

# Wisdom Projects

Peace, Healing, and Justice For All



## Human Resources Handbook

For Wisdom Projects, Inc.

A nonprofit organization

Baltimore, Maryland

## Human Resources Handbook for Wisdom Projects

*Wisdom Projects, Inc.* (WP) warmly welcomes employees. We endeavor to engage with you in affirmative, encouraging, and supportive ways. As a condition of employment, we must abide by and adhere to the policies, standards, and procedures in this handbook, and all directives on the Policies web-page of our website, as well as the directions and guidance given to you verbally by your supervisor and/or the Executive Director/Director (CEO).

See the Policies at <https://wisdomprojects.org/policies>.

APPLYING TO ALL EMPLOYEES, FULL-TIME, PART-TIME, AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

### Guidance and Feedback

All employees must be prepared to receive guidance, training, and supervision from the Executive Director. We are a values-driven organization with its own unique mission and methods. We ask that you listen to feedback and take direction. We aim to be very supportive when we offer feedback. Please also know that we care deeply about the accuracy, quality, and professionalism of everyone's work. We also care deeply about the cultivation of trust and goodwill between employees on our team and between us and the people we serve. Engaging with marginalized children and adults demands a high threshold of excellence. We must not replicate the injustices, inaccuracies, poor quality, or systemic challenges that affect the people we serve. We also aim to uplift you and your work and we encourage dialogue with us.

### Sexual Misconduct/Harassment

Have fun when it is appropriate, joke appropriately in a manner that does not target or put down anyone, and be relaxed and comfortable in your workplace relationships and communications. At the same time, employees are forbidden from dating, asking out, romancing, and having sex with other employees, youth, community members, families, anyone on job sites, or anyone of the organization's institutional collaborators and partners. Do not speak words or act in a manner that sexually harasses other employees, youth, families, anyone on job sites, or any of the organization's institutional collaborators and partners. Even if it is consensual, we do not allow staff of Wisdom Projects to date or maintain sexual relationships because of the danger of conflicts of interest and the high risk of relational problems. We immediately report sexual misconduct against children to either parents, directors, or law enforcement and conduct scrupulous background checks.

### Department and Communications

- All employees must be extremely punctual, reliable, honest, ethical, professional, pleasant, client/person-friendly, and trustworthy.
- All employees must have a positive, non-toxic, non-discriminatory social media presence.
- While there is no formal dress code, we ask that all employees and everyone in our workforce development programs refrain from wearing clothing that shows their midsection or the outline of their private parts and no one should not wear light colored sweat pants or tight, revealing clothing at any time. Clean, dress-casual, non-descript clothing is preferred. Please avoid jewelry or expensive watches and other accessories because our violence prevention work often places us in sensitive situations where we do not want our clothing to attract undue attention.
- All employees must respond to and/or acknowledge receipt of business text messages, email, and phone calls/messages (or communications) made between the hours of 9 AM and 7 PM within two hours. Communications made after these hours can be made the next day by 9 AM in the morning. Employees must acknowledge receipt of all communications.

### **Discretion and Confidentiality**

- We are committed to upholding the principles and procedures of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and the Maryland Personal Information Protection Act (MPIPA).
- Employees must maintain confidentiality of the business' information, staff's information, and community members or partners' information at all time.
- Employees must never contravene HIPAA, FERPA, and MPIPA laws and policies.
- If approached by anyone with a request for information or action, employees must never seek to answer, comply, or act on their own. Instead, thank the individual making the request and direct the individual to the CEO. Only let the CEO handle matters regarding requests for information or action.

### **Whistleblower Protection Policy**

- We require all employees and representatives to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. Employees and representatives must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns internally so that we can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all board members, officers, employees, and volunteers to report concerns about violations of all officials of the organization if ethical breaches occur or if suspected violations of law or regulations occur that affect operations.
- No Retaliation: It is contrary to our values to discriminate against anyone, including whistleblowers. If you are not comfortable speaking with your supervisor or you are not satisfied with your supervisor's response, you are encouraged to speak with Sharon Williams, a board member at <https://wisdomprojects.org/contact>. Supervisors and managers are required to report complaints or concerns about suspected ethical and legal violations in writing or by email to Ms. Williams and/or the Executive Director.

