



Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion (DEAI) Actionable Insights

Using This Tool: This tool is designed to spark conversation among small teams within your museum staff. Use it for your leadership team, within departments and across departments, or at all staff meetings for small groups. The purpose of the questions and suggested actions is to help your organization align, prioritize and identify action steps to move toward more inclusive and equitable practice.

Becoming More Inclusive and Equitable

Becoming more equitable in our museums requires shifting our organizational practices, both internally and externally. Understanding and taking action in nine different organizational areas can help advance museums' diversity, equity, access and inclusion goals and the fields' journey toward social justice.

- Vision/Values
- Leadership
- Governance
- Resources
- People/Operations
- Vendor Diversity
- Services/Products
- Community-Centered Engagement
- Data Collection/Evaluation

Organizational-level Dimensions of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI)



(Garibay and Olson, 2020)

What is it? Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion (DEAI) is explicitly stated as a value and an organizational commitment.

Through an Equity Lens: How are your organization's mission, vision, values and aspirational goals focused on equity and inclusive practice? Do your organizational values reflect a commitment to all visitors and community members? As a field, how are we ensuring that both internal and external practices help move our organizations toward actively engaging visitors, staff, volunteers and board members who are under-represented at our museums and marginalized in our communities?

What Do You Already Know?

- Do your organizational vision and values align with your organizational practices? In what ways?
- Do your organization's stated mission, vision and values reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI)?
- How is the written commitment carried out in the actions and practices of your organization?
- Do your stakeholders (staff, board, volunteers, visitors, outreach participants) know of your organization's commitment to equity?
- Who in the organization is leading efforts to focus on inclusive and equitable practice? Who in the organization is accountable for stewarding the organization's DEAI efforts?
- Does a commitment to DEAI show up in your organization's current strategic plan?
- Does your organization have a written DEAI statement?

Ask Questions:



- **Why:** What is motivating your organization's current efforts around DEAI?
 - Right thing to do
 - Strengthens our business case
 - Staff or Board member advocating
 - Funds to implement a DEAI project
 - Future funding possibilities
 - Responding to changes in community demographics
 - Keep pace with the museum field
 - Attract/retain diverse staff/volunteers
 - Be an anti-racist organization
 - Responsive to recent current events in my community or the US
 - Focus on the long term goal of reaching equity demographics
- **Who:** Do your organizational values reflect an understanding that different visitors have different needs?
- **How:** If you have a written DEAI statement or representation of DEAI in your strategic plan, how are those stated commitments reflected in organizational practice? How are you enacting your DEAI values and vision?

Leverage Your Strengths: Map Your Assets

- Where in your organization is a commitment to engaging under-represented community members showing up?
- Who in the organization is already leading efforts to engage new and different audiences?
- What stakeholders (community members, board members, volunteers, staff) might you engage to help you think about new and different ways to actionalize DEAI within your mission-focused work?

Take Action: Strategies to Advance DEAI practices

Devote time to engage stakeholders in the conversation

- Listening Sessions with community members
- Staff Interviews
- All Staff meetings
- Dialogue at the board level
- Volunteer feedback
- Documentation of ideas generated

Develop or Refine Your Organization's DEAI Statement

- Look at other organization's statements ([link here](#))
- Get feedback internally through individual interviews or all staff meetings
- Identify areas of synergy between other statements and your goals
- Create the statement
- Get feedback again

Create a DEAI Action Plan

- Incorporate within your existing strategic plan
- Develop a plan with actionable steps and concrete measures to assess progress
- Include input from different stakeholders (staff, board, volunteers, visitors)
- Think about the strategies and structures that will enable the plan to be put into effective action (who will focus on it and how will they be accountable)

Establish a DEAI committee

- Recruit team members with a diversity of thought, role and experience
- Consider creating a committee with both staff and board level representation

Develop concrete metrics to assess progress and outcomes

- Identify what you consider measures of progress to be
- Compare community demographics to staff, board and volunteer demographics
- Align organizational documents to new vision/values



Talk about it:

Which action ideas might best leverage your existing resources? Which seems to be the highest priority? Most pressing?

Watch out for Potential Barriers

These are some of the barriers that museums have faced as they strive to be more inclusive and equitable in their organizational vision and values.

