

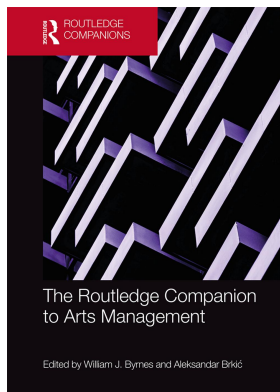
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23

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE ARTS IN AMERICA

Strategies and practices

Jean E. Brody

Introduction

During the latter half of the twentieth century American society began to collectively acknowledge its long history of discrimination based on culture, race, ability, gender, gender identity, sexual preference or expression, and more. Americans have been challenged to question ideas of what constitutes art, who makes art, and how art is funded in recent decades. Understanding the history of structural racism, of inequities in opportunity, and in recognition of cultural expression have become pressing issues for the entire arts and culture sector in the twenty-first century.

For the arts manager, issues surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion demand attention on many levels. Managers carry experiences, expectations, and biases into their work, and these can affect which art is chosen to be created or presented, the people selected to work with artistically, who may be on a board of directors and staff, and interactions with members of the community. While many cultural workers and organizations have begun to address these issues, this is work that cannot be completed easily or quickly, but instead requires an ongoing and persistent effort.

Defining diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

Diversity most often refers to who is present, and which specific groups can be identified as members of an organization, an audience, and a public. Many arts and cultural organizations wish to increase the diversity of their audiences, their staff and board, their volunteers, and participants in their programs.

It is important to note that diversity encompasses many different categories. Racial diversity is nearly always the first to come to mind, due to the history of discrimination based on perceived racial and cultural identity. Overcoming societal biases is both an everyday and long-term effort: centuries of bias built into language and culture are difficult to tear down. Science tells us that there's no such thing as race (Chou, 2017). However, because bias, discrimination, and racism are quite real, much of the work to be done on diversity has to do with overcoming a history of as well as current racially discriminatory behaviors. The fact that race itself is not biologically real does not obviate the need to counteract racism and its effects.

At the same time, arts organizations have increasingly acknowledged the need to expand notions of inclusivity beyond race by considering whose identities, artwork, and cultural expressions have not been sufficiently represented, or in some cases not represented at all. Concerted efforts are being made to include more artistic and cultural expression by women, by people of differing abilities, and by gender non-conforming and transgender artists. Grantmakers in the Arts, for example, has chosen to focus specifically on racial equity and uses the acronym NALAA to encompass Native American, Latinx, Asian, and Arab-American artists (Grantmakers in the Arts, 2018). There is an increased sensitivity to representing the experiences of non-Christians, particularly Muslims. The Museum of Fine Arts Houston's Islamic Worlds Initiative committed ten years of exhibitions to present the art of various Islamic cultures (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2017).

There are also varying levels of awareness of what has come to be called "intersectionality" – the overlapping of a variety of identities in each individual (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). A person whose appearance indicates she is a white female might also be lesbian or may have a disability that's not immediately apparent and therefore, self-identification becomes crucial. Knowing who is present and working to increase the representation of underrepresented groups, is often the first step in addressing diversity.

Equity, or cultural equity, refers to the equitable treatment of all groups, cultures, races, abilities, and so forth. Equity includes correcting for institutionalized racism, building more accessible programs and facilities, and correcting for inequities in funding, both public and private, that have long favored European-based art forms and institutions over those created to promote the works of people of color, of women, and of people with disabilities.

Americans for the Arts defines cultural equity expansively:

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.

(*Americans for the Arts*, 2018)

Cultural equity efforts interrogate institutions and institutional behavior and seek ways to change societal structures that favor one group over others. One important piece of the work of addressing equity has been the examination of how the philanthropic sector still overwhelmingly favors arts institutions that are primarily run by, and present the work of, white Americans and people of European descent (Sidford, 2011; Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA), 2018).

Inclusion/Inclusiveness. An inclusive organization is one in which all members can participate fully. *Inclusion* and *Inclusiveness* are used variously by different authors but typically describes an internal culture that promotes acceptance, an appreciation that everyone can learn from those whose experiences may be different from theirs and uses that multiplicity of perspectives to strengthen the organization. Inclusiveness efforts may cover everything from interpersonal behaviors, organizational habits or structures that may erect barriers to full inclusion and re-examining how the arts and cultures of a broad array of communities and identities are valued.

