

**Maine Humanities Council  
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan  
Adopted 10/18/19**

**PREAMBLE**

In its 2018-20 Strategic Plan, the Maine Humanities Council committed itself to developing “our ability to support Maine’s diversity and to live out our shared commitment to equity, accessibility, and inclusion in everything we do.” This planning document is an attempt to define ongoing goals and strategies which would help us put this commitment into practice and work toward the vision put forward in our strategic plan.

Our assumption is that examining our current practices and developing new strategies to foster and support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) will be an iterative and recursive process, taking place over the course of months and years, but we are committed to beginning that process now, along the lines suggested here.

Although we expect our understanding of DEI issues to change and grow as we continue to work on the goals outlined in this document, we begin from the assumption that, in a culture with a history of structural racism and inequity, our ordinary practices and policies may be unintentionally exclusive, racist, or inequitable, privileging some groups over others or failing to take into account racial or social difference. Thus reviewing our practices and policies “through a DEI lens” means, at the very least, looking for such unintentional exclusions and inequities and correcting them and actively seeking opportunities to include and engage with diverse voices and perspectives.

We also want to commit ourselves, following the strategic plan, to using the humanities to create “positive transformation in Maine communities,” to “foster meaningful conversation and connection among all Mainers,” and “to bridge racial, ethnic, religious, and other cultural divides.” We acknowledge that traditional humanities texts may themselves incorporate and inscribe racist, misogynist, and classist assumptions and ideologies, which we have a responsibility to challenge in our programs, both by treating these issues in our discussions of the traditional texts and by intentionally including texts from diverse perspectives. But we are convinced of the power of the humanities-based discussion to be a force for positive social change and to bring people together, and we want to emphasize this goal in everything that we do. Looking at our work “through a DEI lens” also means actively seeking opportunities to create social change and to promote diversity, equity and inclusion through our programs.

The goals and strategies listed below are organized around four key areas--organization, programs, partners, and communications—and will be addressed by the DEI Task Force, board committees, the staff, and board/staff working groups, as appropriate. It should be understood that any changes to MHC documents, policies, or procedures as a result of the activities called for in this planning document will be brought forward for the approval of

the Executive Director and/or the board, following our usual procedures. Nothing in this document should be seen as authorizing changes outside of our normal procedures.

Finally, we want to emphasize that we consider accessibility to be a key aspect of inclusion, and thus all references to “DEI” should be understood to include accessibility.

## **GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

### **A. Organization**

**GOAL #1:** Refine commitment to DEI and define key terms.

Strategy #1: Define what we mean by key terms—diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, accessibility, DEI lens—in the context of the MHC. [Task Force]

Strategy #2: Evaluate existing core documents (mission statement, vision statement, bylaws, strategic plan, articles of incorporation) through a DEI lens and revise as appropriate. [Governance Committee/Task Force]

Strategy #3: Develop new core documents (e.g., diversity statement, accessibility statement) to further support DEI values. [Governance Committee/Task Force]

**GOAL #2:** Increase and maintain diversity of board, staff, facilitators, and contractors and encourage full participation from everyone.

Strategy #1: Create recruitment practices designed to increase diversity of staff, facilitators, and contractors. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Create recruitment practices designed to increase board diversity. [Governance Committee]

Strategy #3: Assess climate and culture using a DEI lens. [Task Force]

Strategy #4: Develop and foster organizational practices to create inclusive and welcoming climate and culture. [Staff/Task Force]

Strategy #5: Develop and foster leadership practices that encourage full participation by board and staff, including clarifying and communicating how decisions are made. [Staff/Task Force]

GOAL #3: Ensure that organizational policies and processes support DEI goals.

Strategy #1: Assess existing organizational policies and processes (e. g., staff handbook, board book, investment policy, grant criteria) through a DEI lens and revise as appropriate. [Staff/Governance Committee/Personnel Committee]

Strategy #2: Create new policies and processes as necessary to support DEI objectives. [Staff/Governance Committee/Personnel Committee]

GOAL #4 Build capacity for staff, board, and facilitators to productively engage with and follow through on the MHC's commitment to DEI.

Strategy #1: Support professional development opportunities for staff in the area of DEI. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Support board development opportunities in the area of DEI. [Task Force]

Strategy #3: Develop training and support activities for facilitators that increase their capacity for DEI. [Staff]

## **B. Programs**

GOAL #1: Diversify program audiences.

Strategy #1: Assess current program audiences using a DEI lens, identify underserved groups, and make efforts to be more inviting and welcoming to these groups with current programming. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

Strategy #2: Identify additional underserved groups we want to reach and prioritize on the basis of equity. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

Strategy #3: Build relationships with identified underserved groups and develop programs in collaboration with them. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

GOAL #2: Ensure programs holistically reflect our organizational commitment to DEI.

Strategy #1: Assess and review program relevance and value holistically through DEI lens. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

Strategy #2: Revise or discontinue existing programs and create new programs in response to the review. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

Strategy #3: Implement and sustain changes with a commitment to regular institutional review. [Program Committee/Grants Committee/Staff]

### **C. Partners**

GOAL #1: Develop a mutually beneficial dialogue with partners around organizational commitments to DEI.

Strategy #1: Make the MHC's commitment to DEI transparent in conversations with partners. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Seek opportunities for active learning about DEI in collaboration with partners. [Staff]

GOAL #2: Develop and maintain partnerships that are aligned with our DEI work.

Strategy #1: Assess and review efficacy of partner relationships through DEI lens. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Prioritize partnerships that support our DEI goals. [Staff]

Strategy #3: Create relationships with organizations that further our DEI goals. [Staff]

GOAL #3: Become a valuable resource to organizations that are interested in partnering with us on DEI work.

Strategy #1: Document DEI work and be willing to share with other organizations. [Task Force]

Strategy #2: Connect partner organizations to DEI resources. [Staff]

Strategy #3: Develop MHC's role as a competent partner organization on DEI issues. [Task Force]

## **D. Communications**

GOAL #1: Ensure that MHC communications embody our commitment to DEI.

Strategy #1: Review and assess our communications practices using a DEI lens. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Develop revised, inclusively minded strategies as necessary. [Staff]

GOAL #2: Communicate publicly about our DEI commitment.

Strategy #1: Develop shared language for talking about our DEI commitment and communicate it to board, staff, and facilitators. [Task Force]

Strategy #2: Encourage board and staff to share our DEI commitment publicly and appropriately using that language. [Task Force]

GOAL #3: Use our communication capacity to recognize and amplify historically underrepresented voices

Strategy #1: Assess MHC's communications capacity and its potential to publicize the activities of underrepresented groups and make adjustments as necessary. [Staff]

Strategy #2: Establish structures which allow MHC to share underrepresented perspectives through its communication network. [Staff]