, especially in situations where consent is to be gained, sharing information related to activities, and taking them in confidence for making decisions about sensitive matters.

#### **21.5.6. Capacity Building and Training**

1. **Staff Training:** Mandatory training for all staff, volunteers, and partners will cover child protection, recognizing signs of abuse, trauma-informed care, and

legal duties of care. This training will be refreshed annually to ensure that all personnel are up to date with current best practices and legal requirements.

2. **Regular Training Updates:** Training programs will be regularly updated to incorporate the latest research, legal changes, and best practices in child protection and safeguarding.
3. **Community Training:** The foundation will involve local communities through awareness programs on child protection, raising awareness about the importance of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Workshops, informational sessions, and outreach programs will be organized to educate community members on recognizing signs of abuse and understanding their role in protection.
4. **Supervision and Support:** Regular supervision sessions will be established for staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults. These sessions will provide a space to discuss concerns, receive support, and ensure adherence to safeguarding protocols. Debriefing sessions will be available after any incident or challenging interaction.

#### 21.5.7. Best Practices for Inclusivity, Responsiveness, and Progressiveness

1. **Cultural Sensitivity:** All interventions will be tailored to respect and reflect the cultural contexts of the children and vulnerable adults, ensuring that support is relevant and effective.
2. **Inclusive Participation:** Children and vulnerable adults will be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes that affect their well-being and protection. This includes participation in community programs and providing input on policies and procedures.
3. **Digital Safety and Privacy:** The foundation will implement guidelines to ensure the digital safety and privacy of children and vulnerable adults, particularly in maintaining confidentiality and protecting against cyber threats.
4. **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** The foundation will seek feedback from children, vulnerable adults, and staff on the protection process, using this feedback to continuously improve services. Regular reviews of policies and practices will be conducted to ensure they remain responsive and progressive.
5. **Special Provisions for the Most Vulnerable:** The foundation will ensure that the specific needs of particularly vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, or those from extremely marginalized communities, are met.

#### 21.5.8. Accountability and Reporting

1. **Grievance Mechanism:** A clear and confidential grievance mechanism will be available for children, vulnerable adults, and staff to report any misconduct or issues arising from interactions. All grievances will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.
2. **Transparency:** The foundation is committed to transparency in its work with children and vulnerable adults, regularly reporting on outcomes and challenges while maintaining the confidentiality of identities.



- 3. External Audit and Accountability:** Regular external audits will be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding practices. The foundation will maintain accountability to its stakeholders, including children, vulnerable adults, families, donors, and regulatory bodies.

#### **21.5.9. Collaboration with External Stakeholders**

- 1. Partnerships:** The foundation will collaborate with local governments, law enforcement, healthcare providers, other NGOs, and community organizations to create a robust support network for children and vulnerable adults.
- 2. Shared Responsibility:** Agreements with partners will include specific clauses on child protection and safeguarding, outlining shared responsibilities and consequences of non-compliance.

#### **21.5.10. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 1. Ongoing Monitoring:** The foundation will regularly monitor and evaluate all programs and activities involving children and vulnerable adults to ensure compliance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Periodic audits and reviews will be conducted to identify areas for improvement and maintain the highest standards of protection.
- 2. Impact Assessment:** The foundation will periodically assess the impact of its interventions with children and vulnerable adults to ensure effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- 3. Child-Friendly Reporting Mechanisms:** The foundation will ensure that children are aware of how to report concerns and will provide child-friendly mechanisms for them to do so, such as confidential suggestion boxes, child liaison officers, or peer support networks, ensuring their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed in a safe and supportive manner.

#### **21.5.11. Review and Amendment**

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in law, organizational needs, or emerging best practices. Amendments to the policy will be made in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including children, vulnerable adults, staff, and partners, to ensure that the policy remains relevant, inclusive, and effective in protecting those it serves.

## **21.6 Policy for Working with and Providing Legal Support to Survivors of Witch Hunting and Gender-Based Violence**

### **21.6.1. Objective**

This policy outlines the commitment of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation to support survivors of witch-hunting and gender-based violence (GBV) by developing practices that are holistically trauma-informed and legally sound. It ensures that all communications with survivors are conducted with respect, dignity, and sensitivity, while assuring comprehensive legal support in alignment with India's and Jharkhand's laws, grounded in global best practices, and taking an intersectional approach to different forms of discrimination.

### **21.6.2. Scope**

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, resource persons, and partners working with or on behalf of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. It applies to all activities involving direct and indirect interactions with survivors, including but not limited to counseling, legal support, research, community engagement, and advocacy.