According to the Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project, "Inclusive organizations . . . not only have diverse individuals involved but, more importantly, they are learning-centered organizations that value the perspectives and contributions of all people, and they incorporate the

needs, assets, and perspectives of communities of color into the design and implementation of universal and inclusive programs. . . . [I]nclusive organizations recruit and retain diverse staff and volunteers to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the communities they serve” (Denver Foundation, 2018).

The LA County Arts Commission’s Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative’s report explains, “While a truly ‘inclusive’ group is necessarily diverse, a ‘diverse’ group may or may not be ‘inclusive’” (Dang, Hernandez, and Jackson, 2017, p. 11).

A brief history of DEI in the U.S. arts and cultural sector

In the United States, the great majority of art forms, arts institutions, and arts and cultural history has been based on aesthetics and expectations derived from European arts traditions. While many of these art forms have a great deal to offer, this history has resulted in regular patterns of exclusion, discrimination, and inattention to large segments of the population. Several recent studies offer insights into the history of exclusionary attitudes and practices.

Los Angeles County Arts Commission’s report identifies two main periods of interest in what was once called affirmative action or multiculturalism: the 1970s and the 1990s (Dang, Hernandez, and Jackson, 2017, p. 4). Early in the history of the National Endowment for the Arts, many “multicultural” organizations were supported through the Expansion Arts program (Coleman, 2016). In the early 1990’s, publications by Samuel Gilmore (Gilmore, 1993) and by Clement Alexander Price (Price, 1994) offered reviewed the history of exclusion of works by women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.

A report by the DeVos Institute traces the history of African American and Latin American performing arts groups and the lack of recognition and financial support that has frequently kept these artists and arts organizations from flourishing (DeVos, 2015). Many arts service organizations have made efforts to look back at works by women and artists of color that did not receive the attention they deserved in their time. An excellent example of this is the Legacy Leaders of Color Project created by Theatre Communications Group, presenting video interviews with key leaders of color in the theatre world.

Arts managers find themselves working within a funding ecosystem built upon a history of structural inequities. Artists and arts organizations that have had unequal access to funding and other resources may not survive or may continue to struggle for recognition and organizational stability. There is a shared responsibility first to acknowledge those inequities and then work actively to make organizations, arts communities, and society more just and equitable.

Why diversity, equity and inclusion now?

Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion belongs to all arts managers regardless of how they self-identify, not just to the people who are members of an underrepresented group. Many artists, arts managers, and leaders seek to have a positive impact on their communities and see the arts experiences offered by their organization as contributing to building a better, more equitable society. Many organizations that have a longer history find there is a need to respond to the changes in society in order to stay relevant and continue to attract audiences, contributors, and broad community support. Numerous broad societal pressures have led to an urgency to make change happen as quickly as possible.

Racial Diversity. For decades, American society has grown more racially diverse, with an increasing majority of the population belonging to what has been considered a “minority” group. Many major metropolitan areas are already demographically majority “minority” (Berg,

2012). The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2060 non-Hispanic whites will constitute just 43.6% of the U.S. population as a whole (Colby and Ortman, 2015, p. 9). Despite these realities, many arts and cultural organizations continue to be predominantly white in their boards, staffing, senior leadership, and audiences.

Culture, Country of Origin, Language. There is an increasing diversity of culture and country of origin. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 expanded the number of countries from which the U.S. accepts immigrants, resulting in decades of people arriving from all around the globe, and bringing with them a wealth of linguistic diversity and cultural expression (Price, 1994; Ngai, 2004).

Generational Change. Baby boomers, born from 1946–1964, are entering their retirement years. Numerous arts organizations will see a change in leadership, as well as changing roles for experienced artists and arts leaders. At the same time, Gen X-ers (born 1965–1980) and Millennials (born 1981–1997), as well as even younger generations, have changing expectations about inclusiveness, patterns of interpersonal behavior, and institutional norms of inclusiveness (Ono, 2016). Emiko Ono’s report for the Hewlett Foundation focuses on California but is applicable nationally. She finds that Millennials and Gen X-ers have an expectation that leadership can and should be shared, and that arts organizations will welcome and support diversity amongst staff, board, and audience. The report suggests solutions such as distributed leadership, as well as addressing the continuing lack of diversity in senior leadership and on boards (Ono, 2016).