### **Background Checks and Drugs/Alcohol Policy**

- Being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at WP is strictly prohibited. Having drugs and/or alcohol in one's system while on the job is insubordination and smelling or presenting as if you are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly prohibited.
- You may be asked to undergo background checks, drug testing, and finger printing at any time, including multiple times a year or in a spot-check fashion. Please comply in a timely manner.
- WP aims to always model health and wellness for youth and families. We encourage children and youth to avoid drugs and alcohol including e-cigarettes/cigarette smoking, vaping, and the use of tobacco products. So that WP employees are models of good health for the youth, the company asks that you not smoke cigarettes, use e-cigarettes, vape, or use Tobacco products just before arriving at a job site or during your engagement with youth while on-the-job (inclusive of online and hybrid engagement). We are a community health organization and we must model the best behavior for wellness. We also frown upon taking breaks to smoke cigarettes.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

- Mandate: Employees, board members, and volunteers should not have a conflict of interest with any activities, operations, programming, and/or partnerships of the organization.
- Procedure: The following is the process that we use to manage conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest.

- Employees, board members, and volunteers must disclose the conflict/potential conflict immediately upon announcements or updates about activities, operations, programming, and/or partnerships at staff meetings or quarterly board meetings;
  - Employees, board members, and volunteers must disclose conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest immediately as soon as possible and then cease all conflicts of interest or resign from affiliation with the organization;
  - Employees, board members, and volunteers must not pursue involvement or decision-making of any kind on behalf of or within the organization if there is a conflict of interest or potential of a conflict of interest and this policy explicitly prohibits officers and board members from voting or conveying consensus on any matter in which there is a conflict of interest; and
  - Employees, board members, and volunteers must not continue any involvement with entities or people (either for remuneration or not) that involves conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest while a part of our nonprofit organization.
- All staff and board members may not accept any gifts that create or foster conflicts of interest. Generally, staff members are not allowed to accept gifts from constituents, clients, and partners except for young children below the age of 10 who give gifts in the course of programming with the permission of parents/guardians. Youth 10-18 are told about our gift policy.

### **Lesson Planning**

- If applicable, please engage in lesson planning in the manner requested by the Executive Director.
- Adhere to the organization's methods and instructions for structured learning, curriculum, community organizing, and lesson planning.
- Arriving early to set up, plan, and prepare lessons (be they in-person, online, or hybrid) is part of the work of lesson planning.

### **Call-In/Call-Out and Absences**

- Please text or email the Executive Director a week in advance if you cannot work so that we may have time to retain a substitute. Verbal notification of absence is not sufficient—only notify us of absences by text or email. See the number of sick days, and Paid Time Off policy in this document.
- The Executive Director must approve all absences.

### **Lateness for all Employees**

- WP seriously frowns upon lateness. Please do not come late for work. Start out early so you are never late. Your presence matters and the youth and adults with whom we work are adversely affected by lateness and unreliability. Being on time may mean coming early.
- Employees requesting sick leave are required to have documentation from their physician describing the nature of the illness, whether the illness is infectious, and the length of time it will take for the employee to become well.
- We are a community health organization and being vaccinated with up-to-date vaccines is especially important because we work with vulnerable, at-risk populations. Consequently, employees are required to obtain all applicable vaccines at the Executive Director's direction, including updated COVID-19 vaccines, and may be terminated with cause for refusal to obtain vaccines as directed when they are released for the public. See the next bullet point for exceptions.

- Employees who must have an exception to this policy in relation to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, or other applicable state or federal laws must notify the Executive Director upon hiring in writing within 48 hours of signing the contract.