### **21.6.3. Guiding Principles**

- **Respect and Dignity:** All dealings with survivors will prioritize their dignity, privacy, and autonomy. Survivors are to be regarded with respect and free from any judgments, recognizing their experiences and rights.
- **Consent for Interventions:** Adequate information is given to survivors regarding the purpose, procedures, and possible outcomes of any intervention, with their explicit consent obtained before any action is taken.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of survivors is maintained at all times. Information about a survivor will be shared on a need-to-know basis and with the survivor's consent, except when required by law.
- **Non-discrimination and Inclusivity:** All survivors should be treated equally, regardless of their sex, gender, caste, class, or any other status. Special care and attention will be provided for marginalized and vulnerable groups. The policy recognizes the intersectionality of discrimination and aims to address it comprehensively.
- **Empowerment:** The foundation will empower survivors by providing them with the resources, knowledge, and support needed to rebuild their lives, assert their rights, and establish or reinforce their agency.
- **Safety and Security:** The physical and psychological safety of survivors is paramount. The foundation will take all necessary measures to ensure that survivors are protected from further harm.
- **Survivor Leadership:** Opportunities for survivors to take on leadership roles within the organization and contribute to governance and decision-making processes will be provided as part of their empowerment journey.

### **21.6.4. Legal Compliance and Support Process**

- **Adherence to Laws:** All actions and interventions will comply with the relevant laws of India and Jharkhand, including the Prevention of Witch

Hunting Act and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, among others.

- **Initial Legal Needs Assessment:** Trained staff or legal advisors will conduct a thorough assessment of survivors' immediate legal needs, risks, and their understanding of their rights.
- **Legal Counseling:** Survivors will receive clear, accurate, and culturally appropriate information about their legal rights and options. Legal actions will only be pursued with the survivor's informed consent.
- **Connection to Legal Aid Services:** The foundation will help connect survivors with qualified legal aid services, including government programs, NGOs, and pro bono legal services. If a survivor wishes to pursue legal action, the foundation will assist in securing free or subsidized legal representation.
- **Support During Legal Proceedings:** The foundation will support survivors through all stages of legal proceedings, including court preparation, evidence collection, and emotional support. Safety measures will be implemented as needed.
- **Monitoring and Follow-Up:** The foundation will monitor the progress of legal cases and conduct regular check-ins with survivors to provide ongoing support and address any new concerns.
- **Use of Technology:** The foundation will explore and implement the use of technology, such as virtual counseling or mobile-based legal advice, to enhance access to legal support for survivors.

#### 21.6.5. Engagement with Survivors

- **Initial Contact and Assessment:** A comprehensive assessment of the survivor's needs, risks, and preferences will be conducted in a safe and private environment by trained personnel.
- **Counseling and Psychological Support:** Survivors will be offered trauma-informed counseling services, either directly provided by the foundation or through referrals to qualified mental health professionals.
- **Community Reintegration:** The foundation will support survivors in reintegrating into their communities through awareness programs that address stigma and promote understanding. Survivors will be actively involved in planning and implementation.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Survivors will be provided with opportunities for economic empowerment, such as skills training, job placements, or support for self-employment, to enhance their independence and resilience.
- **Engagement with EquiVoice:** Survivors, if interested, will be engaged with the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation in suitable roles, such as resource persons, volunteers, or other positions that align with their skills and interests. This engagement is designed to empower survivors and provide them with a platform to contribute to the foundation's mission.

- **Network Formation and Participation:** Survivors will be encouraged to form or participate in networks aimed at establishing or strengthening their agency. These networks will provide survivors with a collective voice, opportunities for mutual support, and a platform to advocate for their rights and interests.

#### 21.6.6. Capacity Building and Training

- **Staff Training:** All staff, volunteers, and partners working with survivors must undergo mandatory training on gender sensitivity, trauma-informed care, and the legal rights of survivors. This training will be refreshed annually to ensure that all personnel are up-to-date with best practices and legal requirements.
- **Community Training:** The foundation will engage in community education initiatives to raise awareness about the harmful effects of witch hunting and GBV and to foster a supportive environment for survivors.

#### 21.6.7. Good Practices for Inclusivity, Responsiveness, and Progressiveness

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** All interventions must be tailored to respect and reflect the cultural contexts of the survivors, ensuring that support is relevant and effective.
- **Inclusive Participation:** Survivors will be encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their recovery and legal journey. This includes being part of community programs and providing input on policies and procedures.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** All interactions and interventions will be guided by a trauma-informed approach that recognizes the complex impact of trauma on survivors' lives and emphasizes safety, trustworthiness, and empowerment.
- **Progressive Legal Advocacy:** The foundation will actively advocate for the reform of laws and policies that affect survivors of witch hunting and GBV, pushing for systemic changes that improve access to justice and the protection of rights.
- **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Survivors and staff will be invited to provide feedback on the support process, which will be used to continuously improve the foundation's services. Regular reviews of policies and practices will ensure they remain responsive and progressive.
- **Global Partnerships:** The foundation will seek to establish partnerships with international organizations to strengthen legal support and advocacy efforts, ensuring alignment with global best practices.