Barrier

Solution

Having a DEAI statement in name only	Put an annual action plan in place that responds to your written DEAI statement. Identify concrete steps that can be accomplished within the year. Revisit the statement each year and identify new action steps.
Failing to examine what your organization means by <u>all</u>	Often when organizations state that they want to reach all, the strategies and practices they put in place are actually designed to reach the dominant community/group. Take the time to question assumptions and create strategies that will work for those most marginalized in your community. Often those strategies are new and different than your current practice, and still work for everyone.
Vision and values known and practiced by only a small subset of the organization	Think about how you might infuse your DEAI vision and values within many of your organizational practices. Do they show up in your onboarding for new staff? How are they reinforced during all staff meetings? At regular department meetings?
Accountability for DEAI housed within one department or person	Distribute responsibility for DEAI throughout all leadership and departments of the museum, including the CEO and board.



Talk about it:

How might you engage a broad group of stakeholders in dialogue to examine, refresh or re-imagine your organizational vision and aspirations through an equity lens?

Shift Internal Practice: Check Your Progress

You'll know that you've started making progress in thinking about vision and values through an equity lens when your organization:

- Has a written DEAI statement and plan that puts that statement into action, with clear accountability about who is responsible for the elements of the plan.
- Engages in regular and ongoing dialogue about how the organization is working toward its equity goals.
- Embraces being a listening and learning organization, reaching out to and welcoming new perspectives from a variety of stakeholders, both internally and externally.

Find Out More: Other Resources to Try

Apply Theory: Benchmark Your Practice

CCLI launched a ground-breaking study designed to establish a set of metrics that museums can use to measure the progress of their equity and inclusion work. The landmark report, using data collected from 580 museums across the United States, highlights where organizational change is progressing and where gaps exist. Find the full report here: [CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEAI Practices in Museums](#) Showcasing community engagement as one of nine indicator areas, this is an excerpt of some of the findings.

Without strategic and consistent action, museum leaders risk not being able to support and achieve organization-wide equity and inclusion.

Are museums prioritizing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) efforts and integrating these values into their core work?

The recent CCLI (Cultural Competence Learning Institute) report, *CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEAI Practices in Museums*, presents a pivotal benchmarking analysis using data collected from 580 U.S.-based museums of all sizes and disciplines.



ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Museums report that DEAI is an organizational priority but have not taken strategic, consistent action at an organizational level that is foundational enough to support—and achieve—enduring equity and inclusion. Below are some best practices for supporting long-term DEAI work drawn from the landscape study. Use this information to benchmark your museum’s work.

- ➔ **Identify roles and responsibilities for prioritizing DEAI efforts to ensure accountability and focus on chief executive engagement.** More than a third (34%) of museums indicated that no person or group held responsibility for DEAI efforts. Even fewer, under a quarter (21%), identified the chief executive as responsible for this work.
- ➔ **Boards should take concrete action to ensure policies and processes advance DEAI efforts.** Although most (73%) museums reported that their Boards understand the importance of DEAI, only 38% of Boards have asked for or approved changes to policies or processes necessary to support DEAI efforts.
- ➔ **Ensure that task forces and committees established to support the museum’s DEAI work include staff from across departments.** Only 30% of museums report having a DEAI committee.
- ➔ **Support sustained commitment to internal and public-facing DEAI work by allocating resources to these efforts.** More than half (52%) of museums allocate operating funds for public-facing DEAI while just over a third (37%) do this for internal DEAI activities like professional development.



Talk about it:

Where does your organization seem to fall in comparison to others in the field? In response to this data, what areas do you want to focus on as an organization moving forward?

Community-Centered Engagement



What is it? All aspects of the museum’s work are anchored in, informed by, and created with its communities, particularly those underrepresented, through equitable collaboration and power-sharing.

Through an Equity Lens: Using a broad definition of community that encompasses the many different ways that groups of people might be connected (geography, jurisdiction, interests, beliefs, set of characteristics), this work acknowledges that museums should be relevant and responsive to their communities, understanding the critical issues affecting different parts of the community and striving to meet community needs and aspirations, especially for communities that have been marginalized. Shifting to a power sharing model is critical.

