



Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion @ A.C.T.

Updated November 22, 2020

A.C.T. AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

A.C.T. commits to becoming an inclusive and anti-racist organization where everyone can thrive. The moral imperative that drives our commitment is the transformational power of art made possible when true inclusion is realized, when a diversity of perspectives and experiences is respected, and when oppressive systems are collectively dismantled - leading to better art, more supportive and welcoming environments, and improved outcomes for all.

As part of a theatrical ecosystem with underpinnings of systemic racism and anti-Blackness, we acknowledge our organization's history as a predominantly white institution. We also acknowledge that A.C.T. has caused real harm and trauma, consciously or subconsciously, directly or indirectly, adversely impacting our colleagues, students, audiences, staff and members of our community. We take these injuries seriously, and we are working to make meaningful, lasting changes that dismantle and eliminate the inherently oppressive structures and practices in our culture, our organizational structure, our business practices and our work, on and off the stage.

We are doing the work through listening, educating ourselves, responding, and adjusting to be better as an organization and individuals. We are holding each other accountable with clear actions, goals and measurable results. This work is ongoing and we acknowledge the tension between moving quickly, being inclusive and making change that will have lasting impact.

Our EDI Vision

- We envision a theater where residents of the San Francisco Bay Area see their stories and themselves represented on and off stage.
- We envision a theater that invests in and promotes artists, stories and programs representative of the diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- We envision a theater where all feel welcome and safe. Where everyone feels accepted for who they are.
- We envision a theater that truly embraces a diversity of thought and perspective.
- We envision a theater where people assume responsibility for their actions and growth and proactively work to ensure they are anti-racist in their behavior.
- We envision a theater where concerns are brought forward, problems are acknowledged, and individuals are given a chance to learn and grow and become better, leading to a stronger community and world.
- We envision a theater where we ongoingly reflect upon and examine our practices to dismantle the influence of oppressive systems.
- We envision a theater that will support the work of organizations and individuals in our extended community in dismantling racism.

How We'll Know We Are Making Progress

- Analysis of our staff, artists, board, students and audiences will show progress on an annual basis in becoming more representative of the demographics of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Response to engagement surveys from staff, artists, students and board will show rankings as a highly inclusive organization where people are thriving and where a diversity of perspective is encouraged and embraced.
- Incidents counter to our values will be reduced and ultimately not exist.
- The work on our stages and in our training and education programs is representative of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Input from our community of audiences, the theater community, and the Bay Area at large is solicited on a regular basis so we can learn where we are falling short and where we are progressing.