#### 21.6.8. Accountability and Reporting

- **Grievance Mechanism:** A clear and confidential grievance mechanism will be established for survivors and staff to report any misconduct or issues arising from interactions. All grievances will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.

- **Transparency:** The foundation commits to transparency in its work with survivors, regularly reporting on outcomes and challenges while maintaining the confidentiality of survivor identities.

#### **21.6.9. Review and Amendment**

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in law or organizational needs. Amendments will be made in consultation with stakeholders, including survivors, to ensure the policy remains relevant, inclusive, and effective. The foundation will ensure that any revisions incorporate feedback from survivors, staff, and global best practices.

## **21.7. Gender Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

### **21.7.1. Purpose**

The Gender Policy of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation is crafted to ensure that gender equality, inclusivity, and non-discrimination are core values in the implementation of its work. This policy reflects the foundation's commitment to promoting gender equity, respecting diversity, and empowering everyone, regardless of their gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation, to engage fully and equally in life.

### **21.7.2. Scope**

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, resource persons, and partners of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. It covers all activities, programs, internal policies, and external engagements, including recruitment, project implementation, advocacy, research, community involvement, and organizational governance.

### **21.7.3. Guiding Principles**

- **Gender Equality:** The foundation is committed to upholding gender equality principles and eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination. This includes advocating for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for everyone.
- **Inclusivity and Non-Discrimination:** The foundation embraces diversity and is dedicated to creating an environment free of any gender bias, where everyone is respected and valued. Discrimination of any form, particularly against women, will not be tolerated.
- **Intersectionality:** The foundation acknowledges that gender intersects with other social categories such as race, caste, class, ability, age, and sexual orientation, creating unique experiences of oppression and privilege. This understanding informs the foundation's approach to gender equality.

- **Empowerment:** The foundation believes in empowering individuals of all genders by providing them with the resources, opportunities, and support needed to assert their rights, develop their potential, and participate fully in life.
- **Safety and Well-Being:** The foundation prioritizes the safety and well-being of all individuals, especially those who are marginalized or vulnerable due to their gender identity or expression. This includes providing safe spaces, preventing gender-based violence, and ensuring access to appropriate support services.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The foundation respects the cultural contexts in which it operates and strives to promote gender equality in a culturally sensitive manner while remaining committed to eliminating practices that harm or marginalize individuals based on gender.

#### 21.7.4. Gender Mainstreaming

- **Integration into Programs and Projects:** Gender considerations will be integrated into all programs, projects, and activities of the foundation. This includes conducting gender analysis, setting gender-specific objectives, and ensuring that the needs and perspectives of all genders are considered at every stage of the project cycle.
- **Intersectional Capacity Building:** The foundation will provide training that incorporates intersectional approaches, helping all members understand how various forms of discrimination intersect and affect different genders, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- **Gender-Sensitive Communication:** All communication, both internal and external, will be gender-sensitive, using language and imagery that respects and reflects gender diversity. The foundation will avoid stereotypes and ensure that its messaging is inclusive and empowering.
- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** The foundation will allocate resources in a manner that promotes gender equality. This includes budgeting for gender-specific initiatives, ensuring equitable access to resources, and monitoring expenditures to assess their impact on different genders.

#### 21.7.5. Capacity Building and Training

- **Gender Sensitivity Training:** All employees, volunteers, and partners will undergo mandatory gender sensitivity training. This training will cover topics such as gender equality, unconscious bias, intersectionality, and the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. Annual refresher training will be conducted.
- **Leadership Development:** The foundation is committed to developing leadership skills among individuals of all genders, particularly those from marginalized or underrepresented groups. This includes providing mentorship, training, and opportunities for leadership roles within the organization.

- **Community Education:** The foundation will engage in community education initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality, challenge harmful gender norms, and promote the rights of all individuals, regardless of gender identity or expression.

#### 21.7.6. Safe and Inclusive Work Environment

- **Non-Discrimination in Recruitment and Employment:** The foundation will ensure that its recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes are free from gender bias and discrimination. All employees will be evaluated based on their qualifications, skills, and performance, without regard to gender.
- **Zero Tolerance for Harassment:** The foundation has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and any form of gender discrimination in the workplace. Clear procedures will be in place for reporting, investigating, and addressing such incidents, with strict confidentiality and support for victims.
- **Workplace Flexibility:** The foundation recognizes the diverse needs of its employees and will implement policies that promote work-life balance, including flexible work hours, parental leave, and accommodations for employees with caregiving responsibilities.
- **Support for Gender Minorities:** The foundation will provide specific support systems for gender minorities, including access to mental health resources, peer support groups, and tailored services to meet their unique needs.

