

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

P.O. Box 95, New London, CT 06320 | (860) 448-5135 | info@CultureSECT.org | www.CultureSECT.org

Board Diversity Equity & Inclusion Plan September 2019

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Our History

Until 2012, Southeastern Connecticut was the only region in the state without a Designated Regional Service Organization (DRSO) to support the CT Office of the Arts in the Department of Economic and Community Development to organize and advocate for the creative sector.

In the fall of 2012, a group of more than 50 regional business, arts, tourism, government, and education leaders conducted cultural assessments in both the greater New London and greater Norwich areas. These studies identified the region's assets and potential, and clearly demonstrated the need for strategic collaboration. Based on the assessments, a group of leaders volunteered to serve as a Transition Team to file for nonprofit status, create a temporary website, begin to build a cultural sector database, and receive official state designation as a DRSO. In November of 2013, a founding Board of Directors was established. An executive director was hired in January of 2014.

Now, after five years of operations, the Cultural Coalition has accomplished much of the early vision and goals, and has remained the DRSO for our region. The Cultural Coalition serves as the “voice” of the cultural sector and the liaison between the cultural sector and leadership entities invested in regional revitalization—municipal, community, business, education, tribal, military, and tourism sectors—our independent nonprofit coalition provides core services to connect, strengthen, and advocate for the cultural community.

Supporting the belief that culture is a catalyst for place making, the coalition seeks to play a creative, innovative role fostering partnerships among cultural sector assets and other regional initiatives seeking to advance regional identity, and attract and retain businesses, residents, and visitors.

From professional development and workshops to support the creative sector industry to advocacy and economic development projects in municipalities, the Cultural Coalition serves more than 500 registered partners. Our Partners are representatives who live, work and support the arts, cultural and creative sector in southeastern CT. From sole proprietors, artists and small volunteer-run organizations, to professionally staffed museums, tourist attractions and arts centers, the Cultural Coalition includes a diverse cross section of nonprofit and for-profit individuals, businesses, groups and organizations.

More than 40% of our partners, over 200, are nonprofit organizations.

The Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition fosters region-wide economic growth in New London County by optimizing existing and new arts and cultural activities to assure that cultural sector and creative business assets are central to the vitality of the region.

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Our Challenge

In general, arts & cultural nonprofit organizations in our region do not have boards that reflect the communities that they serve. In 2018, in collaboration with the Community Foundation of Eastern CT, the Cultural Coalition hosted *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: A Regional Call to Action* at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center with more than 60 organizations attending and 90 attendees. Engaging with nonprofits to learn about becoming more diverse and inclusive, and providing them with tools and resources to do so, is part of our regional call to action.

Race and Ethnicity Demographics in Our Region

One-fifth of the population of New London County is non-white, and in our two anchor cities, Norwich and New London, at least 50% of the population is non-white.

City of New London - The ethnic composition of the population of New London, CT is composed of:

49.2% White 27.6% Hispanic 17.1% Black 2.2% Asian 2.3% Mixed .5% Other

City of Norwich - The ethnic composition of the population of Norwich, CT is composed of:

64.8% White 10.0% Hispanic 11.9% Black 7.4% Asian 5.0% Mixed .8% Other

New London County - The ethnic composition of the population of New London County, CT is composed of:

77.7% White 8.5% Hispanic 5.6% Black 4.3% Asian 3.3% Mixed

Source: *StatisticalAtlas.com (U.S. Census Bureau)*

Fall 2018 Regional Nonprofit Survey Results

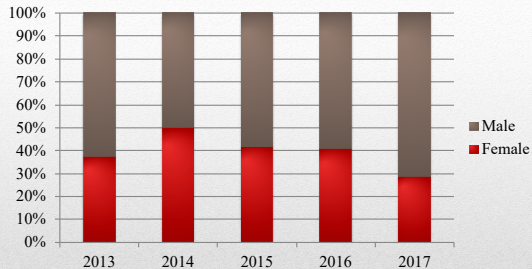
As part of the DEI workshop, we surveyed attending nonprofits (51 of 63 organizations responded with a total of 526 board members collectively) showed that:

