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Staten Island Children's Museum: Strategic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan

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Executive Summary

This diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) plan incorporates the views and experiences of staff members, administrators and Board members of the organization. Data from the organizational assessment, along with the results of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) survey, has allowed the Staten Island Children's Museum (SICM) to address the gap in who and where the organization is, and who and where it desires to be. Through intensive sessions in partnership with the Staten Island Cultural Institution Group, SICM further understands the importance of shared language and how to effectively communicate, to all stakeholders, what is mission-critical to the organization's desired outcomes. Establishing baseline definitions and a shared understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion, with relationship to the unique demographics of Staten Island, affords SICM the opportunity to develop a plan specific to the community in which it serves, while respecting its distinctive institutional capacity.

The diversity, equity and inclusion plan requires the organization to critically assess its current processes, practices, protocols and procedures in the following key areas: Hiring and Recruitment, Retention and Promotion, Diverse and Equitable Leadership, Inclusive Organizational Culture and Programming and Outreach.

Hiring & Recruitment - The way in which SICM presents itself to the community impacts who visits as patrons and chooses the organization as an employer. SICM is committed to a deep examination of policies to ensure all components of the hiring cycle reflect inclusive and equitable practices as measured by the way in which its leadership and staff represent the diversity it values.

Retention & Promotion - Inclusion is a fundamental component of employee retention; to foster an inclusive environment SICM must create an organization whereby diverse individuals are able to fully participate within the organization. Although current staff capacity is limited, a commitment is being made to formalize the review process to enhance open communication to and from employees and make intentional investments in the staff for their personal and organizational growth and advancement.

Diverse & Equitable Leadership - In an effort to faithfully reflect the Staten Island community in the staff and leadership, it is necessary that community collaborations be a part of this process and an ongoing practice. Going beyond the organizational walls to intentionally foster and cultivate relationships with other cultural institutions and groups will allow for SICM to expand its reach into the broader Staten Island community.

Inclusive Organizational Culture - The ongoing and intentional engagement of the organization and its employees in the areas of performance, development and growth positions SICM to acknowledge and redress institutional barriers that hinder the belonging, education and development of all employees, especially in the area of cultural competence. Through reviewing and revising core statements and documents, implementing mandatory ongoing trainings and instituting a cross-departmental working group for DEI, SICM's culture will shift and the climate of the organization will enhance its inclusiveness. Additionally, SICM will revise and enhance Board member's roles and responsibilities to incorporate the support of this DEI plan and its commitments. Instituting mechanisms to capture employee experience enables SICM to measure, assess and address areas of improvement while celebrating and communicating its progress.

Programming & Outreach - As an institution committed to the full participation of all its visitors, SICM must ensure that visitors see themselves represented in the services and programs it provides. As a civically engaged community partner, it is mission-critical that through programming SICM is responsive and relevant to the lived experiences of different groups. SICM will purposefully offer programs and exhibits that reflect all of the Staten Island community.

Shared Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

The following shared statement serves as a foundational guide for the Staten Island Cultural Institutions Group's commitment to and implementation of our DEI plans:

Staten Island Cultural Institutions Group (SICIG) values, celebrates, and is committed to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in its five cultural institutions. SICIG believes building an inclusive and equitable environment is an ongoing, active process that requires constant and deliberate mindfulness and attention. Through policies, procedures and programs, SICIG values and seeks the strengths of human variety in race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, immigration status, geography and country of origin. Across communities, in programming, with staff, boards of directors, volunteers, artists and visitors, SICIG persistently strives to build a culture of diversity of voice and representation, authentically inclusive spaces and equity for all.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity

All lived experiences--specifically those from historically marginalized groups, in terms of, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography, immigration status, and country of origin.

Equity

Promoting systematic, fair and just treatment that results in impartial opportunities and outcomes for everyone while eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of the underrepresented.