#### 21.7.7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

- **Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation:** The foundation will regularly monitor and evaluate its programs, policies, and practices to ensure they are gender-responsive and effective in promoting gender equality. This includes collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data and using it to inform decision-making.
- **Implementation Plan:** A gender focal point or committee will be designated to oversee the implementation of this policy, ensuring that all aspects of the foundation's work are aligned with the gender policy.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** The foundation will establish mechanisms to hold the organization accountable for its commitments to gender equality. This includes regular reporting on gender-related outcomes, as well as internal and external audits of gender policies and practices.
- **Feedback and Grievance Mechanisms:** The foundation will establish clear and accessible feedback and grievance mechanisms, allowing employees, volunteers, and partners to raise concerns or report violations of the gender policy in a safe and confidential manner.

#### 21.7.8. Partnerships and Advocacy

- **Collaboration with Gender Equality Advocates:** The foundation will collaborate with other organizations, networks, and movements that promote gender equality and the rights of all genders. This includes participating in joint advocacy efforts, sharing knowledge and resources, and supporting initiatives that align with the foundation's values.
- **Policy Advocacy:** The foundation will actively advocate for policies and legislation that promote gender equality, protect the rights of all genders, and address the root causes of gender-based discrimination and violence.

#### **21.7.9. Legal Compliance**

The foundation will comply with all relevant local, national, and international laws related to gender equality and non-discrimination. The foundation is committed to adhering to legal standards while advocating for the advancement of gender rights.

#### **21.7.10. Sustainability and Long-term Commitment**

The foundation is committed to sustaining its efforts toward gender equality over the long term. This includes setting long-term goals, integrating gender equality into the foundation's strategic planning, and continuously seeking to improve and adapt its gender policies based on feedback and evolving best practices.

#### **21.7.11. Review and Amendment**

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in law, organizational needs, or emerging best practices in gender equality. Amendments will be made in consultation with stakeholders, including individuals from diverse gender backgrounds and the communities served, to ensure the policy remains relevant, inclusive, and effective.

## **21.8. Code of Conduct for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

### **21.8.1. Purpose**

The EquiVoice Alliance Foundation Code of Conduct sets the expectations for behavior for all its employees, volunteers, resource persons, and partners. The code is framed in such a manner that it helps provide a professional, respectful, and ethical work environment in accordance with the mission, values, and commitment to social justice of the foundation.

### **21.8.2. Scope**



All the people related to the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation—such as its employees, volunteers, contractors, resource persons, and partners—are expected to comply with this Code of Conduct. This applies to all actions in relation to the business of the foundation, in and out of the workplace, including online activities.

### 21.8.3. Key Principles

- **Integrity:** Conduct all actions and decisions based on honesty, transparency, and accountability. Members are expected to be of the highest standards of ethical behavior, not doing any acts that may bring discredit to the foundation.
- **Respect:** All people involved in the foundation shall, therefore, treat others with respect and dignity, value diversity, and support an inclusive work environment. Discrimination, harassment, or any form of disrespectful behavior shall not be tolerated.
- **Responsibility:** Individuals are expected to take responsibility for their actions, adhere to the foundation's policies and procedures, and fulfill their duties to the best of their abilities. This includes being accountable for their decisions and any consequences that may arise.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The foundation should work in respect of the cultural practices and traditions of the communities it works with, if the practices and traditions do not contradict human rights principles. People should interact with the local communities by being sensitive and respectful of their cultural norms.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** The foundation is committed to minimizing its environmental impact. All individuals must use resources responsibly, reduce waste, and promote sustainable practices in their work.

### 21.8.4. Professional Behavior

- **Respect for All:** Interactions with colleagues, beneficiaries, partners, and the public should be in a manner that shows respect and professionalism. There will be no toleration of bullying, harassment, or any other form of abusive behavior.
- **Confidentiality:** The private nature of any sensitive information concerning the foundation, its beneficiaries, and its partners should be observed. Confidential information must be disclosed on a strictly need-to-know basis with proper authorization.
- **Avoiding Conflict of Interest:** Members shall be sensitive and take necessary steps to prevent any personal interests from impacting their work on the foundation's behalf. Members must immediately communicate all potential conflicts of interest directly to their supervisor or to the board, as appropriate, and be cautious to avoid real or perceived harm.