Our Stakeholders

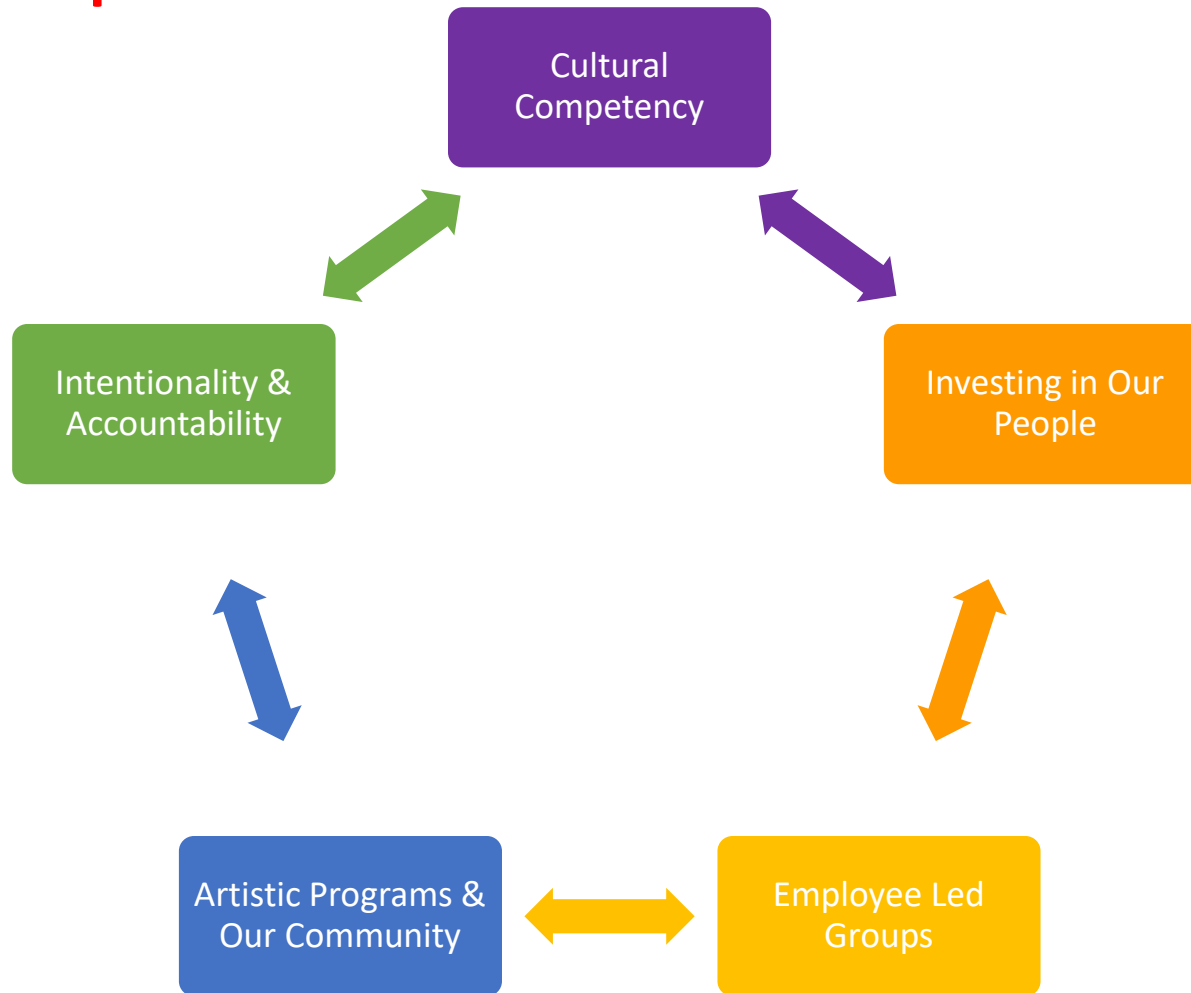
- Staff and Faculty
- Trustees
- Artists
- Students in all Training and Education Programs
- Audiences
- Donors
- Volunteers
- Community
- Local and National Theater Field
- Other sources of input:
 - Media
 - Research
 - Surveys
 - Movements



Organizing Components of Our Work

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5 Components



Cultural Competency

Cultural competency of staff leads to inclusion.

Cultural Competency is defined as the capacity to shift perspective and behavior based on commonalities and differences by experiencing cultures and individuals with greater levels of complexity. It's a skill that can be learned and requires practice. It's a muscle that requires flexing. It can be acquired through education, training, experience, and through various methods of learning such as art, travel, or immersion.

The value proposition: richer, deeper relationships, broader perspective, more effective communication and collaboration.

Investing in Our People

From the very first point of contact with A.C.T. (i.e. where a prospective employee sees a job posting and the language in our job descriptions) to an employee's last day on the job, and the entire employee lifecycle in between – we will examine the major aspects of a person's time with us and ensure an EDI lens is cast at each of those touch points.

Ensure diversity in recruiting and hiring. Ensure inclusion in performance management, employee development, succession planning, total rewards, and retention. Ensure transparency, clarity, and communication in all policies, processes and practices. Ensure equity in compensation, opportunity, and access.

Employee Led Groups

Groups like our EDI Committee, Subcommittees and Affinity spaces are an important aspect to a holistic approach to EDI. They ensure we are hearing from all corners of the organization, that a diverse array of voices are heard from, and issues, ideas, or concerns are raised that may not otherwise surface or be considered.

Groups are cross-functional teams with representation from across the organization, given budgets and full organizational support.

Artistic Programs & Our Community

An EDI lens is cast toward what goes on our stages and what is taught in our training and education programs. What stories are told? Who tells those stories? This has direct correlation to who comes to our shows, events, our spaces, and who partners with us in other ways.