Inclusion

The degree to which diverse individuals are able to fully participate and feel valued, respected, understood and welcomed within an organization or group; not a natural consequence of diversity and requires intentionality.

Organizational History

Augmenting classroom learning has always been central to our mission. Prior to opening to the public in 1976, the "Museum without Walls," as it was then called, was solely school-based. Currently, every year more than 25,000 diverse students participate in class visits to the Museum for focused programs that use our exhibitions to examine various educational subjects and another 16,000 students still benefit from school-based programs, usually multi-week residencies. Very importantly, students in English Language Learners programs and programs that target students with disabilities also benefit from Museum visits keyed to their abilities.

Today the Staten Island Children's Museum's (SICM) signage, exhibit environment, programming and staff ensure that the museum is accessible to our traditional school-based programs, all families and everyone else regardless of ability or background. We strive to help create bridges of understanding between our organization and our diverse audiences through our programming. Cultural bridges that we have established celebrate play and creativity, provide activities that nurture family relationships, foster a climate of inclusiveness, collaborate with traditional educational and social service organizations and build culturally responsive and caring communities.

Since its founding, SICM has been routinely successful with implementing strategies to reach beyond its walls to Staten Island residents and serve a broad constituency. The recent sociopolitical climate has heightened awareness around racial and social justice inequities in the cultural sector. Partly to be responsive to an article in the NYTimes in 2016 that highlighted some of these inequities, a Visitor Engagement Plan (VEP) was developed with the goal to diversify our forward facing staff, the hope to better represent the demographic makeup of Staten Island and the need to create more employment opportunities for people of color in the arts community. We also hoped to create a diversity, equity and inclusion policy. A new staff position was created and tasked with building nurturing partnerships to attract a workforce of underemployed youth from the North Shore of Staten Island. While we are now successful in attracting and retaining a diversified forward facing part time staff, we have had limited success in our efforts to diversify our board of directors and full time staff leadership positions or the creation of a policy.

A VEP consultant surveyed the diversified part-time staff and

found 1. an "us vs. them" culture present: an all-white fulltime management staff supervising a diverse part time staff; and 2. our efforts to develop deeper relationships with community groups were hindered by staff workloads and limited to inviting targeted groups to participate in cultural performances. Leadership then began formal professional development sessions on diversity, equity and inclusion with other non-profit leaders. A review of institutional policies began, but once the consultant's contract concluded we neglected to establish strategies to continue the work.

In 2017, a local funder invited members of the arts community to participate in an "Expanding Audiences and Deeper Cultural Participation" project. SICM's proposal was accepted and we focused on three goals: 1. staff training around DEI; 2. the creation of a diversity advisory board; and 3. the development of a diversity, equity and inclusion plan.

With staff training, we are experiencing a culture shift within the organization. We have become more deliberate in engaging our diverse visitors through our programming, word choices for exhibit labels, and our imagery. One particular program pushed SICM to be even more deliberate in our external communication – we made the choice to host Drag Queen Story time, a popular performer based program that has been hosted at the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the NY Public Library. SICM received a lot of negative push back from the community and a handful of board members. With the help of our consultants, SICM wrote an open letter to the community about why we chose this topic, how it fits into our mission, what others in the field have done, and what the research says about children and this topic. We have used this lesson to create open letters to our community for each monthly theme since.

In 2018 – 2019 our staff training successfully concluded and we have strategies to address incidences of prejudice and racism in the workplace, tools to disrupt harmful discourse, methods of justice to redress harm, group facilitation skills to continue the conversation within the organization around race, power and privilege, and processes to implement initiatives through shared decision making. Our DEI advisory board has been established and regularly advises on various DEI topics and the plan has, thankfully, been written.

Vision Statement

Staten Island Children's Museum (SICM) is a vibrant and approachable cultural destination that brings communities, families and young people together for quality interaction. For nearly 45 years, SICM has worked to develop its reputation as an informal educational environment evolving to meet the needs of today's early learners, parents and caregivers.