Gender, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation. Although women have strong representation in the cultural workforce, there are still imbalances in leadership and board membership. Recent decades have seen an increasing openness regarding sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. In 2015 the Supreme Court made gay marriage legal following decades of public controversy. The depiction of gay characters and gay relationships in the arts, whether in paintings, on television, in film, or on stage, is increasingly common. Public conversation in recent years has brought about an increasing acceptance of transgender and gender non-conforming people. Despite these advances, there is more progress needed to achieve equity in pay, opportunity and artistic representation for all of these groups.

Welcoming People with Varying Abilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990, and arts organizations have gradually been changing facilities and programs to better comply with ADA requirements. Among arts and cultural organizations, there is an increasing awareness of the need for ADA compliance, including both the legal and moral obligation to include the disability community. A guide to ADA compliance for arts and cultural organizations is available on the website of the National Endowment for the Arts as well as VSA Arts on the Kennedy Center website.

Beyond compliance, many arts organizations have welcomed people with disabilities as arts creators, arts appreciators, arts managers, board members, and supporters. Some organizations have seen reaching out to the disability community as a marketing opportunity, a chance to reach a new demographic. For example, the Theatre Development Fund (TDF) has promoted sensory-friendly performances and provides services for people with a variety of accommodation needs.

Potential barriers to DEI in the arts

While many arts organizations seek to improve their track record in DEI, there are also factors that make progress potentially more difficult.

Income Inequality. While the Occupy Wall Street movement highlighted this issue beginning in 2011, recent decades have seen a growing gap between the very wealthy and the rest of

the population. Income inequality has an impact on arts organizations' audience development efforts, their desire to diversify their staffs, and to diversify their donor base. If only the wealthiest can afford to attend the programs or join an organization, an organization's audience and donor pool will be missing potential small and mid-level donors.

Professionalization of the Sector and the Demand for Formal Training. The field of arts and cultural management has become more professionalized since the mid-twentieth century, resulting in an increased demand for job candidates with bachelor and master's degrees (Laughlin, 2017; Green, 2017; Kreidler, 1996). There has been a proliferation of arts administration programs, both graduate and undergraduate, growing from just nine in 1975, to more than 80 by 2013 (Varela, 2013; Laughlin, 2017). This growth has created a potential barrier for aspiring arts managers who may not have had access to formal training due to the increased cost of higher education (Green, 2017; Garcia, 2018). For those who do earn degrees, it is also resulting in increased student debt, making it less likely that a candidate can afford to work for the historically low salaries that are common at the entry level in the sector.

Unpaid Internships. Another potential barrier is the assumption that a young person entering the field will be able to complete an unpaid or low paying internship in order to gain experience. While some families can support this intermediate career step, for others this is not financially realistic. This problem is particularly acute in the museum world, where young people who must support themselves may be effectively shut out of the sector. Making funding available for paid internships and fellowships should be a priority for arts and cultural organizations when developing fundraising plans.

Inequities in Funding. Researchers of cultural philanthropy find a clear pattern of inequities in funding, which disadvantage arts and cultural organizations arising from racial and cultural minority art forms and artists (Price, 1994; Gilmore, 1993). In "Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change," Holly Sidford provides clear data showing the historical discrepancy in funding for communities of color and culturally specific organizations (Sidford, 2011). Sidford's initial report shows that just two percent of arts organizations received more than 50 percent of total revenue in the sector and that these institutions predominantly focus on Western European-based art (Sidford, 2011, p. 5).

A subsequent report in 2017 by Sidford's research firm, The Helicon Collaborative, found that these inequities persist, they are pervasive both locally and nationally, and the situation has worsened from the first to the second report. Helicon faults the lack of diversity amongst philanthropic leaders, especially on boards, for policies and practices that result in structural, sector-wide inequities (Helicon, 2017). Foundations that support the arts, for example, should build more diverse boards, and re-examine structures and policies that may disadvantage artists and arts organizations of color.

DEI efforts need a multi-pronged approach

An organization wishing to embark on a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion program should assume that a multi-pronged approach will be necessary, including making change on an organizational level and contributing to sector-wide efforts.

Advancing Sector-Wide Changes. To contribute to sector-wide efforts, arts managers can learn about current research DEI issues and how other organizations are addressing it. Numerous arts service organizations have issued statements on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and recent studies have been conducted to collect data on the diversity of the arts and cultural workforce. Research on the state of diversity efforts has been issued by the American Association of Museums, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission, the New York

City Department of Cultural Affairs, by Grantmakers in the Arts, and many more. Examples of existing networks that arts managers can connect with include Museum Hue, founded in New York City by museum workers of color, and the Arts Administrators of Color, founded in Baltimore, Maryland which supports arts managers of color.

