

AEP Equity Working Group: Sample Definitions and Statements for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Background: The following list of definitions and statements addressing diversity, equity and inclusion was compiled through interviews with AEP partner organizations, outside research and AEP Equity Working Group discussions. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. These samples of language may serve as a starting point for organizations looking to draft their own definitions or statements.

Broad Policy and Value Statements

Americans for the Arts: “To support a full creative life for all, Americans for the Arts commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation.”

“Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.”

Dance/USA: “Through the lens of equity, Dance/USA strives to remove the boundaries erected by a legacy of racism, classism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, gender bias, and xenophobia and we work to dismantle institutional and systemic oppression that attack the dance field’s progress, impede the creation of work, and negatively impact dance audiences and communities.”

Educational Theatre Association (EdTA): “The Educational Theatre Association complies with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and all other related federal, state, and local employment laws. EdTA does not discriminate based on age, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation in regard to any term, condition, employment, program, event, or service. Diversity and inclusion are integral to upholding our core value of People Matter. We want every member of our organization - from students and troupe directors to volunteers and event attendees - to feel important and respected by our organization and our Thespians.”

National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Position statement on [Inclusivity and Diversity in Music Education](#): “A well-rounded and comprehensive music education program, as envisioned in the 2014 National Music Standards, should exist in every American school; should be built on a curricular framework that promotes awareness of, respect for, and responsiveness to the variety and diversity of cultures; and should be delivered by teachers whose culturally responsive pedagogy enable them to successfully design and implement such an inclusive curricular framework.”

NAfME Position Statement on [Equity and Access in Music Education](#): “All students deserve access to and equity in the delivery of music education, one of the subjects deemed necessary in federal law for a well-rounded education, which is at the heart of NAfME’s stated mission: to advance music education by promoting the understanding and making of music by all.”

[National Assembly of State Arts Agencies \(NASAA\)](#): “NASAA values America's diversity: America's diversity enriches and strengthens our nation. Yet as we become a country moving away from a single racial or ethnic majority, we wrestle with demographic, economic and political divides. The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) celebrates our nation's diversity and promotes the role of the arts to connect and uplift us, bridge our differences, and inspire an appreciation of our shared humanity.”

“The public-sector arts play a unique and essential role to ensure the arts contribute to the well-being and prosperity of all Americans. As public entities, state arts agencies have a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and they work to support a strong democracy that elevates the American experience and nourishes the creative spirit of our people and communities. All states and populations are unique, and collectively they contribute to America's rich and evolving story.”

[OPERA America](#): “OPERA America believes that opera companies have an obligation to be more reflective of their communities and that the art form and the industry gain from diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

[State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education \(SEADAE\)](#): “SEADAE does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability in admission or access to or employment in its programs and activities.”

Equity Definitions and Statements:

[Grantmakers In the Arts \(GIA\)](#):

Equity: The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and

processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

Racial Equity: Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. Racial equity is one part of racial justice. Therefore, we also include work that addresses root causes of inequities and not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

Philanthropic Racial Equity: Racial equity in funding is the investment of social and financial resources in policies, practices, and actions that produce equitable access, power, and outcomes for African, Latinx, Arab, Asian, Native-American (ALAANA) communities/BIPOC communities/communities of color.

National Art Education Association (NAEA): "Equity refers to conditions that support fairness and justness based on individual needs and circumstances whereas all members have opportunities to thrive and realize their best within the NAEA community" (Adopted by NAEA Board 2017).

NASAA: "Equity: the implementation of policies and practices without bias, allowing all people to realize fair and just engagement, treatment, benefits and opportunities."

National Guild for Community Arts Education: "Equity: We promote accessibility, inclusion, racial justice, and social change because the arts are fundamental to our humanity and a catalyst for equity."

OPERA America: "Equity: OPERA America is committed to creating an equitable culture among its staff and board, and across all its programs. The organization will work with its members to implement fair policies and practices that create working environments free of prejudice, discrimination and misogyny, and that respect and inspire all people equally. Equity means fairness for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, age or disability status."

