

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group

December 2024 Report to the Board

Working Group Members:

- Rajene Hardeman, Co-Chair (D)
- Mark Wilson, Co-Chair (C)
- Stuart Auchincloss (U)
- Barry Ramage (D), Board President, ex officio
- Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, MHLS Executive Director

1. The group created a path to kick off the new “Core Values Advisory Group” which was approved by the board at the September 2025 meeting.
 - a. *The purpose statement of the Core Values Advisory Group is to support MHLS in authentically addressing [our core values](#) as they apply to the governance of the system.*
2. This new advisory group will report to the Executive Committee, meeting twice a year to serve as “trend spotters” that help us stay current and authentic on current issues that impact our governance and service delivery work here at MHLS. The particular intersection of this trend spotting will be designed along the lines of our stated core values as adopted by the board:

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.

3. This was the final meeting of the “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group.” Created in 2020 as the “Racial Equity Working Group” to explore the role of MHLS with the national discussion about racial equity at that point in history. Within the first year, the group broadened its scope beyond racial equity, to all forms of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Highlights of the group’s accomplishments include:
 - a. The now approved [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy](#) was drafted for the Bylaws, Policy, and Procedures Committee.
 - b. Oversaw our engagement Michigan Nonprofit Association, funded by the Community Foundation of the Hudson Valley, to assess our staff and trustee’s perspectives on our organization’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and goal setting made possible thanks to the results of that assessment. Goals included creating a mentorship program for new trustees; auditing the rules and procedures – including minute-taking – of the board to ensure board operations are inclusive of diverse board members; using the ADA checklist to evaluate MHLS facilities; and adding “sexual orientation” and “gender identity and expression” to the organizations equal employment opportunity, nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies, all of which were achieved.
 - c. Worked with the Board Development Committee by providing two orientations a year for the board on topics related to equity, diversity, and inclusion; consulting on the orientation for new trustees to ensure our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is well represented; the addition of an EDI-focused question to the board’s self-evaluation tool. Orientation topics have included: “Impact Over Intention,” “Implicit Bias,” “Age & Gender Discrimination,” and “Climate Justice.”
 - d. Evolved our board recruitment guidance to encompass issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
 - e. Created a “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy & Procedure Analysis Framework” (attached) to enhance each board committee’s ability to consider issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion as they review and create policies for the organization.
 - f. Worked with MHLS staff to provide input on multiple continuing education opportunities for member libraries including a half-day online conference, Safe Zone Project training, and a Justice at Work cohort; to create the accessibility statement now posted to the MHLS web site; the creation of an EDI Statement for the MHLS Directors Association
 - g. Recommended the declaration of MHLS as a “Book Haven System” to ensure public access to all titles that appear on the ALA Most Challenged list annually and the naming of the fund to underwrite the purchase of the print and e-titles for this collection after Debra Wilcox Klein, a key member of the working group who passed away unexpectedly at the end of 2023.