What Do You Already Know?

- When your museum considers the diversity of its audience, which dimensions of diversity do you currently address?
 - Racial
 - Socioeconomic
 - Age
 - Ethnic
 - Physical Ability
 - Gender/Gender Identity
 - Geographic
 - Neurodiversity
 - Sexuality/Sexual Identity
 - Immigrant/Refugee
- What are you, as an organization, gathering data about?
- Do you gather information about staff and volunteers as well as visitors?
- What do you know about your community composition?

Ask Questions:



- How do you currently define community?
- How might you redefine community to broaden your scope?
- Do you have data to help you understand who from your community is already engaged with your museum and who might be under-represented in your museum audience and outreach audience?
- How are you learning about who is not coming to your museum?

Leverage Your Strengths: Map Your Assets

- What assets does your organization already have in terms of Community Engagement?
- How can you build on these assets to address areas that need more attention?
- What assets might you find in your community to help you engage more meaningfully with your community?

Take Action: Strategies to Advance DEAI practices

Learn more about those who aren't coming to your museum

- Meet with community leaders from a specific community group
- Conduct audience research with a specific community group
- Conduct formal community listening sessions
- Form an advisory committee
- Identify and talk with community partners who are engaging with specific community groups

Invite members of under-represented communities to join you

- Attend specific exhibits, events or programs
- Contribute as artists, performers, facilitators or to provide context for exhibits, events or programs
- Serve as cultural liaisons giving feedback
- Jointly develop or co-create exhibits
- Lead the design of exhibits, programs or events with support from the museum

Engage your Museum's staff, volunteers and/or board members

- Visit local areas where people from communities that are under-represented at the museum live, work, and hang out
- Talk with community members to learn about their needs, aspirations and priorities
- Attend a community-initiated event
- Establish monthly meetings for staff and volunteers to learn more about local communities through lunch gatherings, book readings, etc.



Talk about it:

What other ideas do you have for your organization to advance DEAI in community engagement?

Watch out for Potential Barriers

These are some of the barriers that museums have faced as they strive to be more inclusive and equitable in their community engagement.

Barrier	Solution
Relegating community engagement work to a single department.	Cross-departmental commitment to community engagement is important for long term success.
Not knowing or understanding the community.	Take the time as an organization to learn more about your community and the critical issues happening right now in the various parts of your community.

Making assumptions about the role of earned revenue in community engagement.

Recognize and acknowledge that learning more about the communities you are hoping to engage can help you to understand how choices are made around values, leisure time, and using family financial resources.

Using the Board as a foil/shield. “We can’t do that because the board won’t be in agreement.”

Check in with the board and engage in strategies to bring them along as well.

A perception that if community members share their ideas, the museum will have to respond to each idea.

Help engage community members in conversations around what they hope for and in what ways the museum can be responsive to those hopes.



Talk about it:

What barriers to community engagement do you see at your organization?

Shift Internal Practice: Check Your Progress

You’ll know that you’ve started making progress in shifting your organization’s community engagement DEAI practices when:

- As an organization, you engage in ongoing dialogue and data collection to understand who is coming to your museum.
- Responsibility for community engagement is cross-departmental, rather than housed in one department.
- You have taken steps towards connecting and co-creating with at least one community group to develop an event, program or exhibition.

Find Out More: Other Resources to Try

See <https://communityscience.astc.org/overview/> for more info about definitions of community and community engagement.

