AEP Equity Working Group 2020 Work Plan

Introduction

This work plan aims to solidify the overall purpose, structure, and next phase of work for the AEP equity working group. The Arts Education Partnership and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, chair of the working group, outline the following work plan to guide the working group.

AEP working groups convene partner organizations to generate and disseminate knowledge, effective practices and the creation of policy and practice deliverables around a specific topic or issue at the forefront of the arts education field. The AEP Equity Working Group brings together arts and education organizations committed to advancing equity to gather, study and share models of practice and lessons learned on the topic of equity in arts education across the field. Chaired by AEP advisory council member National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), the AEP Equity Working Group consists of interested AEP partner organizations invited to participate in a volunteer capacity. As of September 2019, the working group consists of 33 representatives from AEP partner organizations.

2020 Direction

In the coming months, AEP will be releasing a new strategic mission and accompanying engagement strategy that opens the working groups to partners and affiliates. AEP affiliates will be defined as members of AEP partner organizations or organizations and individuals that conduct arts education-related work at a state, regional or local level.

For 2020, the group will re-center as an inquiry-based learning community for partners and affiliates with expertise and/or interest in DEIA. AEP will provide capacity building resources for members to explore DEIA issues together, with a secondary focus on producing deliverables. This direction considers the group's feedback on the value of dialogue and activities to deepen understanding of strategies and tactics to move DEIA

work forward in their own organizations. This also supports AEP's new strategic mission which places greater emphasis on building leadership capacity and knowledge for AEP partners and affiliates.

Group Structure and Membership

The equity working group will be structured as an inquiry-oriented learning community. This group will consist of leaders from AEP partner organizations and affiliates looking to learn about diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) and leaders with demonstrated expertise in DEIA focus areas. There will not be a cap to working group membership at this time.

There will be room for participation from practitioners in the field who may not wish to participate in the learning community but have valuable expertise to share with the group through guest presentations and technical assistance support. AEP will research and invest financially as needed to compensate guest speakers.

Inquiry Process

With the working group re-centering as an Inquiry-Oriented Learning Community, the focus of the group will be on moving through the following process:

1. Collectively develop inquiry questions (e.g. "what structures are set up in our own organizations that impact equity? How can we shift those structures to create more equitable systems?)
2. Create a plan to investigate the inquiry questions
3. Establish process benchmarks
4. Revisit questions
5. Meet benchmarks for documentation of learning

It will be important for the group to create and maintain a safe space for participants to pose questions, workshop ideas, reflect, report out on individual progress, and adapt as the community learns together. Meetings will balance reporting out, interrogating the groups inquiry questions, and mapping out what resources need to be brought in to build knowledge and capacity related to the specific inquiry questions. For example, this group may decide to have each participant look at human resource policy documents at their

own organizations to see how they have an impact on equity and invite an expert to lead a session on that area of inquiry.

This group will focus on shorter term goals that allow the work to grow organically. At the end of each meeting, participants will come to an agreement on what to expect for the following meeting's focus.

Key Terms:

- **Inquiry-Oriented Professional Learning Community**: a group of six to twelve professionals who meet on a regular basis to learn from practice through structured dialogue and engage in continuous cycles through the process of action research (Dana, Yendol-Hoppey 2008).

- **Action Research**: systematic, intentional study by (leaders) of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Action researchers seek out change and reflect on their practice by posing questions or "wondering," collecting data to gain insights into their wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading relevant literature, making changes in practice based on new understandings developed during inquiry, and sharing findings with others (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). This process includes:
    1. Locating an action research question or wondering
    2. Developing a plan for research
    3. Analyzing data
    4. Sharing work with others

- **10 Essential Elements of a Healthy Inquiry**-Oriented **Professional Learning Community**:
    1. Establish a vision that creates momentum for their work
    2. Build trust among group members
    3. Pay attention to the ways power can influence group dynamics
    4. Understand and embrace collaboration
    5. Encourage, recognize, and appreciate diversity within the group
    6. Promote the development of critical friends
    7. Hold the group accountable for and document learning