### **Paid Time Off (PTO) for Employees**

- Fulltime or mainline employees receive five days of approved paid leave (PTO) each year of employment, inclusive of personal days and sick days, excluding federal holidays.
- Wisdom Projects offers extended holiday and summer leaves. Excluding the winter and summer holidays (in which all employees have time off), the 5 days of PTO must not be consecutive unless the employee has approved consecutive days of leave with the Executive Director.
- Please notify the Director at least 72 hours in advance for all planned personal days. A week's notice is preferred.
- The Executive Director will work with full-time employees on a case-by-case basis to provide compassionate leave for serious illness. However, as funding is limited, WP may not be able to offer extended paid medical leave.
- Part-time employees work out their schedules with the Executive Director and they receive 5 days of paid time off during the fiscal year. PT PTO must be requested and approved by the supervisor. Additional PTO must be requested and approved by the supervisor.

### **Jury Service**

As we are headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, our policy pertaining to jury service only pertains to employees in Baltimore, Maryland.

- For regular summoned jury service, we grant the employee one day of PTO (paid time off) above and beyond the PTO elsewhere offered in this document. We do not force the employee to use their other PTO for one day of jury service. We are a small nonprofit organization with less than 10 mainline employees and our annual fiscal year budget does not allow us to pay employees for missed work for jury service after one day.
- For summoned *grand jury* service in Maryland (lasting months, for example), we are not able to provide the employee with paid time off. We usually send by certified return receipt or overnight express mail with receipt a request for the employee to be excused from grand jury service due to the size of our organization and the need for the employee to work in their specialized role.
- Employees must provide written hard copy documentation pertaining to all kinds of jury summons in the physical hands of the Executive Director within 24 hours of receipt of the documents from the jury commission or relevant jury or jury related division.

### **Annual Contracts, Payday, Taxes, Benefits, and Vacations for Salaried Employees**

- Full-time exempt employees work on annual contracts during our fiscal year, which runs from September 1 to August 31. Contracts are assessed for renewal each year in July and August and renewals are contingent upon the organization's funding and the employee's performance and conduct.
- Employees may undergo 30- or 90-day trial periods either upon hiring or upon annual review.

- Top management's compensation is reviewed annually and if a change is to be made in the amount of the Executive Director's compensation, then the Board reviews comparability data, and contemporaneous, substantiation of the deliberation and decision by consensus.
- We pay full-time non-independent-contractor employees by direct deposit, not checks. The direct deposit pay date is worked out for each employee individually.
- We never pay by cash or deal in cash for anything.
- Federal income tax, Social Security, Medicare, and State Tax as well as all other applicable taxes are all withheld from each monthly payment of salary for non-independent-contractors by direct deposit.
- Each year, employees must complete applicable tax forms and the amount withheld from their direct deposits will depend on the information provided in these forms.
- Employees must retain receipts and evidence for all reimbursements.
- As annual benefits, the Executive Director or Directors receive housing assistance, retirement support, and support to cover healthcare insurance premiums. Unless they are covered elsewhere, mainline employees receive car-related stipends for transportation support; and support to cover healthcare insurance premiums. Other benefits are negotiated with new mainline employees during hiring or onboarding.
- Because Wisdom Projects, Inc. takes breaks for the winter and summer during January and August according to the public school system's schedule for hiatuses, we do not have a vacation policy, and we encourage employees to vacation or take breaks during the times when our afterschool or other programming is temporarily on hiatus.

### **Part-Time Employee Compensation**

- Part-time employees (including independent contractors) are compensated according to a plan worked out with the Executive Director and the part-time employee may be paid by our payroll system with taxes withheld or by Cash App, Zelle, or PayPal (or another applicable platform) on a schedule set by the Executive Director.