Arts organizations can join in these efforts by creating a formal DEI or Equity statement, adding their voice to existing advocacy efforts, supporting efforts to prepare young people for careers in the arts, and understanding where inequities can be found in funding for arts and cultural organizations and entities.

Committing to DEI through Formal Public Statements. Many organizations in recent years have created diversity, equity, and inclusion statements, and have revised internal policies to make sure that they are matching their actions with stated policies. Americans for the Arts has published extensive information about its DEI initiative and has created an editable document that any organization can use as a model to begin to build its own statement. Links to examples of DEI statements are included in the Resources section at the end of the chapter.

When creating a public statement about DEI, organizations will need to consider:

- Who will be involved in developing the statement? What will be the process?
- What terminology will be used?
- Will the focus be on addressing inequities that affect all groups, or will certain groups be chosen as the primary focus?
- Will the priority be on certain areas of artistic and management practice?
- Will there be a statement of purpose and an action plan?

Joining with Others as an Advocate. As noted, arts advocacy organizations such as Americans for the Arts, and arts service organizations serving specific segments of the arts and cultural sector, are excellent resources. Arts managers can add their voices to advocacy efforts already underway within their arts discipline or geographic region.

Contributing to a More Inclusive Pipeline. Among the key factors contributing to staffing inequities in the arts and cultural sector is the limited access based on racial, socioeconomic, educational, linguistic, and disability status. Arts managers can identify existing internship and mentorship programs that reach out to underrepresented groups and participate in these efforts. If none exist, cultural organizations can build a network in their region or within a discipline and establish programs to encourage potential new members of the field who.

Connecting to organizations that offer internship programs could be a productive way for arts managers to tap into potential job applicants for future openings in their organization. Examples of internships can be found at Wolf Trap Performing Arts Center, which offers a Multicultural Diversity Initiative internship, and an Economic Diversity Initiative. On a national level, Theatre Communications Group offers the Spark Leadership Program and the Rising Leaders of Color program to mentor rising leaders of color in theatre. The Bloomberg Arts and Culture Internship program reaches out to high school students to introduce them to a variety of careers and institutions in arts and culture in New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

Self-Assessments by Arts Managers. Along with these large societal and sector-wide efforts, arts managers need to examine their assumptions and behaviors as an essential part of supporting the change process. Here are few key areas where arts managers can focus their attention.

Implicit Bias. Implicit bias is the unconscious bias we absorb from the society around us.

Whether that involves assuming that a “director” must be male, or that a person of color may have less education than a white person, people are often unaware of the assumptions

they make based on what they think they know about people. Studies of implicit bias have shown that conscious beliefs and values are not always reflected in the actions people take due to these unconscious forces (Jost et al., 2009). However, understanding that biases are absorbed from social and cultural environments only underscores the shared personal responsibility that all arts and cultural workers must accept in order to counteract the impact of these pervasive and often invisible forces.

Acknowledging Privilege. What is privilege? It is anything that makes it easier for someone to do things on a daily basis and in their lives. Privilege is not limited to race: it also includes gender, culture and language, sexual orientation, education, economic background, and whether or not someone has a disability or health challenge. Many elements of privilege are things that the individual has little to no control over, such as whether your parents are married, what their education levels are, and what economic circumstances an individual grew up in. Most people carry different forms of privilege, which they may not be aware of until there is a realization, for example, not everyone can run, not everyone was encouraged to express themselves artistically, and not everyone grew up in a house full of books. Privilege may be economic, or it may simply be a lack of barriers.

Taking Personal Responsibility. Responsibility does not equal guilt: this does not mean that each person is personally guilty for all of the wrongs of society. It does mean that each individual needs to commit to understanding their privilege and biases, and to changing what they can. Acting on this awareness may involve pursuing implicit bias training, listening to others' experiences and perspectives, and monitoring internal thoughts and assumptions to try to heighten awareness and modify one's own attitudes and behaviors.

Organizational strategies to reflect DEI goals

The most common areas of organizational practice requiring DEI efforts will include planning, programming, audience development, community engagement, staffing, and board development. Organizations must first determine where they are in the DEI process, make a plan that reflects clear priorities and actions, and then continue to modify practices and monitor progress to work on key areas needing improvement.