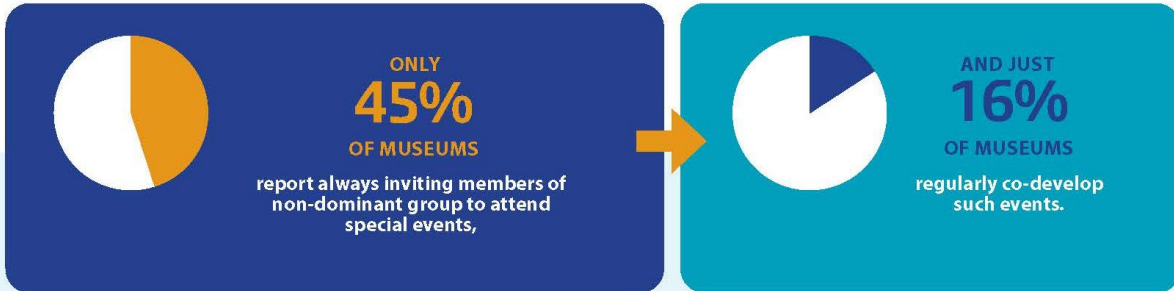
Apply Theory: Benchmark Your Practice

CCLI launched a ground-breaking study designed to establish a set of metrics that museums can use to measure the progress of their equity and inclusion work. The landmark report, using data collected from 580 museums across the United States, highlights where organizational change is progressing and where gaps exist. Find the full report here: [CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEAI Practices in Museums](#) Showcasing community engagement as one of nine indicator areas, this is an excerpt of some of the findings.

Museums are not doing enough to share power with community members from non-dominant groups and give them agency and voice.

How well are museums serving and engaging marginalized groups within their communities?

The recent CCLI (Cultural Competence Learning Institute) report, *CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEI Practices in Museums*, presents a pivotal benchmarking analysis using data collected from 580 U.S.-based museums of all sizes and disciplines.



ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Sharing power with marginalized communities is critical to achieving more responsive and inclusive experiences. Museums tend to engage communities in passive ways and only on a case-by-case basis, not as part of their regular work. Below are best practices for more equitable community engagement drawn from the landscape study. Use this information to benchmark your museum’s work.

- **Work with and compensate cultural liaisons to build relationships and more authentically engage non-dominant groups in your community.** Just under half (45%) of respondents reported working with cultural liaisons, yet only 10% of those compensated liaisons for their work and expertise.
- **Involve individuals from marginalized communities as co-designers.** A small percentage of respondents that engage marginalized communities report always co-creating programs (19%), special events (16%), and exhibits (14%). An even smaller percentage invite community members to lead the design (with museum support) for programs (11%), special events (10%), and exhibits (6%).
- **Museum marketing and communications plans should include ongoing strategies to engage underrepresented groups.** While close to three-quarters (71%) of museums report having marketing plans to engage specific underrepresented groups, most (53%) of these efforts are undertaken as part of a special project or grant rather than integrated into a museum’s core practices.



Talk about it:

Where does your organization seem to fall in comparison to others in the field? In response to this data, what areas do you want to focus on as an organization moving forward?

Services and Products: Exhibits and Collections



What is it? Exhibit and Collection offerings integrate DEAI values and practices, reflecting and meeting the needs of diverse groups. This dimension includes exhibits, collections, and physical space.

Through an Equity Lens: The visual, experiential, and physical spaces we create and the items we collect, store, and showcase engage visitors, tell stories, allow access to content, and highlight our communities. Each of these can be assessed to ensure we are being inclusive of all people, including those who are immediately connected to the content and those who are not. Decisions about the way we acquire objects, share power with community knowledge holders and ensure accessibility are opportunities to strive for equity. When we design content and experiences for our visitors through an equity lens, we must consider accessibility, both in the more commonly understood areas of physical and cognitive ability, and in ensuring access to those who do not feel represented, connected to or welcome in our museums.

When we design content and experiences for our visitors through an equity lens, we must consider accessibility, both in the more commonly understood areas of physical and cognitive ability, as well as access to those who don't feel represented, connected to or welcome in your museum.

What Do You Already Know?

- What questions about access and community needs does your team ask itself when creating new exhibits or choosing what collections to acquire and show?
- What languages (written or visual) do you use to describe your exhibit or collection content?
- How do you acquire your objects? Who is involved?
- Where are your objects kept and who decides when/how they are rotated in/out for the public to experience?
- What processes do you engage in to evaluate the provenance of your collections?
- What images do you showcase as part of your exhibitions or signage?
- Do the people highlighted in your exhibits represent a variety of dimensions of diversity?



Ask Questions:

While exhibit development, exhibit assessment and collections management are separate categories of work, many of the considerations through a DEAI lens are similar. The questions below apply in different ways to each of these categories.