### **Communications**

- It is the role of the Executive Director to communicate official business concerning partnerships, programs, operations, and events, and to handle all directives, evaluations, and concerns that issue from the leadership or oversight of a job site or the community with which we serve.
- Likewise, it is the role of Executive Director to manage the employment of teachers and employees. Only the Executive Director retains and remunerates WP staff. It is **not** the job site's role, the employee's role, or anyone else to hire, retain, recommend for hiring, or manage WP employees. Adhering to federal, state, and local labor laws demands that we are clear about who manages the employment of WP employees.
- If a member of the leadership or staff of a job site or a community approaches an employee with a directive or a concern, then the employee should please thank that person for their communication and then immediately tell them to call, text, or email the Executive Director formally in an official capacity with their directive or concern.
- After receiving a call or email from the staff of a job site or anyone else, the Executive Director will handle the matter and may or may not (gauging confidentiality) then reach back to employees.
- Employees should not attempt to negotiate, engage, or respond on their own. Rather, they should let the Executive Director address the matter.

- Employees should not communicate evaluative information about WP, its employees, its partners, or its grantors to anyone, including staff of job sites, partners, grantors, communities, other employees, families and/or parents.
- If employees have a problem or wish to evaluate WP or its employees, bring the concerns to the Executive Director directly in a timely fashion and they will dialogue with the employee, or the person in question, or initiate a process of mediation to address concerns in a timely and good faith manner.
- Not going directly to the Executive Director may jeopardize the safekeeping and privacy of personnel records (and employees have a legal right to the confidentiality of their Human Resources records).
- Furthermore, not going directly to the Executive Director may also jeopardize the quality of WP's work with partners, grantors, and other professional entities.

### No Proselytizing

Employees must never, ever proselytize or promote the work of other organizations (apart from our main institutional partner as approved by the Director) at any time to community members, students, or constituents. We have had problems in the past with employees promoting activities from their other jobs at our work sites, and this is strictly forbidden. When at our work sites, the focus must only be on Wisdom Projects and approved partners. Proselytizing is grounds for immediate termination.

### Cross Purposes/Conflicts of Interest/Non-Compete

- **“Poaching”:** Please work with us to prevent the “poaching” of WP teachers and employees. “Poaching” is when an entity attempts to hire away a person currently employed by an organization. We view “poaching” as a severe breach of business ethics. If anyone approaches you and attempts to talk about another job with you or to hire you, then we ask that you be ethical and bring the matter to the attention of the Executive Director by email within 24 hours of the incident.
- Likewise, please NEVER discuss job searches or attempt to become employed at an organization with whom we partner or an organization that may pose a conflict of interest with our work. This is a very serious breach of business ethics and grounds for immediate termination of employment.
- **Requests to Program:** Each WP program represents an oftentimes highly complex partnership that contains legal contractual obligations. An individual or a business not represented in these agreements cannot simply come on site to offer programming, no matter how small, unless this programming is approved by WP and its partners. Moreover, WP must ensure that all programming at job sites comports with our business values, methods, identity, and brand. If a business partner or associate of an employee wishes to visit or offer programming at that job site, then WP asks that the employee emails us within 24 hours and apprise us of the matter, and allow us to handle the matter by communicating directly with the business partner. Provide the contact information of the business partner.
- **Cross Purposes/Conflicts of Interest:** In addition to the Conflict-of-Interest policy that appears within this document, we ask that employees be sensitive of actual or assumed cross purposes and conflicts of interest by being mindful of not negotiating, scheduling, or developing competing services that run during the times when WP offers programming.
- **Non-Compete:** Employees should not involve themselves in the programming or training of past employees of the organization that may duplicate, even informally or implicitly, the programming and training of WP, or that may raise issues of competing loyalties and divided trust. So much of what we do as an organizational team is based on trust and goodwill. Past employees could have separated from the organization due to malfeasance or activities that undermine or run counter to the organization. Engaging in the programming of past employees may threaten the trust and goodwill between us as a team. Moreover, some training may conflict with the training provided as an employee of this organization and that conflict could undermine (even subtly) the execution of your duties. Please disclose all involvement of this nature immediately and ask WP's Executive

Director if it runs counter to this part of the human resources policy. This kind of involvement—and hiding this involvement from WP Executive Director or WP’s Director (CEO)s—may be grounds for dismissal. (Note that this clause does not pertain to having private friendships or associations; rather, it is about involving oneself in potentially competing programming or training of past employees specifically.)