- 83% to 92% of all organizations have less than 25% Black, Hispanic, American Indian or Asian board members
- 86% of boards have less than 25% members under age 30
- 80% to 92% of all organizations have less than 25% Black, Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian staff

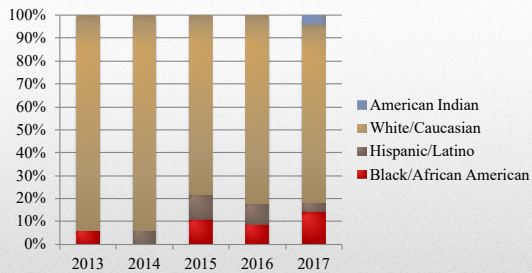
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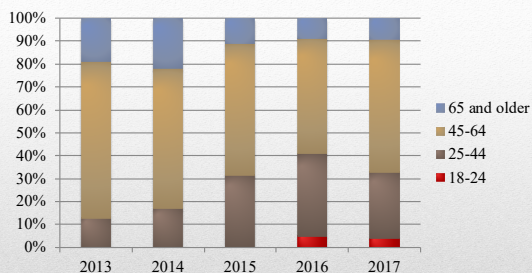
The Cultural Coalition has also struggled with diversity on our own board:



**Board Demographics-
GENDER**



**Board Demographics-
ETHNICITY**



Board Demographics-AGE

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Our Role

As an umbrella organization serving nonprofits, we have learned that our role is not only to provide a model for improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), but to provide the tools, resources and motivation to make change in our sector and region.

Our Organizational Definitions

Diversity - We understand that each individual is unique and we explore these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment so all may thrive in terms of performance, motivation, communication and inclusion.

Equity - We value the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for everyone by creating access to the opportunities and the resources needed to thrive, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion - We create environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed and valued and are fully integrated into the cultural dynamics, leadership, and decision-making structures of the organization.

Our Value Proposition

Mission Central Case Statement - Culture is reflected in arts, music, dance and creative expression, and unites people and communities. Diversity, equity and inclusion create an authentic **coalition** - the coalescing of distinct cultures - united through arts, heritage and creativity. By optimizing existing and new arts and cultural activities in our region, the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition ensures the well-being and economic prosperity of our partners, and by extension, our communities in the region.

Demographics Centered Case Statement - Arts and culture transcend race, age, religion, gender, and ethnicity. By incorporating, valuing and elevating DEI within our own organization, the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition will be able to authentically engage, understand and confidently represent the diverse community that lives in Southeastern CT.

Business Critical Case Statement - Our diverse partners are our lifeblood. For the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition to thrive, we must increase our outreach, engagement and support to not only reflect all cultures in our community, but to represent their interests and broaden community impact. We must build trust and provide economic value to our partners. Only with a broad base of support will we enhance our own sustainability.

Equity Centered Case Statement - Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of disparities within our community. The Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition will strive to open lanes of access to funding, provide equal opportunities in our programs and services, and ensure accessibility to current and future partners. Our commitment to equity is reflected in governance, operations, policies and practices.

Our Vision and Commitment

The Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition seeks to authentically represent the region we serve. As an umbrella organization serving hundreds of businesses, including small and large nonprofits, we are committed to being a role model for our partners.

We believe diversity, equity and inclusion begins with the board in the board room, requires on-going education, and informs a more thoughtful decision-making process, which spurs collaboration and a culture of inclusivity. Diversity, equity and inclusion extends to staff, donors, volunteers, partners, and program participants. We acknowledge that diversity, equity and inclusion are important areas for growth.

We are committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion evident in our organizational structure, policies, goals, programs and activities, and by doing so, we will be able to confidently and proudly serve as our region's *cultural coalition*.

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SECTION 2 – GOALS, ACTIONS & TIMELINES

LEADERSHIP GOAL: Be a leader in DEI by setting an example (via Board Action Plan for DEI) to catalyze change in the region.