Our vision is for everyone, as they enter through our doors, to feel immediately welcomed and to be treated respectfully regardless of their diverse identities including race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography, immigration status, and country of origin.

As we think about what it means to be a museum for all people in the second quarter of the 21st century, SICM envisions becoming a community activator – an organization that consistently draws the community into its spaces. Inclusion is the institutionalizing of our DEI strategies. For example, diverse programming will no longer be isolated appendages, it will be woven into the fabric of the institution. We no longer want to have a "if we build it, they will come" mindset, we want to become an intentional community engager that voices our own values while also providing support, a space and a voice for those who may not know or feel that they are welcomed.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan allows SICM to see diversity through a broad lens, as mentioned above. This lens will facilitate our work with the community – our employees, volunteers, board of directors, vendors and visitors – to better disrupt and dismantle social, economic and structural inequities. Our vision is to learn and to grow with our community – we do not want to be static – and to continually broaden our definition of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Staten Island Children's Museum's Strategic DEI Plan will strengthen our commitment to:

- Offer the community a place where honest, transparent and mindful communication can take place we want to listen.
- Have insightful and inspiring conversations around DEI in the development of our policies, processes, plans, practices, and programs.
- Be transparent with our staff and create and follow policies more equitably
- Focus our efforts on transformative systemic change
- Be held accountable and allowed to make course corrections as we take responsibility for our actions and imperfections.
- Be honest, transparent and mindful in all of our communications written, verbal, imagery and social media.
- Partner with funders, board members and vendors who are committed to creating a workspace infused with culturally responsive practices.
- Improve community visitation and participation through continuous, diverse, equitable and inclusive programming to maintain the collaborative spirit needed to enrich our island.

Explore



The Process

In 2017, a local funder invited members of the arts community to participate in an "Expanding Audiences and Deeper Cultural Participation" project. Staten Island Children's Museum's (SICM) proposal was accepted and focused on three goals: 1. staff training; 2. the creation of a diversity advisory board; and 3. the development of a diversity, equity and inclusion plan. As a result of this funding, the staff training has successfully concluded and we have strategies to address incidences of prejudice and racism in the workplace, tools to disrupt harmful discourse, methods of justice to redress harm, group facilitation skills to continue the conversation within the organization around race, power and privilege, and processes to implement initiatives through shared decision making. Our DEI advisory board has been established and regularly advises on various DEI topics and the plan has been written.

SICM was also awarded a grant from DCLA, in 2018, that afforded it the opportunity to obtain consultant services to further support its efforts to develop a DEI plan with the other four members of the Cultural Institutions Group on Staten Island (SICIG), including the Staten Island Museum, the Staten Island Children's Museum, the Staten Island Zoological Society, and Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden.

In conjunction with the consultants, who conducted an organizational assessment, and with the SICIG, the SICM leadership attended three intensive sessions of professional development with the objectives:

- Leadership will be able to position their organizations within the gaps of representation across the arts.
- Leadership will identify obstacles and barriers to becoming more diverse, equitable and inclusive.
- Leadership will be able to identify strategies and supports to develop and implement their DEI plan.
- The topics covered in the workshops included:
- The business case for diversity
- Who comprises Staten Island? Who are we? Where are the gaps?
- Implicit bias, difference and privilege
- Obstacles and barriers to DEI
- SMART goals and metrics

As a result of our professional development sessions the SICIG began the work of the early stages of developing DEI plans. Together, all five organizations:

- Developed a shared language and statement around DEI.
- Assessed the current diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices of each organization to identifygaps.
- Identified areas of focus and strategic goals.

Following the three initial sessions with the SICIG leadership, the SICM's DEI leadership team and Board members convened with the consultants to further build upon their capacity to understand the complexity of organizational DEI and to guide them through the process of the beginning stages of organizational change.

