

## Kendal at Oberlin

### Community Engagement

Commitment to the external community is a hallmark of societal responsibility to which all Employer of Choice organizations should ascribe. Employer of Choice candidates should describe (in essay form) their systematic\* commitment to active community engagement through various involvement efforts, both large and small, and how the approaches and design of their efforts support their Mission and strategic direction. Fulfillment of this commitment to societal responsibility is demonstrated through engaging leaders and employees in the community to create positive, measurable impact for both the organization and community. Response to this item will address the following:

- How does the organization contribute to societal well-being and create positive community impact as part of their strategy and ongoing leadership activity? **Too many times, organizations see community involvement as an activity rather than a strategic part of successful operations. Community involvement is a significant use of organizational resources, including time, talent, financial resources, energy and enthusiasm, demands on leaders and employees' personal time beyond their daily work commitments, etc. Exceptional organizations understand that resource investments of this magnitude need to be considered and evaluated for their strategic value and impact for the organization, and it is critical that such a significant expenditure of resources be allocated in the most effective manner possible.**

**The applicant in this case has established and aligned a highly effective system through which it aligns and evaluates its community commitments with its Values, Practices, and Five-Year Strategic Plan. In addition, they define the regional scope of their involvement investments, and review the impact semi-annually to ensure that impacts created are commensurate with expectations that guided resource allocation to chosen community involvement and development efforts.**

- How does the organization identify the key communities (geographic, causes, pressing external needs, etc.) they choose to intentionally support? **As mentioned above, the senior leaders (Board, Executive Leaders and Senior Leaders on site) are engaged in this effort in both strategic planning and operations, but also in organizational performance review and investment/impact evaluation. This effort focuses the entire organization on the highest and best use of the critical resources invested in community involvement.**
- What types of community engagement activities are undertaken by the organization? How does the organization design/deliver their involvement in these activities, engaging their workforce members in those efforts in a meaningful fashion? **The applicant details its many community involvement efforts, and the list is comprehensive in nature and aligned with priorities set in the processes described above. The "exceeds" rating in this applicant's case is distinguished from other applicants by the alignment and evaluation/assessments processes, not by the volume of involvements they list. The key to moving up the ratings continuum in this area is not to just present a vast array of engagements and involvement efforts, but to show how decisions are made to become/remain involved in particular community projects, what criteria are used to evaluate whether or not to get involved, and how you measure the impact made, comparing that impact to the level of resource investment expended, and determining whether you actually generated "value" that is worthy of the resources used.**

- How does the organization determine and evaluate the level of impact they are making on their communities through their efforts? How does the organization measure their internal return on investment from their community engagement activities? **This is an area where the applicant has an opportunity for improvement. It is not clear what the criteria are that are used to evaluate its investments in the community, even though it is stated that the Board does review the extent and alignment of community involvement.**

## Community Engagement:

Kendal at Oberlin delights in encouraging residents, staff and board to participate in a wide range of opportunities in the larger community which are connected to our Five-Year Strategic Plan. Our Values and Practices tie to societal wellbeing: “We strive to be good neighbors. Whenever possible, we share our resources, knowledge, and facilities.” Kendal’s Strategic Plan reinforces our commitment to our mission by reinforcing our already strong sense of community, responding to changing circumstances, and collaborating with the external community and affiliated partners. Kendal is focused intentionally on addressing needs in Northern Ohio. Of particular focus is implementation of a community benefit plan aimed at outreach into the larger community. The Strategic Plan Committee is charged with meeting twice a year to assess the impact and achievement of these strategies and to report their progress to the Board. The reports have been very thorough and result in assessment and adjustment to the plan. The Board annually reviews whether the strategic goals have been met as targeted in the plan.

Much of the engagement of residents and staff originates simply on the desire to bring about positive change in the larger community. Encouragement comes in many forms ranging from simple appeals for help to create annual staff performance goals that include awards for volunteer service tied to Kendal’s strategic objectives. Below are some examples.

- Between 2017 and 2018 the Volunteer Clearing House tracked between 50,000 to 64,000 volunteer hours contributed annually benefiting more than 85 community agencies at a significant value of \$1,167,000.00 (2018) as estimated by Volunteer Sector. Hours are tracked by the Volunteer Clearinghouse Committee who match volunteers requested by community nonprofits. This tracking has been done annually for more than 15 years.
- One of the highest categories of community impact is those activities serving the area schools and students. From the very youngest children being served in our accredited Early Learning Center to the many college students being given educational experiences and clinical training, students are integrated daily into Kendal’s campus life. In 2017, Kendal dedicated a duplex home to offer on-campus internships year-round as a way to aid students in their career paths.
- Kendal served as a sponsor in 2018 for the area Alzheimer’s Walk that drew more than 150 Kendal walkers including board, staff, and residents. Funds were raised by departments who created gift baskets for a raffle, and another staff project created a Kendal cookbook in honor of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. These funds were used to cover the Walk’s entry fees and engaged residents, staff, and board.
- Kendal at Oberlin continues to uphold the City of Oberlin’s *Best Intergenerational Communities Award*. Kendal at Oberlin was awarded a Program of Distinction in 2017 by Generations United.
- Kendal at Oberlin residents and administration partner together to be among a group of 10 neighboring organizations to contribute operating funds for a local bus operating door-to-door service two days a week for all Oberlin citizens with reduced rates for seniors.
- Kendal staff join with individual citizens and churches to participate annually in a Holiday Helping Hands Project buying gifts for children of low-income families.
- Welcoming the larger community into Kendal is very important to both residents and staff. During 2018, there were 149 events hosted by Kendal in which our community spaces were made available for nonprofits for meetings, education, social opportunities, worship and more. One example is the eight-week Tree Academy for area citizens as well as for our grounds team who work to support Kendal’s John Bartram Arboretum.

- Kendal at Oberlin has been a partner for eight years with Mt. Zion Baptist Church to serve homeless families under the Family Promise program. While the program is ending in 2019, Kendal will now support Neighborhood Alliance, a similar nonprofit serving homeless individuals.
- The City of Oberlin's Housing Study of 2017 has led to Kendal at Oberlin staff's working to support the development of a Community Land Trust to assure affordable housing for seniors and young families. This is leading to new partnerships among the City, local businesses, and a local foundation.
- Professional staff are encouraged to be involved with the leadership of organizations that tie to advancing the aging experience. Leadership roles and officers for such organizations as LeadingAge National, United Way, Rotary, and LeadingAge Ohio's Leadership Academy are ongoing.
- Our Dining Services Kitchen Team flash-froze leftover food in excess of 1000 pounds in 2018 and the beginning of 2019 to donate to the local nonprofit community organization's food bank for local hungry citizens.