Internal Awareness, Assessment, and Planning. An arts manager cannot make progress alone, but needs staff and the board buy-in, acknowledging that the organization can do better when it comes to addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Without recognizing the need for change, DEI efforts will feel imposed from the outside or from above and will be less likely to succeed. Conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion can often be uncomfortable, so although this step may seem unnecessary, it is important to begin with acknowledging the organization's shortcomings. Everyone needs to become accustomed to the discomfort these conversations may entail and recognize this discomfort can be productive.

An arts manager may need to conduct some initial research to make sure there is an understanding about what areas most urgently need attention. An internal audit of the organization's programming and practices, ideally conducted by an outside consultant, will help identify specific areas for improvement. Specific, actionable, and measurable goals and tactics should be incorporated into the organization's strategic plan. Even if changes have already been made in some areas, it is likely there is more to be done. For example, there may be a good balance of gender and race/culture, but the audit may reveal there is little economic diversity, or the organization may not offer ready access to people with disabilities.

In Philadelphia, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance has undertaken a multi-year initiative to examine its practices; it developed an actionable plan which created internal change as

well as resources for the arts and culture sector in the region. This process involved the board, staff, a consultant, and constituents in the arts and culture sector, with significant efforts to reach out to community members who may not already be connected with the Cultural Alliance (Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, n.d.).

Along with publishing their DEI statement and action plan, all of the Cultural Alliance's working documents are publicly available on their website. Chief Strategy Officer Michael Norris, who has been leading this effort, explained that the organization realized that all aspects of DEI are connected. The Cultural Alliance's plan reflects the reality that DEI efforts must be long-term, must include strong partnerships with others in the community, and must operate within the organization's limitations of funding and staff time (Michael Norris, 2017, interview with the author, December 7).

Programming. Many organizations will state as a goal of DEI that they want to reflect the communities they serve. A good starting point would be to ask if the programming is reflective of, and appealing to, the broad demographics of the local community? Does the organization have certain populations ghettoized into certain times of the year, such as only showing works by African American artists during Black History Month, or works by women artists during Women's History Month? Is the audience primarily older, wealthier adults, and is it possible to make programming choices more varied and appealing? If this seems financially risky, an arts manager can set aside a certain amount of funding in future budgets designated for artistically (and financially) risky new choices.

While it is essential to consider what the public programming says about the organization's identity, and who is welcomed into its space and to its programs, change does begin at home, within the organization. The arts manager will need to consider who is on the staff and board, who holds key leadership roles, the composition of the volunteers and donor corps, and how hiring and human resources policies and practices may impact the organization's ability to sustain internal diversity.

An excellent example of an organization that made changes to increase its inclusivity is the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial in Philadelphia. Their process is described in a report from the Wallace Foundation, "Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood" (Harlow, 2015). The Fleisher staff observed that many of the more recent immigrant groups in their neighborhood did not attend their programs, and the demographics of their student body (they primarily offer visual arts education programs) were not reflective of the demographics of their neighborhood. Through a combination of research efforts, developing relationships with specific communities, planning programs with community partners, and planning programs designed to welcome all, the Fleisher has changed its relationship with its neighborhood (Harlow, 2015; Magda Martinez, 2015, interview with the author, February 2).

Disrupting the Locus of Artistic Control. Because so many arts organizations are founded to serve the artistic vision of a single visionary artistic leader, it can be difficult to re-envision how artistic and programmatic decision-making could be made differently. Some organizations have found ways to bring the staff, volunteers, and community into the decision-making process. Sharing authority and authorship with people whose knowledge and lived experiences may be different from the staffs can enhance an organization's ability to more effectively reach the community.

For example, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco has made numerous changes to their operations to diffuse control and put more decision-making in the hands of more people. Just one of these changes involves the YBCA 100, a list of influential people released annually by the organization, around which a variety of programming is designed. This list is developed through a process that allows all staff at every level to nominate and advocate for people who they find inspiring (Deborah Cullinan, 2017, interview with the author, December 22).

Similarly, People's Light and Theatre Company in Malvern, Pennsylvania has changed its season development process to include input from employees at all levels (Abigail Adams, 2015, interview with the author, September 4).

Some organizations are experimenting with turning over a portion of their programming to audience choice. Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival gives audience members a vote through their Chance to Dance competition. "The Chance to Dance contest is a crowd-sourced online competition that allows dance fans from all around the world to have a say in who gets to perform as part of the Festival 2018 Inside/Out Performance Series" (Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival, 2018). The Joplin Little Theatre in southwest Missouri turned a full season over to audience choice, allowing audience members to nominate plays to be produced. Nominated plays were evaluated based on the company's financial and artistic capacity, and a reduced list of the top 20 choices was put to an online vote open to any audience member (Nicholas, 2017).