Hiring and Recruitment

The development of the diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan has allowed the Staten Island Children's Museum (SICM) an opportunity to critically examine current processes and procedures relating to hiring and recruitment. SICM believes diversity draws on the strength of the variety of the human condition, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography, immigration status, and country of origin. In reviewing the past and current staff makeup, a mission-critical opportunity to shift the dynamic of diversity and inclusion is within the area of hiring and recruitment. While museum staff is rich with diverse intersectional identities, racial diversity presents a significant opportunity for growth, as seen in Fig.1.

Through the examination of policies, SICM will also screen for and establish inclusive and equitable practices. The organization defines equity as promoting justice, impartiality and fairness with procedures, processes and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. In an effort to foster an inclusive environment SICM must create an organization whereby diverse individuals are able to not only fully participate, but thrive and excel within the organization; this outcome is not a natural consequence of diversity and requires intentionality. SICM recognizes unequal starting points and the need for consistent engagement to address imbalance. Although the current staff capacity is limited, the organization is committed to reviewing all roles to incorporate responsibilities to support DEI efforts.

The included goal charts (pages 14 and 15) identify a process to establish a baseline for our diversity efforts to be an organization reflective of the community. The goal chart fully outlines the areas of organizational commitment in years one, three and six and identifies who is accountable. For each goal there are specific metrics by which progress will be tracked. Ultimately establishing and formalizing hiring practices will yield a more diverse pool of candidates that will subsequently convert to new hires.

	Asian	Black	Latinx
Staten Island ¹	8%	10%	18%
SICM ²	<3%	9.2%	10.5%

¹United States Census Bureau, 2018;; ²SMU DataArts, 2018

Retention and Promotion

Introducing inclusive practices and strategies in the hiring and recruitment process allows organizations to not only attract a more diverse pool of candidates, which leads to greater representational diversity among staff, it also allows for greater retention and promotion of the same.

Given Staten Island Children's Museum (SICM) organizational limitations, whether advancement is internal or external of the organization, it commits to formalizing skill building for all employees to enhance their professional development. Supporting managers and other leaders in creating regular opportunities to hear from staff on issues of access, workplace climate, and diversity, equity and inclusion will reinforce staff retention. In the event an employee leaves the organization, formalizing the separation process to include exit interviews will validate the voices of staff members, and the valuable feedback will be used to address challenges or enhance processes.

Retention is also supported by investing in the development of employees through relationship building. Gaining access to the professional networks of our Director and Board members in the cultural sector, and assisting staff in developing connections, also gives them access and communicates their value to the organization.

Lastly, how SICM communicates what it is doing and who is doing this work is an invaluable part of this process and necessary for the inclusive climate and culture of the organization. SICM will establish communication channels that celebrate and update the employees and the progress supporting our DEI efforts.

Diverse and Equitable Leadership

As a cultural institution, the Staten Island Children's Museum(SICM) must see itself as more than delivering history, art, learning and entertainment - it is a civic agency that has a responsibility to serve as a social agent. This is a shift for the organization, and SICM is committed to ensuring this change in values is present and executed at all levels of the organization.

Diversifying the Board of Directors is one of the most challenging tasks the organization will face; it is however the one particular space where efforts can intentionally focus on eradicating inequity and seek to support inclusive representation. The historical practice of relying on personal and social networks can no longer be the only way in which SICM operates as the level of influence inherent in the Board of Directors necessitates it to espouse, support and model the diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives the organization is committed to - it is clearly understood that the success of our endeavors will rise and fall upon leadership. To make impactful and sustainable change will require a personalized approach in building relationships—e.g. attending ethnic specific events for philanthropic purposes in target communities and/or identifying and pursuing other diverse outlets. This commitment is necessary not just at the Director level but the Board level as well. The effort to reframe board member roles and responsibilities and to establish a seat specifically for a member from the community or education sector will further support equity and inclusion amongst a key area of leadership.

