

AEP Equity Working Group:

Addressing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access in Arts and Education

The AEP Equity Working Group, formed in cooperation with National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, conducted a scan of AEP partner organizations' and their constituencies' current efforts, goals, and gaps related to addressing equity and access in arts education.

The following list of tactics for addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, as it relates to arts and education institutions, was compiled from interview data, outside research, and through AEP working group discussions. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is designed to be a starting point for organizations looking to evaluate and expand their current efforts to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and access in arts and education institutions.

Tactics:

- 1. Develop a policy statement related to equity, diversity, access and/or inclusion.** The more organizational stakeholders involved in developing this statement, the better.
 - Ex., Americans for the Arts' (AFTA) [Statement on Cultural Equity](#)
 - Ex., National Assembly of State Arts Agencies' (NASAA) [Policy Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- 2. Explicitly define what your organization means when using terms such as 'equity', 'diversity', 'inclusion', and 'access' to avoid any ambiguity.** These terms can have vastly different interpretations, leading to confusion when it comes to group dialogue and measuring outcomes.
 - Ex., OPERA America's [Definitions of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)
 - Ex. Annie E. Casey Foundation's Core Concepts in their guide, ["7 Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization"](#)
- 3. Develop a publicly available catalogue of activities that list your organization's efforts to advance equity internally and/or for your constituents.** This is a way to hold your organization accountable for change, as well as celebrate progress.
 - Ex., Grantmakers in the Arts' (GIA) [Outline of GIA's Work in Equity, 2008-Present](#)
 - Ex., AFTA's [Progress Report for the Field](#) on their efforts to advance cultural equity across organizational departments
 - Ex., NASAA's continuously updated [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Activities](#) document
- 4. Create a publicly available list of recommended resources for addressing disparities and achieving equity in arts education.** Special attention should be paid to keeping this list as current as possible.

- a. Ex., ArtEquity's [suggested resources list](#) for conferences, webinars, and reading materials
 - b. Ex., OPERA America's [learning resources list](#)
5. **Provide regular, ongoing equity-related training for staff and board.** There are innumerable training organizations, consultants and speakers with deep expertise to consider when curating learning opportunities. Allocating appropriate time and financial resources, and demonstrating support at the leadership level through participation, are critical to the success of these learning opportunities.
 6. **Provide equity-related professional development for constituents, members or other public audiences.** This can include being intentional about programming equity content in your annual conferences and bringing experts to present and engage with your constituents through webinars and other external facing events.
 - a. Ex., VSA Kennedy Center's [webinars archive](#)
 7. **Hire or designate a staff member whose primary job function is to manage equity-related activities or initiatives, and ensure the entire organization integrates their expertise.** If your organization hires a senior level officer housed in programs or human resources, or a more junior level manager or coordinator, ensure that this person's expertise in diversity, equity, inclusion and access is adopted and integrated by all other staff members across all aspects of the organization. It is not uncommon to see this role combined with other responsibilities. If your organization designates an existing staff member to manage these activities, reflect before assuming that the right staffer for this task is a person who is harmed by the structural inequities your organization is trying to solve. Also, management should consider appropriate compensation when job functions expand in order to prioritize new work in this area on behalf of the organization.
 - a. Ex., Opera America's [Director of Government Affairs and EDI Officer](#)
 8. **Develop and implement a rigorous approach to attracting and sustaining a more diverse pool of new-hires.** This includes being intentional about where jobs are posted, if the requirements are appropriately aligned with the role, being transparent about the salary range, providing a livable wage, doing intentional outreach, building strong partnerships with organizations dedicated to creating a diverse pipeline and building an inclusive culture that will make staff from diverse backgrounds feel valued and engaged at work.
 9. **Establish behavioral norms to promote an inclusive culture.** This may include establishing healthy norms for dealing with conflict in the workplace or providing explicit professional development on how to address and prevent microaggressions in your office culture and external engagement.
 10. **Establish equity-related affinity groups for staff and board members and/or constituents and members.**
 - a. Ex., National Guild for Community Arts Education's [ARE Network](#)

11. **Provide equity-related mentorship opportunities for staff members and/or constituents.** Whether you do this internally or through external partnerships, mentorship can be a strong tool for supporting and developing staff and the field your organization supports.
 - a. Ex., NASAA's [DEI Mentorship Program](#)
 - b. Ex., Arts Administrators of Color Network's [mentoring program](#)
 - c. Ex., Sphinx's [Sphinx LEAD](#) program

12. **Conduct specific and ongoing research and/or data gathering initiatives related to equity and arts education.** Research and publish reports related to equity in arts education to continually advance shared knowledge and understanding on the current state and effective methods for making real progress toward a more diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible arts and education sector.
 - a. Ex., VSA Kennedy Center's [Exemplary Programs and Approaches Professional Papers Series](#)
 - b. Ex., VSA Kennedy Center's [Arts and Special Education: A Map for Research](#) publication

13. **Develop partnerships with constituents and/or other organizations specifically intended to advance equity in the arts and education.**
 - a. Ex., [D5 Coalition](#)
 - b. Ex., [The Equity Project](#) involving The International Association of Blacks in Dance, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Dance/USA and more
 - c. Ex., Race Forward's [Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab](#)

14. **Learn to take an asset-based approach to address diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.**
 - a. Ex., University of Memphis's [approach to understanding the difference between asset and deficit-based approaches](#).

15. **Assess current policies and practices from an equity lens and shift understandings about what outcomes are possible in your organization.** Prioritize advancing equity in arts education as an organizational goal and create a task force, working group or hire an outside consultant to understand how current personnel, time, and financial resources can be leveraged to greater effect and impact on equity related goals.
 - a. Ex. National Art Education Association's [National Task Force on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion](#)

16. **Create community and highlight exemplary models, practices, and organizations.** The full arts education ecosystem must work together to effectively create change related to diversity, equity, inclusion and access in the arts and education.
 - a. Ex., Arts Education Partnership Equity Working Group

17. **Understand that 'this is a journey, not a destination'!** Organizations and individual stakeholders need to work to define relevant issues together and push each other to make real progress over time.