8. Understand change and acknowledge the discomfort it may bring to some group members
9. Have a comprehensive view of what constitutes data, and are willing to consider all forms and types of data throughout the group's work
10. Work with Administrators or Executive Leadership

(Adapted from [The Reflective Educator's guide to Professional Development Coaching Inquiry-Oriented learning Communities](#))

Types of Knowledge and Professional Development			
	Knowledge *for* Practice	**Knowledge *in* Practice**	**Knowledge *of* Practice**
Knowledge Source	◼ Knowledge that is the result of generalizable behaviors and techniques that show potential and are verified and acknowledged as effective.	◼ Knowledge that recognizes the importance of teacher practical knowledge and its role in improving practice.	◼ Knowledge that emerges from teacher questions about their practice and results from the systemic study of their classroom teaching.
Professional Development Activities	◼ Read a professional book or journal.	◼ Implement an innovation and reflect individually, with a mentor, or with a peer coach.	◼ Engage in research individually, with a partner, or as part of a learning community.
	◼ Attend a workshop or professional meeting.	◼ Engage in research around a particular innovation.	
	◼ Observe another leader in action.		

Adapted from [The Reflective Educator's guide to Professional Development Coaching Inquiry-Oriented learning Communities](#) pg.5 Figure 1.1

Time Commitment

Participants will commit to dedicating time to the recurring meetings to the best of their ability. This group will meet virtually four to six times a year with regular one to two-hour meetings every other month. Additional meetings may be set as needed to dig deeper into tasks or questions that come up. Consistent attendance will be important to ensure the learning community grows as a unit and each person is included in the various activities.

Benchmarks	Description
Shared Vision	• The group will conduct a working session focused on creating a shared vision for the i**nquiry-oriented professional learning community.** (E.g. All Participants of the AEP Equity Working Group feel comfortable sharing their struggles, questions and learnings during regular working group meetings and are provided a safe space to workshop ideas, gain feedback, and support the progression of DEIA work in their own organizations.)
Inquiry Planning	• Collectively develop inquiry questions (e.g. "what structures are set up in our own organizations that impact equity? How can we shift those structures to create more equitable systems?) • Create a plan to investigate the inquiry questions • Establish process benchmarks • Revisit questions • Meet benchmarks for documentation of learning
Meetings	• This group will meet virtually four to six times a year with regular one to two-hour meetings every other month. Additional meetings may be set as needed to dig deeper into tasks or questions that come up. • This group will meet in person at least once annually at the AEP Annual Convening.
Inquiry Questions	• Allow the group to identify which questions to dig into (address questions with guest speaker series, readings, etc.)
Survey Takeaways	• **Report or Blog**: Release as a brief report highlighting takeaways form original survey, or release a blog highlighting takeaways and introducing the direction of the working group. AEP will need permission from survey participants to have their organizations mentioned. • **Success Stories/Promising Practices:** AEP will ask working group members to highlight what their organizations are doing, and what is going well.
Definitions	• AEP will release compilation of DEIA definitions (like a 50-state comparison report).
Blogs	• Highlight what the group is doing and learning along the way. • Authors will get permission from the group on what participants are comfortable sharing out. • Blogs may be published by AEP and/or AEP partners in the working group.

Guest Speaker Webinars	• Volunteers within the working group will support recruiting guest speakers • Every other working group meeting will have a guest speaker curated to present on a specific area of interest identified by the working group (Goal: 1 webinar per quarter) • The guest speaker presentations will be recorded and released as a webinar series on AEP's website as a product of the working group • Content of guest presentations will be directly tied to inquiry questions developed by the group.
Compilation of Resources and Lessons Learned	• AEP staff and the working group chair will document learnings overtime and compile resources shared through the working group to eventually create a resource for the field. This resource may include the materials and language the group has created to date as well as sections that go over the group's process and lessons learned along the way.

