



## Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

### Introduction

Museums are trusted, vibrant community centers, attracting diverse audiences and providing lifelong learning. The museum community takes pride in maintaining the public trust by caring for important collections, documenting the human story, and bearing witness to history. Museums embrace diversity and strive to make their programs and collections accessible to all audiences. They value federal, state, and local policies that recognize, maintain, and support diversity in all forms.

### Museum organizations have taken steps to adopt more inclusive policies and practices, including:

- The American Alliance of Museums' (AAM) Focus Area [Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion](#)
- AAM's [Museums & Creative Aging Initiative](#)
- Americans for the Arts' [Statement on Cultural Equity](#)
- The Association of Art Museum Directors' [Diversity Initiative with UNCF](#)
- The Association of Children's Museums' [Museums for All](#) initiative
- The Southeastern Museums Conference's [Diversity and Inclusion policy](#)
- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums' [Diversity and Inclusion policy](#)
- The Association of Science-Technology Centers' [Equity and Diversity Committee Charter](#)
- The LGBTQ Alliance's [Welcoming Guidelines for Museums](#)

Education is central to the mission of every museum, and museums embrace their role in fostering empathy and understanding—and combatting discrimination and hate—within their institutions and in their communities.

In January 2019 AAM launched an unprecedented national initiative to diversify museum boards and leadership. Backed by grants from three foundations (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Alice L. Walton Foundation, and Ford Foundation), "Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion," will provide the framework, training, and resources for museum leaders to build inclusive cultures within their institutions that more accurately reflect the communities they serve.

### Talking Points

- **Museums are trusted.** Independent research shows museums are considered more trustworthy than any other source of information (Reach Advisors, 2015). Teachers, students, and researchers benefit from access to trustworthy information through online collections and exhibits.
- **Museums create access for all.** There are approximately 850 million visits each year to American museums by people with different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. Museums are committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to high-quality museum experiences, regardless of an individual's ability to pay or traditionally access a museum. More than one-third of museums are free at all times, and nearly all offer discounts or free admission days. The Museums for All initiative ensures that those with limited incomes can benefit from visiting museums.



- **Museums bear witness to history.** Museums preserve and protect more than a billion objects and help communities better understand and appreciate cultural diversity. They tell important stories by collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting objects, living specimens, and historical records.
- **Museums bring communities together to heal divisions and foster dialogue.** They foster creativity and innovation, and help us understand and appreciate our differences. Museums are increasingly providing trustworthy spaces to have community conversations about a wide range of issues.

#### **A few examples of museums' work in these areas include:**

- **Levine Museum of the New South** (North Carolina) responded to an instance of deep community unrest by remaining open, offering free admission, guided tours, and spaces for reflection and conversation. They hosted a town hall meeting that drew a capacity crowd and offered historical context, followed by Q&A and then small table conversations. Onsite and virtual kiosks are available for visitors to share their stories.
- The **Kidsbridge Tolerance Museum** (New Jersey) teaches strategies around bullying prevention, diversity appreciation, and fostering empathy. Kidsbridge welcomes more than 2,500 youth annually for half-day programs that address name calling, cyber-bullying, discrimination, stereotypes, victim empowerment, and conflict resolution.
- The **National Civil Rights Museum** (Tennessee) offers a free community program to raise awareness about different cultures, issues, and movements. The Lunch and Learn program has covered topics such as immigration, the March on Washington, and current issues in public education.
- The **New England Museum Association** led a coalition of Boston-area cultural institutions to develop #BostonBetter, programming and resources that responded to the needs of local children and families at the one-year anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombing.
- **President Lincoln's Cottage** (Washington, DC) is tackling the modern-day problem of human trafficking, hosting 110 youth participants from across the United States and 16 other countries spanning five continents at its multi-day summits of the "Students Opposing Slavery" program.
- The **Florida Holocaust Museum**, in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, presents the *Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust* program, which explores the vital role of law enforcement in a democracy and the role of police during the Holocaust.
- The **Long Island Children's Museum** (New York) runs a program called Be Together, Learn Together. Developed in collaboration with the Nassau County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Nassau County Family Court, the program provides community resources and support for parents in family court, foster care families, and others in need.
- The **Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate** (Massachusetts) is dedicated to inspiring the next generation of leaders and promoting civic dialogue.
- Over 80 **Sites of Conscience** in the United States provide safe spaces to remember and preserve the stories of atrocity, and engage the public to shape a more just and humane future.

Please visit the Alliance's website at [aam-us.org](http://aam-us.org) or call (202) 289-1818 for more information.