



Oregon Arts Commission Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Plan

Approved December 2022

The Oregon Arts Commission is pleased to share our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Action Plan. We developed this plan to ensure that we are equitable in our grantmaking, services and programs. We are committed to making systemic change and being a leader in equity for arts and culture through collaboration with Oregonians.

As part of state government, we acknowledge and take seriously our responsibility to equitably distribute public funds. We hold ourselves to the highest standard to ensure communities across the state have equitable access to funding, programs and services. We acknowledge our role as public servants to serve the entire state and value transparency, integrity and accountability throughout our work.

Land Recognition

We would like to acknowledge the many tribes and bands who call Oregon their ancestral territory, including: Burns Paiute, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, Confederated Tribes of Cow Creek Lower Band of Umpqua, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Coquille Tribe, and Klamath Tribes; and honor the ongoing relationship between the land, plants, animals, and people indigenous to this place we now call Oregon. We recognize the continued sovereignty of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon who have ties to this place and thank them for continuing to teach us how we might all be here together.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Statement

Every Oregonian deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life. Cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the arts and culture sector and the community at large. The Arts Commission is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in all aspects of our organizations and programs. We will actively work to dismantle structural barriers to ensure that policies, grant programs and services are accessible and equitable. We are committed to the representation of historically and currently underserved and under-resourced communities on our staff, board, committees, and grant review panels. Despite the challenges we face, we are committed to the intentional distribution of public funds using equitable, transparent, and accessible processes. We acknowledge the importance of ongoing reflection, dialogue and learning.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Vision

We envision an Oregon where:

- All people, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, color, ability, gender, gender identity, marital status, national origin, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, disability, location, and immigration status, participate in creative and cultural expression and community life.
- Abundant resources are distributed equitably to Oregon's many communities and cultures to support, strengthen and celebrate our state's diverse communities and their self-determined creative and cultural expression.
- Arts are valued as an inherent and essential part of personal and community identity and wellbeing. Diversity of cultures, participation, and equal access in cultural life and cultural policy are the rights and privileges of all Oregonians.
- Institutional, structural and individual racism are continuously recognized and dismantled.

Guiding Principles

The Arts Commission is guided by the following principles in our approach to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility:

Arts are Essential: Artists exist in every community; the arts are inseparable from the communities in which they are made. The arts are essential to our personal identities, our understanding of our past, our sense of place, and an equitable quality of life in Oregon. Our work helps give agency to the many people who call Oregon “home” by empowering each community's social and economic vitality. The arts are essential to the economic vitality to all communities. Communities are prosperous when the arts are present.

Ensuring Access: We believe that creative expression can benefit all individuals and that everyone should have access to participation in the arts. Every person brings a unique viewpoint and perspective to their experience of creative expression. Our commitment is to protect and promote cultural diversity, encourage active participation in community cultural life, enable participation in decisions that affect the quality of our lives, and assure fair and equitable access to resources and support. We believe that artists, cultural workers and communities determine for themselves what it means to be an artist and cultural practitioner, what the “arts” and “culture” encompasses, and how they understand themselves in relation to their community, their culture(s) and the world.

Catalyzing Dialogue: Creative expression can help change and challenge dominant narratives, shift perspectives, break down barriers, build community, and catalyze dialogue.

Investing in Oregon's Cultural Ecology: Oregon's diverse creative communities contribute to a cultural ecology that is as rich and varied as the state's geographical landscape. We recognize the inherent value in the unique and diverse people and cultures that make up our state.

Valuing Relationships: Partnership, collaboration and mutual, authentic relationships are at the heart of our work and the work of the organizations, communities and individuals that our

programs support. We openly share information, tools and ideas, and actively build bridges and connections. We believe interconnected communities create an impact in ways that single interventions do not. By freely sharing our work and creating connections among the entire ecosystem, we work to make substantial, system-wide change.

Engaging Community: We actively engage partners and community members to strengthen and change our work by enabling people to participate in policy development that affect the quality of our cultural lives. We seek to partner with arts organizations to advance their DEIA goals.