- **Branding:** If the leadership of a community requests that an employee officially brands an artistic product with the site’s branding (logo, etc.), then we ask that you email the Executive Director within 24 hours and apprise us of what is going on in this regard, and allow us to handle the matter. Ideally, all products and content generated, as part of our partnership with job sites, should carry everyone’s branding, including that of WP, so that everyone is uplifted. WP believes in equitable, transparent branding that highlights multiple partners that contribute to projects.

### **Retention and Destruction of Documents and Prohibition Against Alteration or Dissemination of Administrative Settings**

- All employees and board members shall endeavor to be sensitive to the need to retain and manage the organization's vital documents, which (if applicable) are kept in the care of Executive Director using Google Drive. These include By-Laws, policy documents, financial and tax-oriented reports of all kinds, checks, IRS determination letter, proprietary lesson plans and curricula, minutes of board meetings, and other related documents. Employees and board members must never remove or alter these documents without the express permission of the Executive Director.
- So much of what we do as an organizational team is based on trust and goodwill. This includes the handling of passcodes, keys, and access to administrative settings. For the safety, security, and sound management of the organization, the Executive Director is the individual that controls all access, set-up, and handling of organizational passcodes, keys, and administrative settings. Never change, alter, or disseminate (meaning, give to other persons) passcodes, settings, keys, or access. If a fellow employee does not have access to a platform or a professional setting, let the Executive Director give the employee the access. If the employee asks you for access, then send them to the Executive Director instead of giving access on your own. Always ask the Executive Director before making any changes to settings and please receive the Director (CEO)’s permission before taking any such actions. Failure to comply with this clause may be grounds for dismissal.

### **Vetting, Hiring, Negotiating**

- It is only the Director (CEO)s’ role to approach, vet, hire, and negotiate with employees, partners, grantors, and collaborators according to WP’s human resources policy and WP’s other policies so that we follow federal, state, and local laws.
- Please do not attempt to negotiate the hiring or acquisition of teacher, employees, vendors, partners, grantors, or collaborators on your own.
- Feel free to suggest individuals or entities, but please do not approach the individual or entity in any manner prior to suggesting.
- Instead, email the Executive Director with the individual’s contact information and allow us to approach the individual on our own.

### **Written Investment and Joint Venture Policy**

- This policy pertains to the executive, senior staff, board members, and relevant staff members. All agreements must be reviewed and approved by the Executive Director with consideration of the following: that the agreements for partnership ascribes to the values and mission of the organization; that it does not breach the organization's insurance obligations and risk management procedures; and that it benefits the organization according to its mission and values. **The organization has no investments related to any stock markets or other investment instruments or endeavors of any kind.**

## Headcount

- For every experience or lesson taught or facilitated, each teacher on her, his, or their own should perform an initial headcount of children, youth, or applicable adults to ascertain the number of participants involved in the lesson or experience. This headcount is indispensable for several administrative demands, including situations pertaining to an emergency when participants must be accounted for, tracked, and/or evacuated.

## A Commitment to Peace, Disability-Sensitivity, and Trauma-Informed Care

WP is committed to peace and nonviolence in all its endeavors. Employees must model peace and nonviolence, intervene by attempting to stop fighting and play-fighting among youth (according to training and appropriate procedures), be sensitive to people's disabilities, be sensitive to people's trauma, and avoid teaching or organizing content that includes aggression or violence, whether explicit or implied (such as dodge ball or some forms of martial arts). Employees may be asked to undergo training in peacemaking, disability-sensitivity, and trauma-informed care.