Where do we show up in the community? Collectively – as A.C.T. but also as professionals and individuals? This has direct correlation to who applies to our jobs, auditions for a show, joins one of our programs, and who partners with us in other ways.

Intentionality & Accountability

The cornerstone of each component of the EDI plan, intentionality and accountability, is how we show our commitment toward action, impact, transparency and learning evidenced by:

- EDI values are woven into our plans, policies, and standard operating procedures (SOP)
- Desired outcomes and goals are established
- Metrics for measuring progress is defined
- Methods for holding ourselves and one another accountable are established
- Regular sharing out our successes and lessons learned to all stakeholders and the public



Specific Actions

Updated November 22, 2020

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Overview

This plan is focused upon work at A.C.T. primarily from 2018 to date.

Actions are grouped according to the five organizing components of Cultural Competency, Investment in our People, Employee Led Groups, Artistic Programs & Our Community, and Intentionality & Accountability. There is inevitable overlap as all of these areas are intertwined.

This is a living and working document for A.C.T. and not intended to be a checklist as the work is never done. Past actions are noted so that we and future generations of A.C.T. stakeholders can see what has been implemented or attempted and continue to build upon these intentional efforts.

Upcoming Actions

Cultural Competency – Upcoming Actions

- Provide regular training on systemic racism, anti-racism, gender inclusion, micro aggressions, intent vs impact, unconscious bias and bystander intervention to all constituents on a regular and repeated basis. This is for staff, artists when with us, students and for board members.
 - Trainings on Unlearning Unconscious Bias, Microaggression to Microaffirmation and Anti-Racism are currently taking place with Shine Diversity.
- Conduct regular internal training and provide forums for discussion, and continue to provide resources for individual work, to ensure this work, learning and development continues.
- Reconceive what training and ongoing consultation around EDI and culture building is needed and can be most effective under current constraints of COVID
- Engage our leadership team in Intercultural Development Inventory assessment and training, then expand use organizationally.
- Examine the language we use in this work

Investing in Our People - Upcoming Actions

- Implement Manager Training
- Continue to develop and refine an Onboarding/Orientation process for new employees
- Assess and Share Compensation Structure
- Staff and Team Development
- Investing in infrastructure that will allow for expanded, intentional recruitment and retention efforts to help increase diversity of staff and leadership and become a more inclusive organization: Paycom
- Proactively communicate our priorities to seek and develop a diverse array of talent and interest
- Recruit faculty that are representative of the Master of Fine Arts student body.
- Focus on Board recruitment to represent the demographics of the Bay Area
- Provide outside support if no member of the faculty is able to adequately provide mentorship for BIPOC students.
- Provide scholarship resources to participate in our training programs.
- Continue to adjust training and education requirements that may create barriers to entry from job postings.
- Examine Board giving policy to ensure it allows for flexibility so candidates can be assessed for a multiplicity of reasons that can add to the diversity of perspective, experience and resource.
- Continue to update all job descriptions – to clarify roles and responsibilities
- Ensure consistent performance reviews

Employee Led Groups – Upcoming Actions

- Foster and support the EDI Committee, Sub-Committees, and Affinity Groups to offer a safe space for sharing, learning, processing and healing.
 - Staff EDI Sub Committee will resume with additional groups identified
 - Develop the work of the Staff EDI Subcommittees: Audience Inclusion and On-boarding & Retention
 - Relaunch Affinity Groups or small group work with an outside facilitator
 - EDI Manager will be helpful with development of these groups
- Resume regular Lunch & Learn sessions
- In addition to staff and volunteers, artists are invited to participate in employee-led groups when working with us.
- Budget to support the work of the committee is provided including compensating staff for their time
- Managers are expected to fully support participation
- Improve integration of the work of the three EDI Committees (staff, students and board)

Artistic Programs & Our Community – Upcoming Actions

- Ensure our programming and partnerships reflect and represent the diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area community
- We commit to center and honor the cultural specificity in the creation of BIPOC art. We will ensure the diversity of creative teams (including playwrights, directors, choreographers, dramaturgs, cultural consultants and designers) to better tell stories, making certain that actors do not carry the sole burden of representation.
- Season planning and new work commissioning ensure a focus on centering the work of BIPOC artists with a lens on uplifting and affirming stories.
- We will deepen and expand our relationship with the Indigenous community of the Bay Area, recognizing that a land acknowledgement needs to be in a healthy and ongoing context of such dialogue.
- We commit to affordable ticket price initiatives.
- We will formalize and make transparent the selection process for choosing work in our MFA program and will audit the reading list to interrogate classics and what is included.
- Focus on work to engage the Bay Area at large, and especially the Black, LatinX and Asian populations.
- Share resources on how the audience can further their learning from a production and take action to make a difference.