- **Resource Use:** The resources of the foundation, which consist of cash, equipment, and information, should be utilized for responsible purposes in which those resources are intended. Misappropriation or any misuse of such resources is strictly prohibited.
- **Laws and Policies Compliance:** The observance of all the laws, policies, and internal procedures of the Foundation applies to them. This includes anti-corruption laws, guidelines for workplace health and safety, and data protection.
- **Social Media and Public Representation:** Members shall at all times professionally represent the foundation on any public or online platform. Personal use of social media shall not compromise the confidentiality of the foundation's information or impede the good reputation of the foundation.

#### 21.8.5. Ethical Standards

- **Honesty and Integrity:** All associates have the responsibility to interact with all the foundation's transactions and parties, inside and out, with honesty and integrity. This means being truthful in all communications, representing the work of the foundation as it is, without any deception.
- **Fairness:** Decisions and actions will be fair and neutral, without favoritism or partiality. This applies to all the elements in works related to the foundation, including hiring, promotions, and allocations of resources.
- **Transparency:** The foundation is transparent in its operations and decision-making. Individuals are expected to communicate accurately to all stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries, and the public.
- **Inclusiveness and Accessibility:** The foundation commits to use language and practices that are inclusive and accessible for all in terms of varying literacy levels or using English as a second or other languages. Translations or simplified versions of documents will be developed as appropriate.

#### 21.8.6. Harassment and Discrimination

- **Zero Tolerance for Harassment:** We believe in the zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment, including sexual harassment, and towards any form of discrimination based on race, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. Any reported cases of harassment will be promptly and fairly investigated.
- **Establishing a Safe Environment:** It is the duty of all those involved with the foundation to ensure that a safe and inclusive environment is maintained. This involves the upholding of personal boundaries, nurturing positive relationships, and supporting those who might be exposed to discrimination or harassment.

- **Support Systems:** The foundation will establish support systems for people experiencing harassment or discrimination, to provide available counseling and other resources if needs be.

#### **21.8.7. Confidentiality and Data Protection**

- **Protection of Sensitive Information:** People shall keep the sensitive information, including the personal data of the beneficiaries, employees, and partners, confidential. This information will be held securely and accessed or shared only under the foundation's data protection policies and laws applicable in the location.
- **Responsible Use of Technology:** Responsible use of technology includes but is not limited to email, online resources, and all forms of social media to ensure that all communication is proper. This would include not sharing inappropriate confidential information.

#### **21.8.8. Conflicts of Interest**

- **Reporting Conflicts:** Real or potential conflicts of interest shall be reported forthwith to a supervisor or the board, involving either personal relationships, financial interests, or outside activities that might affect or be perceived to affect the concerned individual's obligations to the foundation.
- **Avoidance of Bias:** Individuals must avoid any actions or decisions that could be perceived as biased or that could unfairly benefit themselves or others at the expense of the foundation.

#### **21.8.9. Health, Safety, and Security**

- **Workplace Safety:** The foundation is committed to providing a healthy and safe work environment. Individuals should comply with all the relevant health and safety guidelines; report hazards in time; and be self-safety cautious, as well as others safety cautious.
- **Security Protocols:** For the protection of both physical and digital assets, there are supposed to be security protocols adhered to by the people in accordance with the foundation. This includes the keeping of safe passwords, securing files that have confidential information, and guidelines on entry to restricted access areas.

#### **21.8.10. Reporting and Accountability**

- **Reporting Misconduct:** All workers are encouraged to report any acts in violation of this Code of Conduct, foundation policy, or the law. Reports may be made to the supervisor, HR, or through the foundation's whistleblower mechanism. Confidentiality will be extended to any and all reporters, and reports will be duly investigated.

- **Consequences of Misconduct:** Any violation of this Code of Conduct shall warrant disciplinary action and possible dismissal from employment or volunteering, and it may lead to legal proceedings if laws are broken.
- **Reporting Responsibility:** All members of the foundation community have a responsibility to report unethical behavior. No member of the community may retaliate against any individual who has in good faith reported alleged misconduct.
- **Whistleblower Protection:** The foundation protects whistleblowers. Individuals reporting misconduct will be protected against retaliation and supported through the entire process of an investigation.

#### **21.8.11. Training and Awareness**

The foundation will ensure regular training and awareness of the Code of Conduct through sessions. These will involve such topical areas as harassment prevention, cultural sensitivity, ethical decision-making, and policies of the foundation to make all the members well informed and compliant.

#### **21.8.12. External Partnerships**

The foundation expects all its partners and collaborators from outside to lead with their actions according to the values and ethical standards of the foundation, showing respect to its Code of Conduct and not conflicting with the mission and values of the foundation.

#### **21.8.13. Review and Amendment**

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually or upon reasonable changes in the law, organizational needs, or by a new best practice. All necessary amendments will be done in consultation with stakeholders, to ensure that the code remains relevant, inclusive, and effective. Transparent communication of any adjustment would be communicated to all members of the foundation.