Development of an Equity Toolkit

As the working group members participate in inquiry-based learning, dialogue on specific issues, and break out discussions, AEP staff will take notes and collect feedback from participants on lessons learned. A subcommittee comprised of AEP Staff, ECS Staff and the working group chairs will create deliverables along the learning journey that can be shared publicly and compiled into a malleable toolkit for the field. Working group participants, especially those with specific areas of expertise pertaining to each deliverable will be called on to draft, edit and provide feedback as tangible takeaway documents are created.

Each deliverable may be catered to a different audience. Given the learning nature of this group, leadership will refrain from outlining specific deliverables and will allow the process to move forward organically, and deliverables may be revised after more learning has occurred to serve a new purpose (e.g. A document outlining steps participants took to address DEI in their performing arts organizations may be edited to apply to a school setting once compiled into a toolkit).

Feedback Received on What Should be Included in an AEP Equity Toolkit:

- The final product should address multiple audiences at various levels and that it may make sense to create multiple products to address specific audiences (e.g., create

different content for teachers, state arts agency leaders, principals, superintendents, etc.).

- Be engaging and accessible for a broad audience of readers in arts and education
- Present as an online and active resource rather than a printed and bound resource
- Provide a glossary of terms at the beginning of the document, especially words or phrases that may prompt strong reactions from readers if they are unfamiliar with the concept
- Include a section on pre-work activities for organizations to consider before publishing materials
- Include opportunities for extended learning (e.g. resources for deeper reading or webinars)
- Provide one-pagers that that can be useful independently or as part of a larger resource (e.g. lesson plans, questions to ask board members, activities for self-reflection)
- Include humanizing quotes, stories, and case studies to make content engaging
- Include visuals and strong design (i.e., use different fonts and images, use white space to make the text less dense, etc.)
- Create short- and long-term benchmarks for measuring progress
- Include a section on challenges that may arise
- Do not take a one size fits all approach - pathways through equity work need to reflect where people are in their leadership capacity and their understanding of their own identity
- Balance the use of content focused on process and activities versus data and research

Recap of the Group's Work to Date

- **July 2018:** AEP established the Equity Working Group and sent an open invitation to AEP partners to join.
- **July 2018:** The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies stepped up to serve as the Chair of the working group. Susan Oetgen was designated as the key contact to facilitate the working group meetings.
- **July 2018:** AEP hired a research consultant, Erika Hawthorne, to conduct a scan of the field on current diversity, equity, inclusion efforts.

- **August 2018:** Working group met and discussed the next steps for the survey.
- **August/September 2018:** The AEP research consultant conducted survey interviews by phone using the [Survey](#) with 18 AEP stakeholders. Confidential detailed notes and a summary of takeaways were shared with AEP staff.
- **August 2018:** The following deliverables were drafted and shared with the working group: (1) [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Access Definitions](#) ; (2) [Tactics for Addressing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA)](#)
- **December 2018**: The working group met virtually to debrief on the survey findings.
- **May 2019:** The working group met virtually to review the definitions and tactics documents and discussed deliverables the group would like to produce in the next steps. The idea of a DEIA toolkit surfaced.
- **July 2019:** A subcommittee met to start crafting definitions for diversity, equity, inclusion, and access that could be included in a toolkit for the field.
- **September 2019:** The working group met in person at the AEP convening to participate in trust-building and reflective activities and to discuss a path forward for collaboratively creating a toolkit or other resources for the field. The subcommittee shared an update on how the small group activities went. AEP updated on the Toolkit Focus Group (held directly after the AEP convening) to gain additional input on what a toolkit should encompass.
- **September 2019:** AEP hosted an Equity Toolkit Focus Group to get outside input on what AEP should consider in creating an equity toolkit. A summary of feedback from the participants is included in this document.
- **October 2019 – March 2020**: Jamie Kasper joined the team as AEP Director and staff worked with the working group chair to map out the direction of the working group.