Exhibit Development and Collections Procurement

- Do you have written standards for developing your exhibits or managing your collections? Do they include DEAI aspects, such as options for people with visual and auditory impairments or for representing different genders in images of people?
- What stories are centered in your exhibits? in your collections? How are those topics and perspectives chosen?
- Who from your community are you inviting to advise on, create, or co-create exhibits and experiences?
- How often does the organization invite members of your community to share their expertise with and about objects in your collection?
- How often does the organization invite members of your community to lead the design of exhibits with support from the museum?
- Does your staff train or attend professional development for designing for different needs and learning styles?
- Do you have a Collection Acquisitions Committee? How are committee members chosen? Are community members invited to join this committee?

Exhibit Assessment and Collections Management

- How do you assess your exhibits? Your collections?
- How often do you assess your exhibits and collections for community relevance?
- Does your whole exhibits or collections team know, or know where to access, the rationale for each object or experience and their stories or is that knowledge held with only one/a few people?
- What people are represented in your exhibits? In your collections?
- What voices in your community are not represented in your exhibits?
- How often does the organization invite members of your community to serve as cultural liaisons and give feedback on the exhibits? On collections?
- Where are your exhibits and collections located? Are any placed within your community/outside the museum walls?
- Thinking of the accessibility of your exhibits, anything you want to work toward being compliant on?
- What stakeholders need to be consulted, if needed, regarding reparations in your collections?

Leverage Your Strengths: Map Your Assets

- What assets does your organization already do well in terms of Exhibits and Collections?
- How can you build on these assets to address areas that need more attention?
- What assets might you find in your community to help you engage more meaningfully with your community?

Take Action: Strategies to Advance DEAL practices

Consider the accessibility of your exhibits and collections:

- Do a physical walk-through of your exhibits with people with various physical and neuro/cognitive abilities
- Conduct Audience Research, or host listening sessions or focus groups, with specific community groups
- Invite community members to share their expertise with and/or about the objects in your collection
- Form an Advisory Committee comprised of local community members from diverse audiences you may one day serve.
- Find spaces in your region, outside of your museum, that are easy for community members to reach/attend where you could learn more, and eventually display your objects or exhibits

Represent different dimensions of your community:

- Develop multilingual signage or access
- Choose images and objects that reflect the demographics of your community

Invite members of under-represented communities to:

- Attend specific exhibits, events, or programs
- Provide context for exhibits or collections
- Serve as cultural liaisons giving feedback
- Jointly develop or co-create exhibits
- Lead the design of exhibits with support from the museum

Dig deeper into content:

- After creating a relationship, visit local areas where people from communities that are under-represented at the museum live, work, and hang out
- Meet with community leaders from a specific community group
- Be specific with your community histories and people
- Address marginalization, non-dominant norms, and colonization by giving historical context for your objects and their current relevance.

Empower your staff to consistently check for equity:

- Ask questions about each object in the collection
- Speak up if they have concerns over an object or the way it is presented
- Share their knowledge of and connections to the different lenses of your community
- Get training in Universal Design methods and Decolonization work



Talk about it: What other ideas do you have for your organization to advance DEAI in exhibits and collections?

Watch out for Potential Barriers

These are some of the barriers that museums have faced as they strive to be more inclusive and equitable in their exhibits and collections.

Barrier	Solution
<p>ACCESS</p> <p>“We can’t do all the languages in this community. Let’s just stick with English.”</p>	<p>Equity is not equality. Not all languages need to be represented on signage but you can highlight the most prominent languages used in your region. Check on your rationale on which languages you will highlight. There are also technologies or people resources that can help with language access beyond the two or three dominant languages. Inviting a guest developer doesn’t mean you have to erase the voice of the museum entirely. Think through what are “must-haves” to align with the needs of your visitors or building requirements and allow flexibility on the rest. As the space gets developed, document the process and communicate the story with your visitors. Use the museum voice and network to help embrace this new community-focused exhibit.</p>
<p>SHARING POWER</p> <p>“We have our own brand and way of developing new exhibits and spaces. If we had a community designer or expert take over a space, our audience would get confused and it would look out of place.”</p>	
<p>RELEVANCE</p> <p>We realize that an object(s) may be hurtful to certain people.</p>	<p>Remove the object from display as soon as possible while you dig deeper. (If it cannot be removed because of size or effort needed, be transparent with your community and let them know the item is being investigated.) Call on community and museum experts to find out the history and context of the item. Make sure to involve the people who may be most harmed by its display in public. With your advisors, decide the best course of action, which may include giving the object back, relationship (re)building with the community, and/or organization-wide learning to understand the systems and power that are at play with acquiring similar objects and how to shift towards equity.</p>



Talk about it: What barriers do you see at your organization specifically in creating equitable exhibits and collections?