Another potential disruption would be to invite an artist or community group whose perspective is not represented by the artistic leadership or recent programming to curate a portion of the season or to add a new program offering. As a result of long-term community engagement activities, the Fleisher Art Memorial responded to the local Mexican American community's request to work together to create an annual Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, celebration. Because this idea was initiated within the community, it was also embraced by that community (Magda Martinez, 2015, interview with the author, February 2).

Audience Development and Community Engagement. An excellent reference and source of inspiration for building diverse audiences can be found in Donna Walker-Kuhne's "Invitation to the Party," which is based on her work building audiences for The Public Theatre in New York (Walker-Kuhne, 2005). Two recent publications by the Wallace Foundation, "The Road to Results" and "Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood" provide examples of organizations that studied their local communities and adjusted their programming to better serve their local population (Harlow, 2014, 2015).

Organizations may think first about their audience: who is attending events, subscribing to the seasons, attending classes, or joining as members? It's just as important to ask who is *not* participating in the programs. Are there demographic groups in the local community who could be more effectively included and welcomed? Do the programming choices and marketing messages convey inclusivity or exclusivity? Developing real relationships with existing community groups can result in programming that is relevant to those groups.

Staff. An internal audit of who is already present within an organization may be able to reveal the diversity that's already present. However, even in a small organization, staff leadership may not know how everyone self-identifies. Arts organizations have had to build better tools for asking their audience, staff, and board to voluntarily identify themselves as belonging to one or another group while still respecting privacy. DataArts, which has been collecting data on the arts and culture community since the mid-1990s, has developed a demographic survey that can serve as a model for building an anonymous tool that offers respondents many options for identifying themselves (Sullivan, 2018).

Another area to assess is how authority is distributed in the organization: who is making decisions, representing the organization to the public, and implementing programs? A more diverse staff can bring a broader perspective to organizational and programming decisions and increases the likelihood that an arts manager will notice when someone is being misrepresented or left out altogether. For example, is the staff organized in a way that it keeps some voices silent, while others dominate? It may be necessary to build deliberate practices into staff meetings and decision-making processes to make sure that everyone is heard.

Hiring/Recruiting Practices and Policies. While some arts organizations may already have a staff that is highly diverse, many are challenged to increase staff diversity. For smaller organizations, there may be only occasional hiring opportunities. Having a deliberate policy of considering each staff opening as an opportunity to increase diversity can help to guide decisions in the hiring process. Chapter 24 “Strategic Staffing in the Arts” in this book offers a more thorough review of best practices to hire, recruit, and retain employees.

Senior Leadership. Along with looking at who is in the organization as a whole, organizations should examine the distribution of diversity across types of roles. For example, there may be a disparity between the top leadership and those in entry-level and mid-level positions. In some cases, that top leadership may include the founder or other long-time leaders, who are often older, male, and white. If these individuals are not yet ready for retirement, but the organization wants to find a way to empower younger or newer staff, then it might be worth considering increasing the number of senior management positions in order to promote a promising leader from within who can add diversity as well as expertise. It may also be worth considering the concept of distributed leadership, which redistributes authority so that all members of the staff can contribute to key leadership roles and decision-making. This idea is proposed in Emiko Ono’s “Moving Arts Leadership Forward,” mentioned above (Ono, 2016).

Building from the Ground Up. Increasing diversity can be easier when building a new team or rebuilding an existing team. When everyone is new, it can be easier to deliberately recruit for a diverse mix of people. An example of this can be found in two arts groups in Philadelphia.

The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) in Philadelphia knew that it needed to change a public misperception of the institution as old, stuffy, and not fully inclusive. As part of a larger campaign to address diversity, equity and inclusion, then-human resources director James Gaddy replaced the gallery security guards with a Visitor Experience Team that would become one of the museum’s key interfaces with the public. Gaddy recruited an entirely new team of mostly young, recent college graduates, who were charged with welcoming gallery visitors and engaging with them about the art, while still maintaining necessary security for the art in the galleries. This team was deliberately built to reflect Philadelphia’s diverse local population. Gaddy used hiring criteria such as knowledge of a non-English language and knowledge of the arts to build a diverse, welcoming team (James Gaddy, 2015, interview with the author, August 28).

