

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, equity, accessibility, and inclusion 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:

- In October of 2022, AAM announced a multi-year initiative to transform the standards that guide best practices and accreditation for museums. New requirements will focus on including diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) practices that are critical for the future vitality and sustainability of the museum field and essential to meet the evolving needs of the public. The [Excellence in DEAI](#) report was issued in the summer of 2022 and is supported by a prestigious three-year National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. On October 31, 2023, AAM [announced](#) the members of its Excellence in DEAI Steering Committee. These individuals serve in key leadership roles in the Alliance's work to embed diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) more deeply into its excellence programs, including its Code of Ethics and museum accreditation.
- AAM also announced that renowned museum leader and social justice advocate, Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, will join the Alliance as a Senior Diversity Fellow participating in activating the Excellence in DEAI report, formulating plans for how AAM can best support people of color and DEAI changemakers in the museum field, and advising on AAM's forthcoming five-year DEAI plan.
- An article previewing the Excellence in DEAI report, [Meeting the Moment](#), appeared in the January/February 2022 issue of [Museum magazine](#), a benefit of AAM [membership](#).
- The American Alliance of Museums' (AAM) [Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion](#) Focus Area
- AAM's [Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion](#) Initiative
- AAM's [Awards](#) for Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion
- AAM's [Museums & Creative Aging Initiative](#)
- AAM [Statement in Response to the Trump Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping](#)
- The AAM LGBTQ+ Alliance's [Welcoming Guidelines for Museums](#)
- The AAM LGBTQ+ Alliance's [Transgender Inclusion Toolkit](#) for Trans Individuals, Institutions, and Coworkers
- AAM and School for Advanced Research [Standards for Museums with Native American Collections \(SMNAC\)](#) (2023)

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

- The Association of Art Museum Directors' [Diversity Initiative with UNCF](#)
- The Association of Children's Museums' [Diversity Statement](#)
- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums' [Diversity and Inclusion policy](#)
- The Association of Science-Technology Centers' [Equity and Diversity Committee Charter](#)
- ASTC and ACM's [Cultural Competence Learning Institute](#)
- The American Institute for Conservation's [Equity and Inclusion Statement](#)
- The Southeastern Museums Conference's [Diversity and Inclusion policy](#)
- Americans for the Arts' [Statement on Cultural Equity](#)

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

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.

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

- **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.
- **Chicagoland Alliance of Museums with PRIDE (CAMP)** holds quarterly meetings involving some 80 staff from over 25 museums in the Chicago area. The gatherings inspire, inform, and equip museum professionals to make their museum environments more welcoming and inclusive for LGBTQ staff and visitors.
- **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.
- **The Missouri History Museum** takes an inclusive approach to all that it does—from ensuring its exhibitions reflect the diversity of its community, to offering a safe space for visitors to grapple with difficult topics, to providing staff training on anti-bias work, culturally responsive teaching, and serving visitors with disabilities.
- **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 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.