Inclusive Organizational Culture

It is Staten Island Children's Museum's (SICM) responsibility to the community to be a welcoming space. Broadening this to the staff and becoming a workplace of choice is also essential. The degree to which we integrate diversity as an institutional value in the mission statement, core values and guiding principles will greatly impact the success in establishing a more inclusive workplace.

Implementing mandatory annual DEI training will engage all areas of the organization in conversations around race, power and privilege, and will allow for the organization to ensure a standard understanding of what diversity, equity and inclusion is. To support continued improvement and work in this area SICM is establishing a multifunctional, cross-departmental DEI group to strategize, monitor and advise our efforts, as well as prioritize the establishment of new partnerships with historically underrepresented communities.

Programming & Outreach

In an effort to enhance programming to reflect a commitment to DEI efforts and increase participation from the broader Staten Island community, Staten Island Children's Museum (SICM) will experiment with new approaches to programming. To that end, the organization will seek to create and implement an audience development and marketing plan that includes strategies for programming to engage underrepresented communities on Staten Island. The organization will foster, support and encourage the creativity and innovation of the staff by empowering them to implement change, take risks and build broader relationships.

Additionally, SICM will institute a protocol to vet programs, initiatives and exhibits for diverse representation and to ensure that the organization is curating programs and exhibits that truly allow for visitors and staff to see, hear and experience themselves.

Hiring and Recruitment

<u>Goal</u>	<u>1 Year Progress</u>	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
Enhance diverse representation of applicant and hiring pool	Committee will review all job requirements/postings/descriptions to eliminate exclusionary language and unnecessary requirements; incorporate DEI statement	 Hiring team will complete audit of all hiring and recruitment processes to correct inequitable practices and enhance diversity. Will include diverse team members Debrief hiring rounds amongst management-e.g. reasons for rejection 75% of our applicant pool and new hires for most positions are from underrepresented groups. 30% of our new hires for leadership positions are from underrepresented groups Communication of DEI protocols through the employee handbook for onboarding of new hires will be accessible to people with varying abilities. Revise employee handbook to reflect DEI strategies and commitment. 	Routinely achieve diverse pool of candidates for all positions Management will assess staff, community and Board demographic data on a quarterly basis to identify successes and areas of growth in approaching proportionality. Demographic data is shared and analyzed with staff. Percentage of staff members with diverse identities reflect the Staten Island community as per baseline statistics	Director and Department Heads

Hiring and Recruitment Cont.

Goal	<u>1 Year Progress</u>	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
Enhance diverse representation of applicant and hiring pool	Establish and conduct a period of online open comment for all staff members on DEI plans and policies and current staff roles/descriptions to ensure DEI efforts are	Establish an online Cultural Community Organization Directory of churches, mosques, Pride Centers etc., to be utilized as a recruitment source for staff and volunteers Establish relationships with public institutions of higher education within a 20 mile radius that have large populations of underrepresented communities in their art, art history, fine arts, museum curation, and other related programs. • Create strong pipeline of talent for potential hires Increased number of positions are filled through current community pipelines	Management has built sustainable pipelines/outreach outlets to fill open positions with individuals from the most underrepresented groups Percentage of staff members with diverse identities reflect the Staten Island community as per baseline statistics	Director and Department Heads

Retention and Promotion

<u>Goal</u>	<u>1 Year Progress</u>	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
Establish and communicate expectations for employee retention, development and commitment to DEI	efforts is established and accessible to all staff members e.g. DEI is standing item on all department meeting agendas — agenda format will be modified for varying abilities	Institute a feedback structure for exit interviews to capture valuable employee perspective on employment experience • Include space to reflect on power and privilege Institute annual training(s) to cover a variety of DEI topics • Provide time for all employees to attend Implement skill building/trainings and other learning opportunities that establish pathways to leadership (internal or external advancement) • Formalize process for leadership to co-construct individual learning and growth plans with staff • Management will afford equitable staff opportunities to serve in leadership capacities Offer biannual staff satisfaction survey on workplace climate	Establish talent management programs to accomplish DEI goals such as succession planning, coaching, and mentoring to maximize performance and career potential. Staff members, specifically those from underrepresented groups, are prepared and eligible for promotion as positions become available Regularly survey staff on workplace climate Majority of staff surveyed report satisfaction with increasing opportunities to take on leadership roles, professional development opportunities, communication processes and interactions with EEO/AA/ADA staff person	Director and Department Heads

