

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

In the latter part of 2020, The Arts Council of Anne Arundel County initiated a campaign to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) throughout the arts community in Anne Arundel County. The Staff and the Board began a months-long, self-education process to learn what other arts-related organizations had done to introduce DEIA goals into their grants programs and outreach activities, and hired local DEI consultants to provide advice and guidance on next steps. These consultants brought us up to date on methods other arts groups had adopted to develop and implement their own DEIA principles.

By March 2021, the Arts Council was ready to take its initial actions. The Board established a Task Force to define the Arts Council's DEI goals and prepare a brief statement on the organization's commitment to DEIA. This statement, shown in the text box below, and highlighted on our website, summarizes the Arts Council's strong support for the principles of DEIA.

The Arts Council of Anne Arundel County is committed to advancing and modeling equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in all of our programs and services and those of our grantees. We are dedicated to embracing equity and non-discrimination regardless of race, religious creed, color, age, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, language, and/or ability.

As these goals were being drafted, Arts Council staff and Board Members began educating existing and potential grantees about the new DEIA priorities. The annual evaluation sessions with current grantees offered an opportunity to assess grantees' existing familiarity with DEIA efforts and their readiness to incorporate them into their respective grant requests. Brown bag Zoom lunches with current and future grantees introduced all grant seekers to the Arts Council's intention to promote DEIA principles starting in 2021 and to require their incorporation into all grantees' proposals in 2022.

Collaborating with two existing grantees — the Chesapeake Arts Center and The AngelWing Project — five educational sessions with outside experts were held on Zoom for all Arts groups in the County during the first half of 2022. Labeled "Let's Talk About DEIA in the Arts in Anne Arundel County," this series of well-attended programs provided specific guidance on best practices and tools to use in creating partnerships to address DEIA concerns, as well as tools to use in strengthening DEIA within organizations.

DEIA Conversations

Let's Start Talking About DEIA in the Arts

Ruby Lopez Harper from America for the Arts

Conversation I - Who Are We and Who Do We Want to Be?

Deena Kilmon, Director of Engagement for The Arc Central Chesapeake Region

Conversation II – Community Engagement

Dr. Pamela Brown, Executive Director of the Anne Arundel County Partnership for Children, Youth and Families

Conversation III – Partnering for Impact

Rob Levit, Executive Director of Creating Communities

Conversation IV - Exploring Microaggressions

Pete Hill, Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Asha Smith, Equal Opportunity and Human Relations Officer, Office of the County Executive

These sessions were recorded, and can be viewed at
<https://www.acaac.org/we-support/deia-resources/>

The highlight of the Arts Council's DEIA collaboration with The AngelWing Project and the Chesapeake Arts Center in 2022 was the DEIA in the Arts Conference on August 18, 2022. The Conference was funded with a grant from Arundel Community Development Services (ACDS). Speakers included artists, psychologists, musicians, educators, experts in organizational management, human resources, politicians, and related disciplines all of whom shared their knowledge and experience in applying DEIA principles in their professional lives and their artistic endeavors. Small group sessions allowed all participants to share personal views about best practices in achieving DEIA progress in their own organizations. More than [insert number of participants] from all over Anne Arundel County and nearby jurisdictions attended the Conference. Many attendees asserted their interest in attending another DEIA in the Arts Conference in 2023.

The Arts Council of Anne Arundel County has been successful in its adoption of DEIA during the last two years. All of the Board and staff members were committed to the effort from the beginning. The educational sessions and coaching from experts who not only understood the purpose and application of DEIA principles, but also knew the history and politics of Anne Arundel County were right on target in identifying potential barriers and guiding our decisions

as we moved through the process. We were also lucky to be working within a diverse community of artists and supporters who were ready and eager to expand partnerships in support of artistic outcomes. The incredible mural on the wall of the Arundel Center in Annapolis is an excellent example of our support for this kind of work. We remain committed to our mission and our DEIA goals, and will continue our journey to implement them throughout Anne Arundel County.

Martha Blaxall
Chair, ACAAC DEIA Task Force