"Equity means recognizing that not everyone is starting from the same point but ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Universal policies and practices, while equal and accepting, may not be equitable. Equity requires additional, purposeful effort to ensure that those who are oppressed can reach the same levels of success as those with power. Equity is not the same as diversity, nor is it the even the same as equality. Our organizations may have hiring policies that offer equal access. Yet, job postings, support for staff and the "culture" of an organization may not be equitable in that they don't take into account the root causes of lack of representation."

Diversity Definitions and Statements:

League of American Orchestras: "The League believes that the inclusion of a broad range of experiences and perspectives will strengthen our organization by prompting us to react and think

differently, approach challenges and solve problems differently, and seek new opportunities. We believe that superior organizational performance requires tapping into a variety of life experiences and perspectives. For orchestras to remain vital, they must be authentically diverse institutions—onstage, on staff, and in their governance. It is essential that orchestras in the 21st century become organizations that contribute and connect to the overall quality of life of our diverse communities.”

“For the League of American Orchestras, achieving diversity means affirming the inclusion and involvement of a broad representation of our community reflecting its true make-up, including race, ethnicity and cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disabilities, education, geography, and religion.”

NAEA: “The term ‘diversity’ describes both observable and non-observable individual differences (life experiences, work context, learning and working styles, personality types, among others) and group/social differences (race, gender identity and expression, age, social class, country of origin, ability, beliefs, intellectual and cultural perspectives, among others) that can contribute to organizational vibrancy and a dynamic professional community” (Adopted by NAEA Board 2016).

NASAA: “Diversity: the characteristics of a group of people that recognize all dimensions of human identity and difference”

OPERA America: “**Diversity:** Different perspectives, cultural histories, life experiences, and personal stories enrich the style, scale and subject of new works and the interpretations of the inherited repertoire, as well as stimulate innovation at the organizational level. Diversity and gender parity recognize the richness of our varied identities and experiences and affirm their contribution to our art form and the communities we serve.”

“**Diversity** is the breadth of representation within the opera field. It can mean diverse cultures and ethnicities, gender identities, ages, geographies, budget sizes, or works presented. When we speak about wanting to diversify our staffs or boards, it is important that we be explicit about whether we’re talking about people of color, women, artists or other groups.”

“When OPERA America refers to “people of color,” we mean people from ALAANA backgrounds. ALAANA stands for African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American individuals and communities. We acknowledge that both identities and languages are fluid, and we strive to increase our own understanding and update our language as cultures and needs change.”

Inclusion Definitions and Statements:

EdTA: “Any eligible delegate, including students, troupe directors, and chaperones, may attend the International Thespian Festival regardless of age, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. No ITF attendee may be harassed or discriminated against

based on any protected characteristics and any individual found in violation of this policy may be dismissed from the International Thespian Festival.”

GIA: “Inclusiveness: GIA draws strength from and welcomes the engagement of diverse voices and perspectives in shaping and furthering its work, particularly from those who philanthropically support arts, culture, and creative expression.”

NAEA: “The term ‘inclusion’ describes proactive, intentional, and thoughtful engagement with diversity to the extent that all have the ability to contribute fully and effectively throughout the NAEA community.” (Adopted by NAEA Board 2016)

NASAA: “Inclusion: the active and effective engagement of diverse individuals, communities, and perspectives to ensure access, representation and belonging for all.”

OPERA America: “Inclusion: Opera company leaders have begun to examine the attitudes, behaviors, and barriers that underlie the art form’s exclusive traditions while exploring ways to weave new connections into the mosaic of contemporary American life. As opera companies strive to establish mutually beneficial relationships with other arts and non-arts organizations in their communities, newcomers to opera will be introduced to the art form in a variety of settings and will be welcomed and valued as contributors to programming and organizational decision-making. Inclusion goes beyond numerical diversity to ensure authentic representation, empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.”

“Inclusion is the invitation and the welcome. Inclusion doesn’t just mean representation at the board table, but also whose voices are heard. It moves beyond numbers and urges us to think about how we create a space where everyone feels comfortable and safe. When a staff or board has increased diversity with additional people of color, does this new group feel empowered to speak up? Are long-time staff or board members open to new ideas and new ways of thinking?”