Intervention #1:

Obtain the commitment that DEI is a key priority for SCCC.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
1.1 Equity team to educate and respond to Board regarding DEI topics	Equity Team	Ongoing
1.2 Assess the commitment of current Board members	Equity Team	September Board Commitment Form questions following presentation Action Plan (part of adoption of action plan) Assess individual and organizational cultural competency Integrate DEI questions in board and board member evaluations in January (distributed in Dec and presented in January) Becomes part of annual board commitment form for organization (annual meeting in June)
1.3 Assess DEI in organizational programs, operations and activities	Staff	July 2019 - part of internal organizational assessment. DEI committee to review annually

Evaluation Tool: Board and individual cultural competency data and information from the forms submitted and from surveys completed. Organization assessment review.

Intervention #2: Make DEI actions permanent through governance/bylaws.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
2.1 Include DEI on board meeting agenda - on-going	ED	On-going - Direct communication between Andrea and ED for specific topics on agenda and/or materials to distribute in board packet

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2.2 Communicate the priority to potential/incoming Board members and the onboarding orientation process	Chair of Governance	On-going - At least one Equity Team member will be at at least one meeting with all potential new board members Annual meeting 6/28 Add a one-pager to board information & expectations packet
2.3 Integrate DEI into committee meetings and agendas	Committee Chairs	By December 2019 - Equity will deliver guidelines and tip to integrate DEI into committee meeting and agendas January 2020- Begin in committees
2.4 Establish DEI Committee and its chart of work	Governance and ED	Fall 2019

Evaluation Tool: DEI one-pager of Board information and expectations product; Equity Team to monitor and review agendas for all committees twice a year; create DEI dashboard for organization. Create measurements that include qualitative (i.e. testimonials & impact stories) as well as quantitative data for a triangulation of data.

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CULTURE GOAL: Create a culturally inclusive Board environment where diverse perspectives are welcomed and heard.

Intervention #1: Develop (and maintain) an overview of the diversity that exists within the Board (incl. various experiences, interests, and the lens that each brings to the table).

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
1.1 Board icebreaker activities to introduce DEI and individual perspectives we bring (tool/wheel chart)	ED	June - icebreaker to DEI introduce each other (5 minutes 1:1 and introduce partner to board)
1.2 Board activity to identify perspectives we bring (tool/wheel chart)	ED Andrea	Sept -Distribute Social Identity Wheel to board members - self assessment of cultural competency in board packet Sept - Discussion item on agenda about the wheel
1.3 Share Board matrix and diversity makeup	Equity Team	January- board evaluation presentation

Evaluation Tool: Equity Team review the discussions that took place at board meetings; Equity Team to review the board matrix and trends via evaluation results over time. Standardize the process of data collection - self-assessment data (values, priorities, etc). Create a pipeline of actions (instilling new procedures, annual measurements, changes over time, etc).

Intervention #2: Establish an equitable process for the Board to resolve conflicts that emerge around race, culture, ethnicity, gender or other diversity related issues.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
2.1 Create an SCCC Ground Rules - Review example tool (Meeting Ground Rules-WB example), discussion of on-going mindfulness	Equity Team	Oct-Nov
2.2 Review ground rules regularly (before each meeting) and adjust accordingly	Chairs	Oct-Nov

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2.3 Establish the Equity Comm or Comm Chair as point person	Equity Team	Part 2020-2025 (safe space for reporting DEI missteps, addressing issues, and developing recommendations)
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Evaluation Tool: Equity Team provides on-going evaluation and report out in summary to board at annual meeting

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RECRUITMENT GOAL: Board actively recruits and retains members that reflect the existing and changing demographics of our communities and the populations we serve. By 2025, the board is made up of at least 40% non-whites with acknowledgement of other types of diversity, including age, geography, sexual orientation, etc.

Intervention #1: Identify/deploy Board members to explore/engage non-traditional sources for Board members.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
1.1 Develop list of communities we represent	Board	Oct - Nov board meeting agenda item to gather feedback
1.2 Assess current board members engagement with under-represented communities	ED Equity Team	Nov- Dec Distribute communication to gather information about board members' engagement with those communities identified Review responses and summarize
1.3 Board members prioritize and select engagement areas with under-represented communities	Board	January board meeting

Evaluation Tool: Create a board matrix with list and status of engagement to measure meaningful outreach. Focus on the *responses* from individuals, organizations and communities to our board members, rather than on the number and type of outreach activities.