Providing Robust and Stable Resources: Robust and stable public resources are needed for the arts to thrive in our communities. We contribute to the stewardship of the arts in Oregon by providing ongoing operational and project support to organizations and recurring opportunities for artists. We promote an attitude of abundance over scarcity and recognize the vital role that public funding plays in ensuring equitable access to cultural opportunities in Oregon and nationwide. Often smaller organizations depend on this funding to survive.

Acknowledgments

Change happens when we hold ourselves accountable by acknowledging and challenging inequities. In order to move forward with change, we must acknowledge the following:

- We acknowledge that inequities and disparities in power and privilege among different groups of people are prevalent, including in terms of poverty, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, race, and ethnicity. In particular, we acknowledge that systems of discrimination and oppression have privileged and continue to privilege white people. These systems continue to perpetuate harm against communities of color at the individual, organizational, and governmental levels.
- We acknowledge we are part of the systems that create inequities. We want to work with communities to address these inequities.
- We acknowledge there are systematic barriers to Oregon residents' participation in arts and culture and Oregon residents have varied levels of access to arts and culture. Underrepresented and under-resourced communities do not have equitable access to arts and culture.
- We acknowledge there exist various perceptions of how arts and culture are defined which affect who gets to benefit and participate. These perceptions limit access to arts and culture.
- We acknowledge there exist various perceptions and constraints related to the Arts Commission being part of state government and conditions related to receiving funding from the federal government. These perceptions and constraints limit access to our programs and services.
- We acknowledge the Arts Commission's programs, services and technologies have structural barriers that limit access to our programs and services.
- We acknowledge that arts nonprofits and individual artists are traditionally underfunded and have limited access resources.

- We acknowledge that arts has historically viewed as “value added” to quality of life as opposed to a basic human need, whereas we hold as truth the right for Oregonians to have access to the arts as inherent to lived experience and connection to place and each other.
- We acknowledge arts and culture is disproportionately allocated to bring economic prosperity to only certain communities. We are committed to ensuring that all Oregonians have access to economic prosperity through arts and culture.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Goals

Incorporate DEIA policies and practices throughout the Arts Commission’s programmatic and administrative systems, specifically:

Organizational Values

- **Diversify** our staff, board and commission to increase representation from historically and currently underserved and under-resourced communities.
- **Operationalize** and embed racial equity into every part of our work, putting DEIA strategies into practice.ⁱ
- **Inspire** expansion of equity by sharing and collaborating to build on what is already happening.ⁱⁱ
- **Collect and utilize** aggregate demographic information from applicants to inform program and policy decisions.
- **Increase funding to and opportunities for** historically and currently underserved and under-resourced communities.
- **Increase engagement** and remove barriers to participation in our programs and services.
- **Equitably distribute** funding across Oregon’s regions and nine federally recognized tribes.
- **Promote the stories** of the individuals, communities and organizations that we support to strengthen how Oregonians value the arts.
- **Provide accessibility resources** and guidance to arts organizations.

Organizational Accomplishments

- Oregon’s geographic and ethnic diversity intentionally reflected in the make-up of the Commissioners.
- Created the Arts Commission’s Arts Build Communities Grant to fund projects that provide access to the arts to underserved and under-resourced communities.
- Focused the Arts Commission’s Arts Learning Grant for students who attend rural or Title 1 schools.
- Created the Arts Commission’s Small Operating Grant Program to fund small and rural arts organizations.
- Opened eligibility for Arts Commission’s project-based grants to include non-arts organizations, municipalities, after-school programs.
- Artist Relief and Artist Resilience Program funds underserved artists across the state.

