

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Access Policy
Adopted by PHMC on December 5, 2018

Background

Diversity, inclusion, equity, and access are critical elements to responsible stewardship, to the engagement of visitors, and to the creation of environments where all people feel valued. Traditionally, history and art institutions (and cultural institutions in general) have presented biased or limited versions of history. Often these biases have been reflected in the development of these institutions, ranging from how collections have been acquired and curated to how stories have been interpreted. In some cases, expressions of biases and stereotypes have compromised the environment for staff from marginalized communities.

Institutions nationally recognize that addressing diversity, equity, inclusion and access is imperative. This is important not only to create an inclusive environment both in its inward and outward expressions, but to gain trust among those who have typically been disenfranchised (for example, people with varying gender preferences or identification, people of color, people with physical challenges or lower-income constituents.)

Pennsylvania is a large state with strong geographic features that divide the commonwealth into regions. The physical nature of the state has impacted the arrangement of cultural groupings and varying clustered demographics within the state, particularly in terms of ethnicity, race, socio-economics, and gender identity. Because of this, diversity within the Commonwealth is reflected in different ways depending on the surrounding region and cannot be viewed with one lens.

As PHMC's mission and operations are state-wide in scope, the agency must reflect and serve its many constituencies. The needs, challenges, and opportunities to realize the PHMC mission to address diversity, equity, inclusion and access in a complete way requires multiple levels of effort. PHMC will strengthen its mission and vision and its ability to serve all the people of Pennsylvania by addressing issues of diversity with a new and deliberate intention, one that is tailored to the regional variations of populations that occur across the state. All of PHMC's policies must accommodate the varied communities and populations represented throughout the Commonwealth.

Commitment

PHMC is committed to representing and reflecting the experiences of the people and communities it serves. To underscore this commitment, there is an agency-wide working group dedicated to addressing diversity, equity, inclusion and access as an agency-wide effort. The working group will establish best practices and a process for ongoing analysis and the establishment of initiatives to reach the diverse range of Pennsylvanians who engage with PHMC as staff, volunteers, and visitors.

Goals

- PHMC will foster an agency environment that is sensitive to diverse groups of people with varied needs and unique situations.
- All visitors to PHMC's facilities and who participate in its programming will feel welcome, and they will be exposed to an inclusive view of history.

- Staff, volunteers, interns and partners will feel respected, valued, visible and integral to the operation. Each individual will trust that his or her voice can be heard, particularly when it comes to the ongoing improvement of the quality of the visitor experience and the work culture.
- Commissioners and all staff will strive toward becoming culturally competent in order to serve as role models for the diversity, equity, inclusion, and access standards.
- Collections policies and procedures will promote diversity, equity, inclusion and access, thus ensuring that a truly representative history of the Commonwealth is reflected.
- Ongoing initiatives will address the specifics of diversity.
- Through procedures, PHMC will establish a system of measurement, accountability, and enforcement to ensure that diversity initiatives are successful by being authentic, credible, and ongoing in their implementation.
- PHMC will strive with intentionality to embed a tone of inclusiveness in its policies and procedures. Ongoing efforts will be designed to foster equity, inclusion and access thus becoming the standard way of doing business in all aspects of agency work.

Policy Statement

Ethics and Standards

PHMC Commissioners, staff, volunteers and interns will act in accordance with the ethics, standards and best practices to support an experience of diversity, equity, inclusion and access.

Community and Public Engagement

PHMC will establish a framework for regular and ongoing engagement with the varied communities of the Commonwealth, appreciating that while diversity means different things in different locations, inclusiveness, equity and access must be the common goal for all of PHMC.

Familiarization with what Diversity Means at Varied Locations

PHMC Commissioners, leadership, board members, and support organizations' leadership will be familiar with the nuances of their surrounding communities in order to effectively lead the implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion and access initiatives.

The Interpretive Experience

PHMC will ensure that all interpretive experiences reflect a rich and diverse history. History will reflect and respect all populations, including those that were indigenous to the region.

Ideas and interpretation will be based on principles of sound scholarship. Recognizing that scholarship has often excluded the histories of diverse groups, research required to develop an expanded narrative will be conducted as part of new interpretation initiatives, and historians with culturally specific expertise will be engaged when necessary.

Collections

PHMC's collections will reflect the diverse history of the Commonwealth. Curatorial practices and acquisitions will be informed by an inclusive perspective, with the varied viewpoints of the Commonwealth's diverse populations supported by sound scholarship and expanded research.

Marketing & Communications

PHMC will ensure that its materials and messaging are sensitized and inclusive in tone, content and approach. PHMC's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access will be included in the overarching messaging.

Diversity Training

A unified, consistent, and ongoing diversity training process and framework is critical to effecting change. PHMC will research, develop, and implement a training plan to address diversity.

Hiring Practices

PHMC supports the expansion of hiring opportunities to a broader range of candidates in order to diversify its staff. These practices will be within Commonwealth regulations and procedures.

Definitions

The following definitions are central to the policies that have been set forth for PHMC:

Diversity

Diversity is a core value. It is an inclusive concept encompassing, without limitation, race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation or identity; religion, nationality, age, economic class, educational level, language, physical, mobility and ability, geography, and marital and parental status. The state of being diverse means having the broadest possible representation of individuals, experiences, and perspectives in all-encompassing terms.

Equity

Equity ensures that a level playing field is created for individuals or groups according to their respective needs, which may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the authentic effort to ensure that people of varying abilities and experiences can fully participate in all aspects of agency work and feel valued. Inclusion results in an organization's ability to attract, retain, accommodate, and involve a range of diverse people who are valued, respected, and accepted.

Access

Access is the ability for the diverse populations served by PHMC to engage with the agency in a meaningful way. Providing access to all requires PHMC to cultivate attitudes, behaviors, and procedures that promote equity and diversity and that foster inclusion.