Jeri Lynne Johnson, founder and Artistic Director of Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra, tells the story of being inspired by the election of President Barack Obama to create a chamber orchestra that would showcase talented, highly trained, and diverse musicians. As an African American woman, she refused to be restricted by other people’s preconceptions of what a conductor should look like. Because Johnson built her ensemble from scratch, she was able to be very deliberate in recruiting talent who also supported her vision of classical music performers that reflect local Philadelphia audiences. Johnson describes an ensemble that is well balanced between African American, Latin American, Asian American, and Caucasian American musicians. Johnson speaks eloquently about the importance of embodying her belief that classical music is for everyone:

For me, creativity is as much a human right as is education, as is health, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. The ability to create is what makes us human. And so, to deny people that, or to impede that, or restrict it, or oppress it in some way is not right, to me.

(Jeri Lynne Johnson, 2017, interview with the author, December 18)

Boards. Arts and culture boards are often older and predominantly white, and can be homogeneous in terms of ability, income level, and gender. A recent report by the American Alliance of Museums shows that 89.3% of museum board members are non-Hispanic white, and 30% of boards are 100% white (BoardSource, 2017). An NEA report on arts boards showed that “On average, 91 percent of board members were white, 4 percent were African-American or black, 2 percent were Hispanic, and 3 percent were in the “Other” category. . . . Fully 58.7 % of the boards had only white, non-Hispanic members” (Ostrower, 2014).

Some of the obstacles to diversifying boards have to do with board members’ limited familiarity with people who are demographically different from the current board membership. There is also an inclination to want to surround oneself with people with whom one feels comfortable: i.e., people like oneself. If an arts organization’s board is predominantly one demographic, then it is highly likely that it will replicate itself when recruiting new board members. This tendency can only be overcome by making a deliberate choice to seek more diverse candidates and reach outside of comfortable social circles.

Some organizations maintain a board policy of deliberately recruiting for diversity across a range of categories. In conversations with the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA), both mentioned that board recruitment practices prioritize diversity goals while also taking into consideration other desired characteristics of prospective board members, such as knowledge of a particular area of art or art history, or connections with galleries or collectors (Gail Harrity 2015; James Gaddy, 2017, interviews with the author).¹ The PMA works with a detailed matrix of desired board member characteristics to identify gaps in current membership as part of its board recruitment strategy (Harrity, 2015, interview with author).

It is also important to note that what constitutes diversity may vary from one organization to another. Jeri Lynne Johnson of Black Pearl Orchestra noted that some organizations of color might need to recruit older white board members to achieve a better balance (Jeri Lynne Johnson, 2017, interview with author).²

Many organizations use their volunteer committees as a potential source of new board members. Seeking diversity of background and expertise in committees will increase the likelihood that there will be someone already dedicated to the organization who can add board diversity.

Inclusivity practices and policies

In an organization’s efforts to increase diversity (who is there), it is all too easy to assume that once a new hire has been made or a new board member has been recruited, the diversity efforts are done. However, an arts manager may be mystified when a recently hired young black man quits after just a few months, or when a woman who just joined the board, and who uses a wheelchair, does not attend the organization’s events. The reason may be that the arts organization has not yet created a culture of inclusivity. While there are many ways to address this, a few suggestions are described below for building a more inclusive organizational culture.

Inclusivity Audit. An internal inclusivity audit seeks feedback from the people who know best whether the organization’s internal culture feels inclusive. This audit should include staff on all levels, part-time or contract artists and other employees, students, parents, board members, and volunteers. An anonymous survey can ask about key areas of that make up inclusivity. Is the space adequate? (do nursing moms have a private place to go?); is the language inclusive (do you know what pronouns everyone prefers, and does everyone use them?); and is the informal culture inclusive? Are meetings sometimes scheduled in locations that are not physically accessible

to all? Is everyone comfortable requesting time off for religious holidays they observe? Does everyone feel their voice is heard, and their perspective is valued? Ideally, this kind of audit would be carried out by an outside consultant, but it can also be developed internally. Once the have results have been assessed, the arts manager needs to be open to learning from them.

Formal Diversity/Sensitivity Training. Experts can be hired to offer training for boards and staff to increase their understanding of and sensitivity to a variety of inclusion issues. Some training may focus on racism and racial bias, others on gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Larger arts organizations may be able to fund DEI training through their HR budgets, but smaller organizations may need to seek special funding or may look for other small organizations to partner with in order to afford the experts.