Artistic Programs & Our Community – Upcoming Actions, cont'd

- We will provide therapists or counselors to artists for a production that deals with racialized or sexualized experiences or trauma.
- We will compensate all artists for appearances at donor events, appearances and other activities that fall outside of their contracted role.
- We will not conduct 10 out of 12 rehearsals.
- Work to evolve to a five day week in the rehearsal room over the next several years.
- We will ensure our Wig and Makeup staff is skilled in working with BIPOC actors and/or is provided the training and consultation as needed.
- We will work to dismantle harmful casting practices and to decenter whiteness in casting choices.
- We affirm our commitment to become every more aware and engaged with the local theater community and commit to hire more local artists.

Intentionality & Accountability – Upcoming Actions

- Employee engagement survey to get feedback from all and will use to measure progress over time
- Continually examine systems and policies through the lens of dismantling racist structures
- Publish/share our EDI work – e.g. on website with plans, demographics, goals, and outcomes as they evolve
- Investment in dedicated EDI staff to guide and support these efforts.
- We commit to a budget to support this work.
- Increasing transparency across the organization through frequent company meetings, visibility into decision-making processes, and accountability for information sharing.
- Ample and safe reporting paths for staff, students, faculty and artists to bring concerns forward with clear understanding of response protocols and accountability.
- Roll out revised Mission and Values.
- We will expand our code of conduct covering anti-harassment to include anti-racism commitments to be shared regularly with staff, board and all companies of productions through onboarding, first rehearsals and other relevant meetings.
- We will post financials on our website.
- We will post our EDI Strategic Plan and Commitments on our website.
- Ensure all participants are included so that the organization moves forward as a whole.
- Define and implement specific ways to assess progress

Completed, Initiated and Ongoing Efforts

Cultural Competency

- Part of Ongoing Training Efforts
 - Cultural competency talk for front-of-house staff serving student matinees 2018
 - Customer Service training for all front-of-house staff to better welcome people to venues 2018
 - Mandatory Unconscious Bias training for all front of house managers and ushers, in partnership with Berkeley Rep 2019
 - Racial Equity Institute presentation about Systemic Racism for all A.C.T. 2019
 - Planned training on Micro Aggressions, Unconscious Bias, Intent vs Impact scheduled for April 2020 and canceled due to COVID, rescheduled November 2020
 - Planned training on Gender Inclusion in tandem with rehearsals for THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW in 2020, canceled due to COVID, rescheduled for January 2021
- Gender inclusion statement and initiative: communication to all stakeholders of the importance, and signage on all restrooms encouraging people to use the restroom they choose in terms of their gender identity 2018
- Gender pronoun awareness building (at meet and greets and other meetings) 2018
- Senior Leaders engaged in Intercultural Development Inventory assessment and training 2019
- Coaching provided to Conservatory leadership 2018
- Provide anti-racism resources to staff and students to do individual work. Started 2019

Cultural Competency, cont'd –

- Participation in Convenings Led by Other Organizations
 - Participated in the Theaters Advancing Social Change cohort brought together by Theater Bay Area and ArtEquity. 2019
 - Racial Equity in the Arts convening organized by SF Symphony. 2019
 - Z Space EDI series – a group of staff attended multiple convenings 2019
 - Moving Toward Equity and Justice Workshop led by the Hewlett Foundation. 2019
 - TCG Offerings: Annual Meeting, Fall Forum, Working groups 2020

