

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group

### December 2023 Report to the Board

#### Working Group Members:

- Rajene Hardeman, Co-Chair (D)
- Debra Klein, Co-Chair (G)
- Stuart Auchincloss (U)
- Heather Blakely (U)
- George Joiner (P)
- Mark Wilson (C)
- Barry Ramage (D), Board President, ex officio
- Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director

1. The group continued its discussion about how to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion remain front and center in the work of our organization. Several items were identified for the group to work on in the coming months to aid with the transition the group feels is necessary in this work for our board:
  - a. Executive Director Aldrich will ensure that the March orientation for trustees includes an introduction to the policy assessment framework created by the working group and that the phrase: “every trustee is responsible for equity, diversity, and inclusion,” will be part of the talking points.
  - b. A “job description” for committee chairs will be created that includes responsibilities vis-à-vis equity, diversity, and inclusion.
  - c. The group will work on two orientation topics to be presented in May and September.
  - d. A recommendation is made to the Board Development Committee to include reflective practice as part of board culture and include it in the board’s self-evaluation process.
  - e. The group will be discussing the intersectionality of EDI and climate action as well as issues surrounding digital equity and other related social issues as they relate to the work of library/MHLS.
2. The group is recommending the creation of a Core Values Advisory Group that would take the place of the EDI Working Group. Preliminary thinking is that this group could be tasked with assisting the board to ensure authenticity in its efforts from the perspective of our stated Core Values, adopted during the development of our current Plan of Service:

*“Responsive Customer Service: The staff and board of the Mid-Hudson Library System strive to be active listeners and timely problem solvers that create a culture of support and professionalism with each other and our member libraries.*

*Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: The staff and board of the Mid-Hudson Library System believe in working together to co-create a society that is free from structural inequities.*

*Environmental Stewardship: The staff and board of the Mid-Hudson Library System are committed to minimizing our organization's ecological impact and maximizing future generations' ability to live, work, and play in our shared natural environment, with equal access to clean air, clean water, and natural resources.*

*Economic Feasibility: The staff and board of the Mid-Hudson Library System are committed to achieving sustainable funding both for the System and for member library services.*

*Future-Focused: The staff and board of the Mid-Hudson Library System are devoted to optimizing, balancing, iterating and innovating services to equip member libraries for the future."*

This group could perhaps convene twice a year to discuss issues that the board should be thinking about to make recommendations.

3. The construct of an "advisory group" is a new one and aligns with some of the thinking being done by the Government & Community Relations Working Groups to form an Alumni Group to bolster our advocacy efforts. It is recommended that the Bylaws, Policy, and Procedures Committee consider the differences among standing committees, working groups/task forces, and this newly proposed structure of an "advisory group."