## **21.9 Disability Policy for EquiVoice Alliance Foundation**

### **21.9.1. Objective**

The objective of the Disability Policy of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation is to establish an all-inclusive, just, and nurturing environment for persons with disabilities. This policy aligns with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It reflects our commitment to principles of equity, gender sensitivity,

intersectionality, and adherence to global best practices. The foundation strives to ensure that all individuals, regardless of ability, can fully participate in and benefit from our programs, activities, and workplace.

### 21.9.2. Application

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, resource persons, partners, and beneficiaries of the EquiVoice Alliance Foundation. It covers all aspects of the foundation's operations, including recruitment, workplace accommodations, program implementation, community engagement, partnerships, and emergency preparedness.

### 21.9.3. Guiding Principles

- **Equity and Non-Discrimination:** The foundation commits to equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities and ensures non-discrimination based on disability, gender, caste, class, or other distinctions. We recognize the unique needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly those facing compounded marginalization.
- **Inclusion and Accessibility:** We strive to create an inclusive environment where all individuals, including those with disabilities, can participate fully and equally. This includes ensuring that our physical spaces, communication methods, and program designs are accessible to everyone.
- **Gender Sensitivity and Intersectionality:** The foundation acknowledges that disability can compound discrimination, particularly for women, transgender persons, and marginalized communities. Our approach to disability is informed by understanding these intersecting identities, and we are committed to addressing these complexities in our work.
- **Dignity and Respect:** We are committed to treating all individuals with dignity and respect, recognizing their inherent worth and potential. This includes respecting the autonomy and choices of individuals with disabilities and ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.
- **Compliance with Legal Requirements:** The foundation adheres to both national and international standards, including the RPwD Act and the CRPD, to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities.

### 21.9.4. Recruitment and Employment

- **Equal Opportunity Employment:** The foundation actively recruits and retains individuals with disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to employment opportunities. We will ensure that our recruitment processes are accessible.
- **Inclusive Job Descriptions:** All job descriptions will be reviewed to ensure they do not include unnecessary physical or mental requirements that could exclude individuals with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be

made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform their job duties.

- **Reasonable Accommodations:** The foundation will provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities to ensure they can perform their duties effectively. This includes modifications to the workplace, flexible work arrangements, and access to assistive technologies.
- **Training and Development:** We will provide ongoing training and development opportunities for all employees, including those with disabilities, to ensure they can grow and succeed in their roles. Training programs will be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all.
- **Support Networks:** The foundation encourages the formation of peer support networks and mentorship opportunities for individuals with disabilities, fostering a sense of community and providing additional resources for personal and professional development.

#### 21.9.5. Program Implementation and Community Engagement

- **Accessible Programs and Services:** All programs, services, and activities offered by the foundation will be designed and implemented to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes ensuring that physical spaces, communication methods, and program materials are accessible.
- **Community Participation:** The foundation is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are actively involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of our programs. We will seek out and listen to the voices of individuals with disabilities in the communities we serve, particularly those who face multiple forms of marginalization.
- **Decision-Making Involvement:** Individuals with disabilities will be represented in the foundation's governance structures, including advisory boards or committees, to ensure their perspectives are included in decision-making processes at all levels.
- **Awareness and Sensitization:** We will conduct regular awareness and sensitization programs to educate employees, volunteers, partners, and community members about disability rights, equity, and intersectionality. These programs will challenge stereotypes and promote a culture of inclusion and respect.

#### 21.9.6. Accessibility

- **Physical Accessibility:** The foundation will ensure that all buildings, offices, and program locations are physically accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes providing ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and other necessary accommodations.
- **Digital Accessibility:** All digital content, including websites, emails, and online platforms, will be designed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This

includes ensuring compatibility with screen readers, providing text alternatives for images, and using accessible formats for all documents.

- **Communication Accessibility:** The foundation will use accessible communication methods, such as sign language interpreters, Braille materials, and captioned videos, to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access information and participate fully in our programs.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Response:** The foundation will ensure that emergency preparedness and response plans are inclusive of individuals with disabilities. This includes training staff on how to assist individuals with disabilities during emergencies and ensuring that emergency procedures are accessible and effectively communicated.

#### 21.9.7. Safeguarding and Protection

- **Protection from Abuse and Exploitation:** The foundation is committed to protecting individuals with disabilities from abuse, exploitation, and discrimination. We will implement safeguarding measures to ensure that individuals with disabilities are safe and respected in all our activities.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** The foundation will protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals with disabilities, particularly regarding their medical or personal information. Guidelines will be established for securely handling and storing such information.
- **Complaint Mechanism:** A confidential and accessible complaint mechanism will be established to allow individuals with disabilities to report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or abuse. Complaints will be taken seriously and addressed promptly and fairly, with appropriate measures taken to protect the complainant.