Avoiding Tokenism. A person joining the staff or board and who is the first of any under-represented group should not be considered the first and last. Each new person joining an organization provides an opportunity to broaden the diversity and variety of perspectives of the organization's board, staff, and volunteers.

Not a Spokesperson. A person who is the sole representative of her/his group should not be asked to speak for the entire group. Each individual brings a set of experiences and perspectives with them, but they can't be expected to know what all members of a particular identity group think, believe or like.

Creating Space to Listen. Arts managers should also review internal processes and procedures to see if they reveal where it is possible to increase the variety of voices that are being heard. For example, if the board agenda is set only by a small Executive Committee or a Board Chair, and are there opportunities for other board members to request that a topic be discussed or debated? Within staff meetings, do all staff have the opportunity to speak and to be heard? How do people who do speak up know whether their concerns raised have been heard and addressed? It is important to build in more ways for more people to have a voice, and for everyone to become more practiced at listening within the organization.

Policy Review. Organizations should have diversity, equity and inclusion policies that all employees are familiar with. Employees, volunteers, and board members need to know what compliance looks like, and what the consequences of non-compliance will be. Employees should not only know what the national, state and local law may require, but they should also understand the importance of following the spirit of equity-related policies, which are intended to create a positive work environment for all.

Final thoughts

The imperative for action on DEI encompasses the artistic, moral, legal, and financial elements of an arts organization. Programming that is based on the genuine needs and interests of the communities being served can provide a greater range of arts and cultural experiences that increase cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Arts organizations can broaden their base of support, attracting more diverse patrons and donors and strengthen their long-term financial viability. Arts organizations can go beyond compliance with legal requirements to truly valuing difference and the contributions of a much wider range of people and backgrounds than currently is the case.

Successful DEI efforts will directly and deliberately address changes in programming, staff and boards, relationships with a broader portion of the community, and through building genuinely inclusive organizations. With planning, clear focus and a long-term commitment, it is possible to build and rebuild institutions to create a more just and equitable arts and culture sector,

one that values the cultural expressions of everyone in the community, that helps all voices to be heard, and where all are welcome.

Resources for DEI in the Arts

Americans for the Arts maintains a list of arts-oriented DEI resources and consultants: www.americansforthearts.org/
Arts Administrators of Color is based in the Mid-Atlantic region: www.aacdmv.org/
ArtEquity offers training to DEI facilitators as well as consulting services: www.artequity.org
DataArts' Demographic Survey Tool: www.culturaldata.org/pages/demographicslandingdemo
Denver Foundation Inclusiveness Project: www.nonprofitinclusiveness.org/
D5 Coalition offers resources to the philanthropic sector: www.d5coalition.org/International
Association of Blacks in Dance – Equity Project: www.iabdassociation.org/page/Equity
Project
The League of American Orchestras Resource Center: www.americanorchestras.org/learning-leadership-development/diversity-resource-center.html
Museum Hue: www.museumhue.com/ National Association of Latino Arts and Culture: www.nalac.org

Examples of DEI or Cultural Equity Statements

American Association of Museums: www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/
Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity, with a link to a statement you can adapt: www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/statement-on-cultural-equity
Chamber Music America: www.chamber-music.org/statement-commitment
Grantmakers in the Arts: www.giarts.org/racial-equity-arts-philanthropy-statement-purpose
Native Arts and Cultures Foundation: www.nativeartsandcultures.org/
Theatre Communications Group: www.tcg.org/TheNext50Years/EDIInitiative.aspx

Understanding Implicit Bias, Privilege, and White Privilege

Implicit Bias: Explanation of Implicit Bias: <https://perception.org/research/implicit-bias/>
Take the test here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>.
Understanding Privilege: Video visualization of the privileges we may live with: www.youtube.com/watch?v=awGctTODPBk.
Understanding White Privilege: www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really

Resources for Accessibility and Access

National Endowment for the Arts: Accessibility Planning and Resource Guide for Cultural Administrators: www.arts.gov/accessibility/accessibility-resources/publications-check-lists/accessibility-planning-and-resource
Theatre Development Fund: www.tdf.org/nyc/33/TDFAccessibilityPrograms
VSA Arts at the Kennedy Center: www.kennedy-center.org/pages/accessibility/services

Notes

- 1 Interview Gail Harrity 2015 and the author, October 4, 2017; and James Gaddy, 2017, interview with the author, 14 December.
- 2 Interview with Jeri Lynne Johnson, 2017. Month and day not recorded.

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