## Touching Children, Youth, or Applicable Persons

- Ask for a person's explicit affirmative CONSENT to proceed before doing anything that involves another person's physical space (meaning, the space within an arm's reach of a person's body), including touching of any kind, especially youth and only proceed if affirmative consent is given.
- Please do not pull, grab, hit, or correctively and/or toxically touch a child under any circumstances. If they are moving about erratically, create a barrier with your arms or soft objects to contain their movements.
- If they are falling, please do catch them for safety, but do not do this in a corrective, punitive, or toxic manner.
- If a child is doing something unsafe or harmful to her, his, or their own self or to others (including emotional safety), use your "big time" voice and loudly and respectfully (using non-toxic speech) tell the child that she, he, or they are proceeding in an unsafe, hurtful, or harmful manner; that such behavior cannot be tolerated; and be sure to say, "STOP!" and "Eyes on me!" to verbally attempt to stop the problematic behavior. We have an obligation to intervene swiftly when harmful or toxic behavior occurs, but only verbally in the manner expressed here.
- Please do not ever touch a child or adult in any manner that may be viewed as toxic or as sexual misconduct of any kind on the face or from the neck down on the front-center of their body and do not touch a child's bottom or the front lower part of their bodies ever.
- If consent is granted and a child requests or wants a hug, please do give the hug, but do not linger in a front-to-front hug.
- If a child needs to be consoled when upset, place the child to one side of your body and embrace the outer portion of their body from the shoulder and back, avoiding the front-center of their body.
- If consent is given, please do hold hands for a limited period to console and to guide a child.
- Only perform medical interventions involving contact to the chest or face if you are trained or certified in procedures like CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) or the *Heimlich maneuver* (to stop someone from choking).

## Crime and Abuse as Grounds for Dismissal from Employment

- Please understand that illegal activity, insubordination (including disparagement or hostility towards the director, colleagues, partners, clients, or anyone in the communities that we serve), abusiveness, and chronic, persistent failure to abide by the policies in this document as well as the in-person verbal, electronic, and telephonic guidance and feedback that WP's Executive Director and senior staff convey—all constitute grounds for immediate dismissal from employment with notice.

### **Prohibition Against Recording Without Permission**

- Regulations governing the recording of conversations in Maryland fall under the Wiretapping and Electronic Surveillance Act. Maryland is one of eleven U.S. states that have two-party, or all-party call recording laws. We must also adhere to FERPA and HIPAA laws. This means that everyone participating in any conversation, teaching experience, or engagement must give their consent before any communication is recorded by audio, video, or other means. It is unlawful to record phone conversations, online meetings, and other communications without gaining all employees and persons' permission. Participants in our community education and health programs undergo a rigorous intake process and sign forms that grant WP permission to record them; but, if you plan to take photographs, videotape, or audiotape of community members, please be sure to obtain the permission of WP's Executive Director before you proceed. Before making any recordings of WP employees, including the Executive Director (CEO), gain the emailed or written permission of both the employee or employees and the Executive Director (CEO).
- EXCEPTION: Making video and other multimedia is a part of WP's work and for marketing and fundraising. Likewise, video or audio recording may be a part of WP's evaluations involving focus groups, interviews, or documentations of lessons and trainings. This prohibition should not be construed as pertaining to making video, photography, and other multimedia as part of WP's programming and evaluations, for which WP obtains releases. This multimedia making and evaluation is done under the direction of the Executive Director and all such work should be done with the Executive Director's permission and the consent of individuals depicted in multimedia.

### **Intellectual Property, Trade Secrets, and Proprietary Information**

All written and multimedia materials (including curricula and strategic communications) are either the property of Wisdom Projects, Inc. or the Executive Director. Please never share, circulate, disclose, or claim these materials so that you do not breach the privacy, ownership, or copyright of this intellectual property, trade secrets, and proprietary information.

### **Questions/Comments/Concerns**

Please feel free to reach out to WP at <https://wisdomprojects.org/contact>. We care about your professional wellbeing and will work with you to mediate and resolve your concerns. Thank you for joining and/or being on our team!