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**Travel Unity Establishes Certification Program to Combat Tourism Industry's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Challenges; Invites Public Input**

*The diversity-in-travel nonprofit organization calls for public to comment on its DEI standards during two-week period. Pilot program targeting DMOs and travel companies to launch in August 2020.*

New York, NY July 23, 2020 – On July 17, Travel Unity, a nonprofit focused on diversity in travel, released its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Standards for Travel & Tourism with a two-week open period for public review and comments that ends on July 31. To be launched on August 3, 2020, these standards will assist participating travel companies and organizations in benchmarking their commitment to DEI in three primary areas -- visitorship, workforce development and community impact -- and will provide a roadmap for evaluating their future efforts.

"Especially in recent weeks, there has been a striking increase in the number of destinations and travel companies that want to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion in all that they do, from their own operations to the tourism product they oversee. However, while the interest is there, the impact of efforts thus far has often been more ephemeral than measurable," said Roni Weiss, the executive director of Travel Unity. "Our goal is to codify criteria and indicators that gauge how well they're doing and can serve as the basis for a robust certification program."

The DEI Standards for Travel & Tourism is a tentpole program conceived by Travel Unity and emblematic of its mission to increase diversity in travel through individual and community empowerment. Crafted with input from more than 100 professionals, including academics, researchers, media and development experts, the DEI Standards' three-pillar structure takes into account a wide range of topics, from marketing, PR and best practices in hiring to stakeholder engagement and environmental impact. Certification can be applied for by any organization that welcomes visitors, such as destination marketing organizations (DMOs), convention & visitor bureaus (CVBs), hotels, museums, restaurants, theme parks, tour operators etc.

Importantly, Travel Unity's DEI Standards are less about metrics and more about process. Similarly, it champions inclusion and engagement, not quotas. The DEI Standards for Travel & Tourism framework additionally aligns with the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and recognizes the authority of other credentialing bodies, making certification useful to organizations seeking assessments from multiple agencies.

Engaging with individuals is another critical part of Travel Unity's mission, so the nonprofit has devised an action-based [pledge](#) that invites signatories to take a personal inventory of internalized prejudices, acknowledge privilege, become more tolerant and adopt anti-bias behaviors like speaking out when inequities are witnessed.

"We share a belief that change doesn't just come from organizations; it's absolutely critical to inspire the people in a place to be exemplars of everything Travel Unity stands for. When people come back from a vacation, they remember truly welcoming people on the street, just as much as they rave about hotel or restaurant staff that go out of their way to show respect. As many people as possible need to be committed to change," said Romey Louangvilay, the president of Travel Unity's Board of Directors.

Travel Unity has been developing its diversity-in-travel agenda and programs for more than five years. What began as a series of panels about niche travel markets at the 2015 NY TravFest -- a multi-day industry and consumer conference -- was soon established as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit to work with tourism enterprises across the country.

Today, energized by the rush of attention to issues central to its mission, whether in response to the pandemic and equality movements like Black Lives Matter or inspired by the many new social justice organizations that have emerged, Travel Unity sees its DEI Standards as a vital part of how the tourism industry can build toward a responsible future.

Travel Unity will host a virtual summit from October 21-23, 2020, during which initial learnings will be shared based on the use of the DEI Standards with a first cohort of participating organizations. The conference's theme will center on "Reset & Rebuild: Advancing Travel Together" with event details forthcoming. Past conferences have included representatives from the National Park Service, Visit Syracuse, NYSTIA, SUNY Potsdam, SUNY ESF, Impact Travel Alliance, Visit Rochester, The Wild Center and many more.

The public is welcome to view the DEI Standards [here](#) and add comments using the  comment tool.

For more on Travel Unity, please contact Roni Weiss, Executive Director.

For more information about Travel Unity and to donate funds to the nonprofit's programs, visit [www.travelunity.org](http://www.travelunity.org).

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