Diverse and Equitable Leadership

Goal	1 Year Progress	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
Revise organizational structure to reflect diversity efforts	 Establish a multifunctional, cross- departmental DEI group to strategize, monitor, and advise on DEI efforts. Establish diverse search and screen committee as positions become available Convene management at least twice a year to assess progress and areas of growth in terms of this DEI plan. Begin to offer opportunities for horizontal learning and leadership development –e.g. staff-lead book groups, distributive leadership models for facilitation, staff- generated agendas for meetings, guest speakers etc. At least 50% of management attends horizontal learning sessions led by staff 	 Expand current staff position to encompass duties of EEO/AA/ADA Officer for reporting of grievances, concerns and accommodations Revise and incorporate Board roles and responsibilities to include DEI component Provide management and Board members with ongoing training on leading for equity Leadership reviews data from staff surveys in the interest of transparency and goal-setting regarding DEI. 	Leadership positions routinely have diverse candidate pool Establish Board seats for critical areas of inclusioneducation and community. Review board responsibilities and incorporate the need to support DEI through commitment to recruitment, community presence and fundraising for DEI specific initiatives Percentage of diverse Board members represent the Staten Island community in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography and country of origin	Director and Department Heads

Inclusive Organizational Culture

Goal	1 Year Progress	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
To establish a workplace of choice for our employees	Review mission statement, core values and guiding principles to ensure all are clearly informed by our vision of a diverse, equitable and inclusionary organization Continue staff training programs to deepen and extend understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion • Leadership and staff will understand how to respect diversity and build an inclusive workplace	Conduct staff assessment to establish current perceptions of organizational DEI to establish baseline and further track progress Tri-annually review, identify and implement 10% of actionable (non- structural) items from Center for Creative Play's audit of accessibility Annual reviews of DEI policies and procedures indicate changes are aligned with mission statement, core values and guiding principles Establish and implement model for collaborative problem solving with management and staff • Staff at all levels will feel valued, seen, heard, respected and	 Staff assessments consistently indicate employee satisfaction with organizational DEI policies and procedures that: create strategies that address incidences of prejudice and racism in the workplace utilize tools to disrupt harmful discourse operationalized methods of justice to redress harm develop group facilitation skills to continue the conversation within the organization around race, power and privilege standardize processes to implement initiatives through shared decision making 20% of actionable (non-structural) items from Center for Creative Play's audit of accessibility will be implemented 	Director and Department Heads

inspired

Programming and Outreach

Goal	<u>1 Year Progress</u>	Within 3 Years	Within 6 Years	Staff Lead
Enhance programming to reflect and gain participation from the broader Staten Island community	Create and implement an audience development/marketing plan that includes strategies for programming to engage underrepresented communities on Staten Island Offer programming that is representative and reflective of the community's intersectional identities ranging from race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography and country of origin, to attract diverse interest in the museum	 Establish protocols and implement practice of vetting exhibits, programs and collections through DEI advisory council Include anti-bias audit to screen for stereotypes and misconceptions based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, gender fluidity, sexual orientation, family structure, personal beliefs, age, ability, veteran status, socioeconomic status, geography and country of origin Programming will consistently reflect broader SI community 	Visitor demographics will indicate enhanced participation from the broader SI community	Director and Department Head
	Establish protocol for all programming to screen for accessibility and inclusion Continue partnership with On Your Mark to	Research and establish methods to collect visitor demographics to identify usefulness in approaching DEI goals		
	provide a space for day habilitation services	Establish community partnerships to assist with ADA e.g. ASL interpreters		