#### 21.9.8. Partnerships and Collaboration

- **Inclusive Partnerships:** The foundation will collaborate with organizations that promote the rights of individuals with disabilities and work towards creating an inclusive society. We will seek to build partnerships that align with our values of equity, gender sensitivity, and intersectionality.
- **Advocacy for Disability Rights:** The foundation will advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities at local, national, and international levels. This includes supporting policy changes, raising awareness about disability issues, and promoting inclusive practices in all sectors of society.
- **Awareness and Training for External Partners:** The foundation will ensure that external partners and collaborators are trained in disability rights and inclusion, aligning all stakeholders with the foundation's values and practices.

#### 21.9.9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

- **Regular Monitoring:** The foundation will regularly monitor and evaluate its programs, services, and policies to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes collecting feedback from individuals with disabilities and making necessary adjustments to improve accessibility.
- **Continuous Feedback Loop:** A continuous feedback mechanism will be established, where individuals with disabilities can regularly provide input on the effectiveness of the policy and suggest improvements.
- **Accountability:** The foundation will hold itself accountable for implementing this policy and achieving its goals of equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Regular reports on the foundation's progress in promoting disability rights will be shared with stakeholders.

#### 21.9.10. Review and Amendment

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in law, organizational needs, or emerging best practices in disability inclusion. Amendments will be made in consultation with individuals with disabilities, ensuring that the policy remains relevant, effective, and aligned with the foundation's commitment to equity, gender sensitivity, and intersectionality.

## 22. Transparent and Participatory Procurement Policy

### 22.1. Introduction

The EquiVoice Alliance Foundation's procurement policy aims to ensure that all goods and services are procured transparently and equitably, aligning with the foundation's mission and values. The policy balances centralized oversight with decentralized implementation, empowering local units to respond to community needs while maintaining consistency and control over procurement practices.

### 22.2. Principles of Procurement

- **Transparency:** All procurement processes shall be open and clearly documented at every stage.
- **Equity:** The foundation is committed to fair treatment for all suppliers, with a preference for engaging survivors of gender-based violence, marginalized community members, and local suppliers to support economic empowerment.
- **Participation:** Community members and stakeholders will have a voice in the procurement process, particularly in selecting service providers and vendors.
- **Consistency:** The foundation will ensure uniform standards and practices across all units, harmonizing with the core values of equity, justice, and inclusivity.



- **Ethics:** Procurement practices will adhere to the highest ethical standards, requiring all vendors to comply with the foundation's code of conduct, which includes commitments to human rights, environmental sustainability, anti-corruption, and fair labor practices.
- **Sustainability:** The foundation will prioritize environmentally sustainable procurement practices, using green products and services and working with vendors committed to sustainability.

## 22.3. Hybrid Procurement Structure

### 22.3.1 Centralized Policy Development and Oversight

- **State-Level Procurement Committee:**
  - **Role:** Develop standardized procurement policies, guidelines, and criteria aligned with the foundation's mission and values.
  - **Composition:** Includes representatives from senior management, various departments (e.g., Program, HR, Finance), community representatives, and a legal/compliance advisor.
  - **Responsibilities:**
    - **Policy Development:** Establish centralized procurement policies and procedures.
    - **Major Purchases:** Oversee procurement for large or strategic purchases to leverage economies of scale and ensure compliance.
    - **Monitoring and Support:** Provide oversight, support, and training to local units to ensure adherence to centralized policies.

### 22.3.2 Decentralized Implementation at Local Units

- **Local Procurement Teams:**
  - **Role:** Manage day-to-day procurement activities at each unit (e.g., district, Block or Panchayat level).
  - **Composition:** Includes unit representatives, community members, particularly from marginalized groups, and relevant department leads.
  - **Responsibilities:**
    - **Local Vendor Engagement:** Engage with community-based vendors, prioritizing survivors and marginalized groups, to promote local economic development.
    - **Responsive Procurement:** Make procurement decisions responsive to local community needs, within the foundation's policy framework.
    - **Reporting:** Regularly report procurement activities, challenges, and successes to the State-Level Procurement Committee.

## 22.4. Ethical Procurement Standards

### 22.4.1 Code of Conduct for Vendors

- **Ethical Standards:** Vendors must adhere to a code of conduct consistent with the foundation's values, including human rights, environmental sustainability, anti-corruption, and fair labor practices.
- **Vendor Certification:** Vendors must certify adherence to these ethical standards as part of the procurement process.