- Increased outreach and solicitation of artists of color for Percent for Art in Public Places opportunities.
- Focus on accessibility of resources (including alternative grant application options) towards underserved communities including but not limited to: ESL community members, immigrant populations, LGBTQ+ organizations, culturally-specific nonprofits, deaf/hard of hearing/people with disabilities individuals and organizations, etc.
- Understanding grant recipients' impact in their community by integrating DEI questions into the applications.
- Developing an artist registry to promote funding opportunities to artists across the state.
- Evaluating all our grant programs to ensure they are accessible to underserved artists and communities.
- Simplifying grant applications.
- Recruiting peer reviewers who have a DEIA lens and commitment.
- Incorporating anti-bias training into peer review panel trainings.

Goals, Objectives and Actions

Goal: Facilitate Community-Informed Work to Increase Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

Objectives and Actions:

- Actively work to reduce barriers to our grant programs and services through increased awareness.
 - Review and revise all grant programs with the assistance of stakeholders to ensure that guidelines are accessible and equitable.
 - Implement grant management systems that are efficient, accessible, and effective.
 - Explore alternatives to traditional grant application process including video and verbal submissions
 - Create an Accessibility Committee to advise on our accessibility work; review and implement accessibility guidance provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.
 - Transfer to a new and user-friendly grant management system.
- Increase funding to currently and traditionally underserved and under-resourced communities and artists.
 - Develop a process to determine equity gaps to ensure funding is equitably distributed to underserved communities.
 - Identify barriers of rural communities in accessing grant programs.
 - Develop rural initiative program to address the needs of rural communities and artists
 - Propose changes and revisions to current policies and explore new programs to address inequities in grantmaking.
 - Revise policies and practices to ensure our programs and services are accessible to people of all abilities.
 - Collect demographics from artists in Art in Public Places Program.
- Increase the diversity of staff, Arts Commissioners, panelists, and stakeholders.

- Reach out to culturally-specific organizations to encourage their participation on our staff and board.
 - Broadly advertise staff positions and prioritize outreach to community-based organizations.
 - Develop peer review panels that represent the diversity of the state.
 - Develop compensation for panelists to acknowledge their professional expertise.
- Monitor and evaluate progress in reducing barriers to grant programs and services
- Annually review progress of our DEIA work.
 - Conduct listening sessions annually to share our goals and receive feedback.
 - Allocate funding for DEIA strategies.
 - Promote the stories of the individuals, communities, and organizations we support to strengthen how Oregonians' value arts and culture.

Planning Process

This plan was developed by Oregon Arts Commission staff and Commissioners with feedback from partners and stakeholders throughout the state. In 2021, the Arts Commission conducted a series of listening sessions with over two dozen constituent groups including artists and arts organizations of all sizes and disciplines. They provided feedback on their challenges, opportunities, how they are approaching DEIA in their communities and how the Arts Commission can better support their work. Some of the major takeaways from the listening sessions include:

- Their strong commitment to DEIA in all aspects of their organization, programming and impact of their work;
- DEIA is not a final destination, but a journey that differs in various contexts and geographic regions; rural communities want to be recognized for their unique challenges compared to urban centers;
- The pandemic created an opportunity to reset and rethink if and how they are reaching underserved audiences;
- Grant writing is a skill that not all applicants possess and is a barrier to accessing and submitting a successful proposal; and
- There are other barriers in accessing our programs; artists and organizations want to partner with us to make our programs more accessible.

The Arts Commission is a state agency administratively housed within Business Oregon. The State of Oregon [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan](#)ⁱⁱⁱ, released in September 2021, inspires and informs our plan. Sections from our plan are taken directly from the State of Oregon DEIA Plan.

This plan is a working document that will be updated each year by staff and Commissioners. While DEIA is inherent and a priority in our work, we acknowledge we have so much more to do. We look forward to your feedback and input as we strive to break down barriers as a state agency and make our programs and organization diverse, equitable and accessible.

ⁱ State of Oregon, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan: A Roadmap to Racial Equity and Belonging, 2021.

ii State of Oregon, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan: A Roadmap to Racial Equity and Belonging, 2021.

iii State of Oregon, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan: A Roadmap to Racial Equity and Belonging, 2021.