Accessibility in the Arts: Actionable Steps To Make DEIA Part of Your Organizational Culture

Jessica Bellis
Deena Kilmon
Before We get Started
Let’s Recognize:

- DEIA work is challenging, multifaceted and complex.
- This work takes time, outreach & iterative practice in order to be successful.
Step one: Self-assess
Where are you? What is your true goal?

- **Consider all challenges**
- **Listen**: “Is your program actually valued by the audience you are trying to serve?”
- **Are your targets realistic**: Schedule, demographics, benchmarks
- **Grants**: fulfill your mission, not your bank account

*Example*: Check your own board/staff DEIA, check your policies & procedures, mobile friendly registration
Step two: Build Trust
Meet people where they are!

- **Get Out of Your Comfort Zone**: Physically leave your space; go to where your desired audience is
- **Plan for broad and individual outreach**
- **Follow-up**: create pathways to multiple touchpoints & continued participation
- **Work Toward Lasting Community Partnerships**: not just project specific
- **Keep your commitments**

*Example*: Major changes to Avalon Foundation Summer Camp scholarship strategy.
Step three: Establish Partnerships
Choose carefully!

The Best Partners:
- Have a common goal
- Have DIFFERENT strengths, resources or stakeholders
- Strong understanding of what their contributions to the partnership should be and what they will receive in return.

Example: Multicultural Festival to Vaccine Drive
Step four: DEIA Training

- Staff, board, and volunteers
- Get professional help

Example: Bringing a group from the Arc to art museums
Step five: Reassess
Time for an honest debrief

- Did you meet / are you meeting:
  ○ Benchmarks
  ○ Schedules
  ○ Budget
- Was/is your programming valued by its audience?
- Did your partners participate in the ways you had planned?
- Note any lessons learned (especially unexpected ones).
- Identify process or procedure that kept you from your goals
- Listen to your stakeholders.
- Celebrate successes & progress with your partners and stakeholders.

Example: Outdoor Movie night planning process
Repeat, Repeat, Repeat
Begin your next project/year/season with lessons learned

1. Self-assess
2. Build Trust
3. Pick Your Partners
4. Train or retrain your volunteers to be inclusive and welcoming
5. Reassess
Current projects:

- We are One: Community Supporting Community
- Avalon Foundation Children’s Programming
- Multicultural Festival
- Plein Air Easton
- Strategic Planning & Budgeting
- Outdoor Concert series
- Outdoor Movie Series
Questions? Ideas?
Experiences to Share?

Jessica Bellis
Chief Operating & Finance Officer
Avalon Foundation Inc.
jessica@avalonfoundation.org
410-253-9169

Deena Kilmon
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Easton Economic Development Corp.
deena@eastonedc.com