### 22.4.2 Conflict of Interest Policy

- **Declaration:** All Procurement Committee members and staff involved in procurement must declare any potential conflicts of interest transparently and objectively to prevent biases in decision-making.
- **Mitigation:** If a conflict of interest is identified, the individual will recuse themselves from the relevant procurement decisions.

## 22.5. Environmental Sustainability

### 22.5.1 Sustainable Procurement Criteria

- **Green Procurement:** The foundation will incorporate environmental sustainability into procurement criteria, prioritizing vendors that offer eco-friendly products, practice sustainability, or have a smaller carbon footprint.
- **Life-Cycle Costing:** The foundation will evaluate the total cost of ownership for procured goods, considering the purchase price, energy use, environmental impact, and disposal costs.

### 22.5.2 Vendor Sustainability Reporting

- **Sustainability Disclosures:** Vendors must provide information on their environmental practices and sustainability initiatives as part of their proposal, encouraging them to adopt more sustainable practices.

## 22.6. Supplier Diversity and Inclusion

### 22.6.1 Supplier Diversity Program

- **Diverse Supplier Outreach:** The foundation will actively seek out and engage vendors from diverse backgrounds, including women-owned, minority-owned, and LGBTQIA+-owned businesses.
- **Inclusion of Social Enterprises:** The foundation encourages the inclusion of social enterprises that align with its mission and support marginalized communities.

### 22.6.2 Vendor Development Initiatives

- **Training for Diverse Suppliers:** The foundation will offer training and capacity-building programs for small, diverse suppliers to help them meet procurement requirements and enhance their competitiveness.
- **Mentorship Program:** The foundation will establish a mentorship program where experienced vendors can mentor new or smaller vendors, particularly those from marginalized communities.

## 22.7. Risk Management and Compliance

### 22.7.1 Procurement Risk Assessment

- **Risk Identification:** The foundation will conduct regular risk assessments to identify potential risks in the procurement process, including supply chain disruptions, vendor non-compliance, and financial risks.
- **Risk Mitigation Strategies:** The foundation will develop and implement risk mitigation strategies, such as contingency plans, alternative suppliers, and contract clauses addressing potential risks.

### 22.7.2 Compliance Monitoring

- **Third-Party Audits:** The foundation will consider periodic third-party audits of the procurement process to ensure compliance with policies and identify areas for improvement.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** The foundation will ensure that procurement practices comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including labor laws, anti-corruption laws, and environmental regulations.

## 22.8. Transparency and Accountability

### 22.8.1 Open Contracting

- **Public Disclosure of Contracts:** The foundation will adopt an open contracting approach by making key contract information publicly available, including contract terms, vendor selection criteria, and payment schedules. This enhances transparency and builds trust with stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The foundation will regularly engage with stakeholders, including community members, donors, and beneficiaries, to gather feedback on procurement practices and ensure accountability.

### 22.8.2 Performance Metrics and Reporting

- **KPIs for Procurement:** The foundation will establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for the procurement process, such as procurement cycle time, cost savings, vendor performance, and stakeholder satisfaction.
- **Annual Procurement Report:** The foundation will publish an annual procurement report summarizing procurement activities, achievements,

challenges, and areas for improvement. This report will be accessible to all stakeholders.

## **22.9. Innovation in Procurement**

### **22.9.1 E-Procurement System**

- **Digital Procurement Platform:** The foundation will implement an e-procurement system to streamline the procurement process, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency. The platform will include features such as online RFP submissions, automated evaluations, and digital contract management.
- **Vendor Portal:** The foundation will create a vendor portal where potential vendors can register, submit proposals, and track the status of their submissions, increasing accessibility and ensuring a broader reach.

### **22.9.2 Collaborative Procurement**

- **Partnerships with Other NGOs:** The foundation will explore opportunities for collaborative procurement with other NGOs or organizations that share similar values and missions. This can lead to cost savings, knowledge sharing, and stronger vendor relationships.
- **Joint Bidding:** The foundation will consider joint bidding arrangements where multiple organizations collaborate to procure goods or services together, leveraging combined purchasing power.

## **22.10. Continuous Improvement and Learning**

### **22.10.1 Regular Policy Review and Updates**

- **Annual Policy Review:** The foundation will conduct an annual review of the procurement policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective. The review will incorporate feedback from stakeholders, lessons learned from past procurements, and evolving best practices.
- **Learning and Development:** The foundation will provide ongoing training and professional development for procurement staff to keep them updated on the latest procurement trends, technologies, and regulations.

## **10.2 Feedback Loops**

- **Post-Procurement Reviews:** After each major procurement, the foundation will conduct a post-procurement review to assess what went well and what could be improved. Insights will be used to refine the procurement process.
- **Vendor Feedback:** The foundation will regularly solicit feedback from vendors on the procurement process, including any challenges they faced and suggestions for improvement.