Investing in Our People

- Search for top executives ensured that a diverse and qualified slate of candidates were considered and interviewed to move A.C.T.'s commitment to EDI forward. This included the Artistic Director, Executive Director, Director of HR, and the Associate Director of the Conservatory 2018
- Worked to ensure faculty are representative of the student body: five of seven openings between faculty and guest artists were filled with people of color. 2018
- Strong focus on diversity in creative teams of productions: playwrights, directors, designers. 2018
- Focus on recruiting a diverse and qualified slate of candidates in every hire 2019
- Create an Onboarding/Orientation process for new employees
- Assessed compensation structure to create the bones for a compensation strategy and to use to make short-term decisions 2019
- Invested in PayCom and launched 2020
- Ensure support for artists/staff handling challenging material in a production 2020

Employee Led Groups

- Peter Kuo and Amanda Williams have responsibility to liaise between staff and MFA EDI committees 2019
- Staff EDI Committee selected a leadership team and worked to redefine and relaunch the committee with representation from across the organization. 2018 to 2019
- Launched Affinity Groups in March 2019 – White Allies groups and BIPOC Groups met, at first weekly, and then biweekly; continue to assess how to make most useful
- Launched Lunch and Learns in March 2019
- Created subcommittees of the Staff EDI Committee 2019
- Have provided gathering spaces in response to traumatic events 2020

Artistic Programs & Our Community

- Programming continues to reflect and represent the diversity in the Bay Area community and beyond through what is on our stages and through commissioning and developing new work 2018
- Work through the Education & Community Programs department 2011
- House Rules of Play created to build awareness amongst audiences of how to create a respectful and inclusive environment for all to enjoy theater 2019
- #OpenYourLobbies 2020
- Share resources with our constituents and stakeholders 2020
- Introduced land acknowledgements into our programming and are collaborating with the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone to refine. 2020

Intentionality & Accountability

- The Board of Trustees formed an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee in February 2018
- A.C.T. hired Gwen Cochran Hadden as an EDI consultant to do an assessment of A.C.T.'s EDI work and of its organizational culture. 2018
- Added EDI as a standing agenda item to weekly Operating Committee meetings in Fall 2018.
- Introduced conversations with MFA students to select plays. 2018
- Job postings have been written to remove barriers from entry. 2018
- Adjusted language around programming as we learned of concerns beginning in 2018
- Listening tours by new leadership to gather information. 2018
- Building community internally – more frequent company meetings take place monthly and include more planned interaction such as small group breakouts. 2018
- Increasing transparency in the organization - sharing agendas of Operating Committee meetings; recordings of all company meetings. 2018
- Content Disclosures policy - adopted and shared in January 2019.
- Changed A CHRISTMAS CAROL compensation to MFA participants to ensure equity. 2019
- Issued ID's to staff, to wear or show, for admission to facilities and to receive company benefits. 2018
- We have clarified and simplified reporting paths for anyone affiliated with the theater to report concerns or complaints – shared verbally in October 2018.
- Launched an anonymous reporting method in February 2019.

Intentionality & Accountability, cont'd

- Gwen Cochran Hadden consulted in March 2019 to ensure all concerns around EDI have been raised; offer additional recommendations to support people of color at A.C.T. and to establish a vision and expectations around EDI outcomes.
- Embark on an inclusive strategic planning process to provide clarity on priorities, our mission, values, programs and how they connect, etc. 2019
- Board stated EDI as a priority focus from 2018 to-date
- Update job descriptions as roles change or are replaced 2019
- Implement performance reviews across the organization 2019



Appendix

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Demographics – Race and Ethnicity

	All Artists		Staff		Senior Leadership Team		Board of Trustees		MFA Students		Bay Area Census	
	BIPOC	White	BIPOC	White	BIPOC	White	BIPOC	White	BIPOC	White	BIPOC	White
Current A.C.T.	46.3%	53.7%	27.4%	72.6%	41.7%	58.3%	22.5%	77.5%	58.3%	41.7%	57.6%	42.4%
FY20	55.9%	44.1%	25.4%	74.6%	27.3%	72.7%	20.8%	79.2%	55.6%	44.4%		
FY19	43.0%	57.0%	18.6%	81.4%	18.2%	81.8%	20.8%	79.2%	51.4%	48.6%		
FY18	31.4%	68.6%	22.2%	77.8%	27.3%	72.7%			45.9%	54.1%		
FY17	31.6%	68.4%	24.5%	75.5%	37.5%	62.5%			48.6%	51.4%		