

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Working Group Report

Working Group Members: Ric Swierat, Mark Wilson (Columbia), Rajene Hardeman (Dutchess), Debra Klein (Greene), Priscilla Goldfarb (Putnam), Stuart Auchincloss (Ulster), Rebekkah Smith Aldrich (MHLS), and Casey Conlin (MHLS)

Report from meetings held on:

- December 22, 2020
- January 12, 2021

1. The working group has decided to broaden the scope of their focus and reflect that in the name of the group, changing from “Racial Equity” to encompass “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.” The group acknowledges that the racial equity issues laid bare in 2020 are the catalyst for their work but their overall goal is to work towards equity for all, and to ensure that all stakeholders are respected and appreciated as valuable members of our community.

2. Team Updates

- a. Board Education (Team Members: Priscilla & Debra)
 - i. This team is first focusing on assisting Rebekkah and Ric with talking points for the upcoming Committee Chair Orientation session in January.
- b. Policy Review (Team Members: Debra & Stuart)
 - i. This team is first working to customize a policy analysis tool to aid in the review of existing MHLS policies and procedures.
 - ii. This team is also researching a what an adopted EDI statement for MHLS could look like and the practice of land acknowledgement at MHLS events.
- c. Communication Assessment (Rajene, Casey & Kerstin)
 - i. This team has focused energy in assessing a variety of communication and style guides and has recommended [The Social Justice Phrase Guide](#), created by [The Opportunity Agenda](#), to help educate those on the board and staff who have responsibility for communicating to the MHLS community-at-large.
 - ii. The team has identified three terms they will explore further for the next stage of their work:
 1. Privilege
 2. Impact over intention
 3. Implicit bias
 - iii. This team has identified that their work will dovetail with the goals of both the board education and policy review teams.

- d. Board Development/Recruitment (Mark & Ric): This team is analyzing the current board recruitment and election process for MHLS to identify opportunities to ensure our board reflects the constituency of the MHLS service area.
3. The group would like to convey to the board that the efforts of our board in this area will take time. This will not be a “one and done” effort, meaning no one workshop or resource can change organizational or governance culture. The group is focused on the long-term evolution of the governance perspective of the organization and asks for your patience as we find our way forward.
4. Always Open to Feedback: Working group members are very keen to hear where MHLS trustee thoughts are on this topic and feedback you may have on the work that lies ahead. All trustees are welcome to reach out to any working group member to provide feedback.