



Strengthening the Humanities
Investment in Nonprofits for Equity

Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion Toolkit for Grant Applicants

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide organizations applying to a SHINE grant with a starting point to reflect on their organization's culture, strategies, and values related to Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion (DEAI). The toolkit is not exhaustive in every consideration and portions may not be applicable to certain organizations. Maryland Humanities recognizes that successful DEAI work requires financial resources many organizations do not have access to. This toolkit is **not** a checklist of completed requirements to receive a SHINE grant but rather a set of considerations to assist organizations when writing about their organization's approaches to and plans for DEAI work.

Leadership & Mission

1. Is a high-level commitment to Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion important to your organization achieving its mission with greater impact? How is this demonstrated?
2. Does your organization have a strategic plan? Are there DEAI related goals in the strategic plan?
3. Does your organization's mission, vision, and/or values demonstrate a commitment to DEAI?
4. Have the leaders of your organization received DEAI training?
5. Has your organization conducted an organization-wide assessment of its DEAI work including policies, practices and procedures?
6. How are organization leaders and board members held accountable for the organization's established DEAI practices?
7. Has your organization considered the demographic makeup of its board and leadership? (i.e. people with disabilities, people with different racial backgrounds, gender balance, diversity of age, representative of the people the organization serves)
8. Have organization leaders allocated resources to DEAI efforts?

Organization Culture

1. Do the demographics of your workforce reflect the area's demographics and the demographics of your audiences?
2. If your organization has employees, are there established HR policies and an employee handbook? What is the procedure for routinely reviewing and updating them?

3. Do you provide accommodations when needed for people working with your organization or attending programs? What is the procedure for requesting them?
4. Has your organization examined its hiring and recruitment process to incorporate DEAI best practices? What barriers might exist in your hiring and recruitment process?
5. Has your organization reviewed compensation for all staff and interns to ensure equitable pay?
6. Do staff have opportunities to participate in professional development, coaching or mentoring? How do your organization's leaders help staff succeed in their positions?
7. How do employees participate in decision-making within the organization?
8. Does the organization hire consultants and vendors that align with the organization's commitment to DEAI?

Data & Audience

1. Does your organization have data on the demographic makeup of the communities it serves?
2. Does your organization maintain data on the demographics of the people it serves?
3. How does the organization utilize demographic data to make improvements and affect program outcomes?
4. Has the organization examined the barriers (i.e. financial, transport, social stigma) certain groups may face when trying to participate in programs? What are they and how can they be addressed?

5. How does the organization incorporate its audiences' voices and input?

6. Has the organization developed policies that seek to include underserved audiences as part of the organization's engagement strategy?

Belonging, Access, & Narratives

1. Does the organization seek to work with partners who will work with the organization to improve DEAI efforts in the community?

2. Does the organization's partnerships and engagement grow out of intentional relationship building within the community?

3. Has the organization examined the language and messaging on its website, in emails, flyers, invitations and events?

4. Are programs and events accessible to people with disabilities (ADA compliant)?

5. Does the organization celebrate national heritage months (e.g., Black History Month, Asian American and Pacific Islander Month)? Is there a plan for language access and religious inclusion beyond these celebrations?

6. Does the organization employ ethical storytelling in educational and exhibit materials?

7. Is research sponsored by the organization inclusive and respectful of non-Western thought and traditional knowledge reflecting the value of cultural ways of knowing?

8. Do speakers for the organization's events and people featured in programming materials represent different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?

Core Definitions

Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.

Accommodations are personalized supports or adjustments that remove specific barriers with the goal of ensuring an individual can meet essential requirements or perform their job duties. Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process. They are usually adaptations that can't be anticipated or standardized and are different for each individual.

Accountability involves implementing, revisiting, and revising policies to foster an open and inclusive work environment. It can take different forms depending on the context: For instance, policies can be formulated using feedback from surveys, conversations, and/or anonymous feedback loops. Accountability can be about defining who is responsible for each task in a strategic plan. Lastly, accountability can look like celebrating accomplishments and discussing failures as opportunities for improvement.

Diversity is all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

Equity is the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specified goals. An equity emphasis seeks to render justice by deeply considering structural factors that benefit some social groups/communities and harms other social groups/communities. Sometimes justice demands, for the purpose of equity, an unequal response.

Ethical storytelling is an approach to sharing stories that humanize, honor, and give power to the person or people the story is about. The goal is to make room for truth and to correct misconceptions. Ethical storytelling, then, is a way to correct these misconceptions and biases, move away from harmful, stereotypical narratives, and create safer, healthier, more welcoming environments where everyone can contribute and thrive.

Inclusion refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community.

Core Definitions Cont.

In order to adequately provide **language access** services, it's important to have a language access plan. Language access plans provide a step-by-step guide for how organizations or companies communicate or engage with multilingual audiences orally and in writing. These plans should include details about how employees will receive language access training and resources. Before investing in translation and interpretation services, a company or organization should assess the linguistic needs of their audiences and should develop a plan that is tailored to this localized data.

Resource allocation is the process of determining all assets necessary to complete a task or a project. Assets could include: Personnel (individuals, teams, or departments), Financial capital (budget and time), Inventory (data), Equipment, and Technology. Resource allocation involves determining the most effective way to use these resources to meet objectives. In this case, organization leaders need to assess how much resource allocation they provide to DEAI efforts.

A **strategic plan** outlines the organization or team's vision, the tools and actions needed to accomplish that vision, and how the organization or company will achieve its goals. This plan includes measurable objectives, timeline for completion, and a process for tracking progress. A strategic plan is developed by ensuring that all parties involved work toward the same goals. In this process, the organization or company aligns its resources, priorities, and leaders to achieve or adjust outcomes as needed.

Resources

The following resources were consulted and adapted to create this toolkit.

WeaveWell to LeadWell Attracting, Retaining, and Leveraging Refugee and Immigrant Talent for Your Business

Government Alliance on Race and Equity [Racial Equity Toolkit](#)

Annie E. Casey Foundation [Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide](#)

Associated Black Charities [Ten Essential Questions for Policy Development, Review, and Evaluation](#)

YWCA [Social Justice Glossary](#)

National Council of Nonprofits' [DEI Resources](#)