Intervention #2: Expand Board member pipeline (board, advisory council) to include Junior Board.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
2.1 Discuss Junior Board oversight and cultivation of talent/mentors	Equity and Governance	Start in FY 2020-21
2.2 Governance/Bylaws adjusted to include this level (incl. recruitment process, job description)	Governance	Start in FY 2020-21

Evaluation Tool: Bylaws and junior board

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COMMUNICATION GOAL: Board communication is culturally inclusive.

Intervention #1: Openly discuss race, culture, gender, age diversity in the Boardroom and extend to communication about all programs and activities.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
1.1 Add diversity discussion as an agenda item/question at every board meeting to increase awareness	ED	Began May 2019, on-going
1.2 Commitment by Board/staff to view whole organization (activities/operations/program) through DEI lens	Equity Team	September/Oct Equity to report out at board of internal DEI assessment
1.3 DEI vision section in our 2020-2025 plan	Equity Team and ED	By end of 2019
1.4 Add a "Commitment to DEI" section in monthly newsletter (our programs, sharing resources, partners to highlight, etc.)	ED	August 1 newsletter

Evaluation Tool: Annual review by Equity team of all agenda items/topics in board meetings, committee meetings, newsletters, and assessment report; Click throughs to DEI section of newsletter.

Intervention #2: Show appreciation for and recognize board members who advance DEI mission.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
2.1 Share testimonials of how Board members are making a difference in advancing DEI in the organization (reporting on non-traditional event attendance, engagements, community learning)	Equity Team	Sept board meeting - Include positive stories during DEI report at every board meeting

Evaluation Tool: Meeting minutes - board self-assessment survey

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POLICY GOAL: Create and implement policies that help the Board and organization to become culturally inclusive and advance equity.

Intervention #1: Create the planning framework to inform, develop and assess DEI within organization.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
1.1 Create the action plan	Equity Team	Completed by September
1.2 Create an implementation tool for the board, committees and staff with one-time and on-going differentiation	Equity Team	Completed by January 2020

Evaluation Tool: Action plan and implementation tool distribution and feedback from both

Intervention #2: Develop Statement on DEI

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
2.1 Create a written statement on DEI (modeled after AFTA)	ED and Equity Team	End of 2019, part of 2020-2025 plan
2.2 Distribute written statement (printable, downloaded, website)	ED	Sometime in 2020

Evaluation Tool: Create an annual tool to update and review impact

Intervention #3: Help develop and maintain annual board training with DEI focus.

Actions:	Who is responsible:	Timeline:
3.1 Participate in planning process for regional, collaborative annual board training	Capacity Building Collaborative (SCCC is a participant)	As developed

Evaluation Tool: Board self-assessment survey

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CONCLUSION

This process and the work conducted by our equity team signals the beginning of structural change in our organization. We understand that change takes time and continual education, discussion and practice. We know we will encounter resistance, challenges and hard conversations, but believe in on-going education, meaningful discussion and intentional practices. We are committed to inspiring ourselves and others as we continue this vital journey.

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Resource Information

Our DEI Journey

2014-2017 - Rising Tide Series of information gathering roundtables provided a resounding need for increased diversity at the board level, particularly around ethnicity and age.

2018 - Co-hosted DEI Workshop Part 1 with Community Foundation of Eastern CT at Eugene O'Neill Theater Center

2018 - Co-hosted DEI Workshop Part 2 with Community Foundation of Eastern CT at Lyman Allyn Art Museum

2018 - At a board meeting, SCCC discussed and decided to pursue the DEI Cohort opportunity (required \$500 investment, staff and board member time, and a commitment to creating long-term strategy)

2019 - SCCC applied & accepted to become part of DEI Cohort facilitated by Minority Inclusion Project - 6 month learning module with 3 other nonprofits to educate ourselves and our board, create an action plan culminating in a public presentation.

- 4 Equity Team members - 2 board & 2 staff
- Monthly and sometimes bi-monthly Equity Team meetings
- Multiple conference calls, in-person meetings and a couple long (2-3 hour) working sessions
- Began to introduce and gauge reception of board to DEI work through discussion at board meetings

DEI Resources for other nonprofits to utilize are available on our website

DEI commitment & information is in every monthly newsletter

Board Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan, which includes our Action Plan for SCCC is available on our website