**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

 **New Program Launches to Advance Racial and Ethnic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards in Tampa Bay Area**

*New fellowship program will transform Tampa Bay area nonprofits and address serious lack of professionals of color on nonprofit boards.*

TAMPA, Fla. – (May 21, 2021) – National research shows 84 percent of nonprofit board members are white, with one in four nonprofits lacking representation from any professionals of color on their boards (BoardSource, 2017). To address this disparity and foster more inclusive and equitable communities, the Nonprofit Leadership Center has just launched a new initiative, [Advancing Racial Equity on Nonprofit Boards Fellowship.](https://nlctb.org/racial-equity-fellowship/)

This new program will advance racial and ethnic diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) on nonprofit boards in the Tampa Bay area by strengthening the board governance knowledge and skills of professionals of color while equipping local nonprofit organizations to be genuinely ready to welcome these new members onto their boards.

“In working with hundreds of nonprofit leaders each year to provide board governance training, we consistently hear from nonprofit CEOs that they struggle with how to identify and recruit professionals of color to serve on their boards, with many admitting they don’t know where to start,” says Nonprofit Leadership Center’s CEO Emily H. Benham, FAHP, CFRE. “Our new Advancing Racial Equity on Nonprofit Boards Fellowship is an important first step to help create more diverse, equitable and inclusive nonprofit organizations that are better prepared to serve and strengthen our communities.”

Throughout six interactive virtual training sessions, professionals of color will learn how to serve as effective nonprofit board members. They will be paired with other professionals of color who are already experienced board members for mentorship between sessions.

Diversity among board members is crucial to ensuring nonprofit organizations have the broad perspectives necessary to be more effective, understand those they serve, meet strategic goals, and engage meaningful donors. The program also ensures participating nonprofit organizations are equipped, ready and committed to fostering more inclusive and equitable boards of directors and organizational cultures.

“As an African American business owner and experienced board member serving on local and national boards, I understand first-hand the value and significance of having diversity in our boardrooms, said President and CEO of Vistra Communications, Brian Butler, who also helped co-create the program. “We helped create this program to increase the number of diverse nonprofit board members in our region.”

The Advancing Racial Equity on Nonprofit Boards Fellowship program is presented by the Nonprofit Leadership Center with collective support and an unwavering commitment from Bank of America, Citi, Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, Duke Energy, Florida Blue, the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, TECO, United Way Suncoast and Vistra Communications.

“Building diverse nonprofit boards in Tampa Bay is essential to addressing racial equality and economic opportunity, and this program aligns with our commitment to foster diversity and inclusion in the workplace and beyond,” said Bill Goede, president, Bank of America Tampa Bay. “At Bank of America, we realize the power of our people and value our differences. By offering professionals of color more opportunities to thrive in nonprofit leadership positions, we can address the critical challenges facing our community.”

"Our support of this important initiative is just one way we can deepen United Way Suncoast's commitment to social justice," said Jessica Muroff, CEO of United Way Suncoast. "We've always been involved in the fight for equity, and that fight is woven into our new strategic vision. We will continue to create greater opportunity for every person in every community."

Acceptance into the Advancing Racial Equity on Nonprofit Boards Fellowship program is by application only. Candidates will be selected based on the recommendations of funding partners and the strength of their applications. Additionally, professionals of color who serve on boards can apply to be mentors and nonprofits can express their interest to be considered.

[Applications](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=PngH1acbqE-KvM-aHDibArA-fPjIwa5KmH6u1UDb5AdUM1NKUzdHVFI1VFVITDlLU1k3RTM5VUtIMy4u) must be received by 11:59 p.m. ET on June 15, 2021. To learn more about the new Advancing Racial Equity on Nonprofit Boards Fellowship, visit [nlctb.org/racial-equity-fellowship/](https://nlctb.org/racial-equity-fellowship/).

**About Nonprofit Leadership Center**

The Nonprofit Leadership Center (NLC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing and connecting nonprofit leaders to strengthen organizations and communities. With a focus on Tampa Bay nonprofits but with a national reach, NLC offers both in-person and virtual professional development experiences that equip nonprofit professionals to succeed in the areas of leadership, financial management, fund development, communications and marketing, and board governance. All [classes and trainings](https://nlctb.org/training/) are [developed and taught](https://nlctb.org/trainers/)by top nonprofit and business leaders, content experts and educators who possess real-world experience and subject-matter expertise. Learn more and see upcoming events and experiences at nlctb.org or on social media via @nlctb.

**About Vistra Communications**

Vistra Communications is an award-winning, marketing, communications and consulting agency providing integrated communications services to corporate, government and nonprofit organizations. The company has been ranked number one in the Top PR Firms in the Tampa Bay area according to the Tampa Bay Business Journal. For more information, please call 813.961.4700, or visit www.consultvistra.com.

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