Shift Internal Practice: Check Your Progress

You'll know that you've started making progress in shifting your organization's exhibits and collections toward equity when:

- Ask questions about each object in the collection
- Speak up if they have concerns over an object or the way it is presented
- Share their knowledge of and connections to the different lenses of your community
- Get training in Universal Design methods and Decolonization work

Find Out More: Other Resources to Try

IF/THEN Gender Representation Toolkit to better understand how science museums depict gender, and collected data on representation from 76 science centers and museums. <https://www.astc.org/ifthen/>

Article: What does it mean to decolonize a museum?

<https://www.museumnext.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/>

Article: Museum Decolonization: Moving Away from Narratives Told by the Oppressors

<https://smea.uw.edu/currents/museum-decolonization-moving-away-from-narratives-told-by-the-oppressors/>

Apply Theory: Benchmark Your Practice

CCLI launched a ground-breaking study designed to establish a set of metrics that museums can use to measure the progress of their equity and inclusion work. The landmark report, using data collected from 580 museums across the United States, highlights where organizational change is progressing and where gaps exist. Find the full report here: CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEAI Practices in Museums Showcasing community engagement as one of nine indicator areas, this is an excerpt of some of the findings.

Involve individuals from marginalized communities as co-designers. A small percentage of respondents that engage marginalized communities report always co-creating programs (19%), special events (16%), and exhibits (14%). An even smaller percentage invite community members to lead the design (with museum support) for programs (11%), special events (10%), and exhibits (6%).

Museums must integrate a range of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) strategies into their core work in order to create more inclusive exhibits, programs, and events.

Are museums integrating a range of DEAI strategies that develop and support more inclusive visitor experience into their regular practices?

The recent CCLI (Cultural Competence Learning Institute) report, *CCLI National Landscape Study: The State of DEAI Practices in Museums*, presents a pivotal benchmarking analysis using data collected from 580 U.S.-based museums of all sizes and disciplines.

JUST **50%**



OF RESPONDENTS

always offer full physical access to exhibits, programs, and special events.

EVEN FEWER:

<1/3

report always practicing other possible DEAI strategies, like those described below.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

Museums can create more inclusive visitor experiences by integrating DEAI strategies across their work rather than implementing them on a case-by-case basis. Below are some promising strategies drawn from the landscape study for building equity and inclusion across museum experiences. Use this information to benchmark your own work and embed these DEAI strategies into the core practices of your organization.

- ➔ **Offer full physical access (e.g., auditory, wheelchair access) to experiences and consider opportunities for sensory-friendly (e.g., low noise) experiences for visitors.** Only about half report always offering full physical access for programs (59%), special events (57%), and exhibits (52%). And even fewer—only about a quarter—report always offering sensory-friendly access to programs (30%), exhibits (27%), and special events (26%).
- ➔ **Commit to ensuring multilingual access across museum experiences.** About a quarter of respondents provide multilingual access (e.g., written or verbal translations) at admissions (26%) and in wayfinding signage (24%). Only 18% report always doing this for exhibits, 15% for programs, and just 12% for special events.
- ➔ **Develop strategies for addressing topics that have historically been suppressed (e.g., racism, Indigenous science, genocide).** Only a quarter (26%) of museums report always doing this in exhibits, and even fewer in programs (23%) or special events (18%).
- ➔ **Include narratives and voices from underrepresented communities across museum offerings.** Just under a quarter (23%) report always doing this for programs and that number drops even more when it comes to exhibits (19%) or special events (17%).



Talk about it:

Where does your organization seem to fall in comparison to others in the field? In response to this data, what areas do you want to focus on as an organization moving forward?