

Flushing Town Hall

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan

We are pleased to participate in this important effort on the part of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs to foster greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cultural sector in NYC.

At Flushing Town Hall, we believe that all arts and cultural traditions from around the globe deserve an substantive place in the cultural sector of New York City. For too long, the voices of many of the world's peoples have been excluded from the "arts and culture" presented in the US. Still today, European and Euro-American cultural programming dominates NYC. We strive to do our part to offer a more balanced environment that better represents the cultural diversity of NYC.

HISTORY

Our mission for the past 40 years has been to provide a stage for the extraordinary diversity of culture we find among our global neighbors here in Queens, and across the city. We have always sought to create avenues for "intercultural exchange" (as we put it in 1979), and we continue to look for new ways to welcome people from around the globe to appreciate each other's rich and beautiful traditions.

Our commitment to presenting the cultural expressions of diverse peoples, along with our location in the most diverse county in the U.S., has already attracted a diverse staff and board, and has developed in us the ability to understand and empathize more deeply with people from a wide range of backgrounds. Working with diverse artists, programs, and staff helps organically to develop peoples' understanding of each other – and so we pledge to strengthen our commitment to this mission, as the foundation for all efforts at fostering greater diversity, equity, and inclusion at Flushing Town Hall, and in the communities we serve.

Having a venue dedicated to global art forms is also crucial to increasing equitable representation within the overall cultural fabric of NYC, and provides opportunities for artists, cultural practitioners, and audiences that may not currently exist at other venues – as well as for staff and board who want to work in and support this type of environment. We believe that by constantly elevating under-represented cultural traditions and artists, we can contribute to leading the cultural sector in NYC toward greater equity and inclusivity.

MISSION

The mission of Flushing Town Hall is to present multi-disciplinary global arts that engage and educate the global communities of Queens, New York and New York City, New York, in order to foster mutual appreciation. As advocates of arts equity since 1979, we support local, immigrant, national, and

international artists, developing partnerships and collaborations that enhance our efforts. As a member of New York City's Cultural Institutions Group (CIG), we serve as stewards of Flushing Town Hall, restoring, managing and programming the historic 1862 landmark on behalf of the City of New York.

FTH celebrates the history of Queens as the home of Jazz, by presenting the finest in Jazz performance. We are committed to arts education and hands-on learning, for the arts-curious, arts enthusiasts, and professional artists. We serve one of the most diverse communities in the world, and strive to uphold the legacy of inclusiveness that has defined our community since the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

—Drafted in consultation with the Matinecock Tribe of Queens/Long Island—

Here at Flushing Town Hall, our mission slogan is -- "Global Arts for a Global Community"; this, our global community, began with the first people of Queens.

And so we acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Matinecock People, one of the original tribes of New York, and the first people of Flushing, Queens, who continue to live and work on this land to this day. And we honor their elders who have stewarded this land throughout generations.

Over 156 years ago, the local leaders of Flushing built Flushing Town Hall and we are honored to be stewards of this beautiful building that is the artistic home to our diverse community.

VISION

At Flushing Town Hall, our plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, is rooted in the following five commitments:

- **We are committed to our mission and programming vision** to present "Global Arts for a Global Community" and "Global Arts for Global Kids." This mission contributes to increasing the diversity, equity, and inclusivity of the cultural sector in NYC, and forms the basis for efforts to foster greater DEI within our staff, board, and operations at Flushing Town Hall. We are committed to serving the diverse communities of Queens and NYC with culturally-relevant programming, and we are committed to supporting diverse artists, cultural producers, and audiences without whom our work would not be possible.
- **We are committed to our survival.** Because our mission gives a greater voice to under-represented communities, our survival is important within broader efforts at fostering DEI within New York City. As a mid-sized organization serving lower-income communities in NYC, without an endowment, and without major donors on the scale of the larger cultural institutions in NYC, our survival is at risk and requires constant dedication and attention. Without significant additional resources, we do not have the capacity to undertake major new initiatives and policy interventions that would derail or distract us from fulfilling our mission and implementing our programs.
- **We are committed to our staff.** We have a diverse staff experienced in working with people from different communities – many of whom are already experts in cultural competency, and all of whom are dedicated to our mission to provide a platform for diverse cultural work. At the same time, due to our limited budget, staff are underpaid compared to those doing equivalent work at larger institutions. So while we do not have the resources to correct systemic inequities citywide, we are committed to doing everything we can toward staff retention, including providing a variety of non-cash incentives and maintaining and improving clear communication and mechanisms for staff input and

feedback at all levels. That also means not imposing additional administrative burdens upon employees already stretched thin by existing responsibilities – and using a light and gradual touch when selecting and phasing in new procedures around DEI.

- **We are committed to growing and expanding our board of directors and other bases of support.** Flushing Town Hall’s board has significant room for expansion and diversification, which must be the basis for a broader expansion of resources. We have several goals: increasing the number of board members and overall giving capacity; improving and restoring the ethnic diversity of the board, which, while it currently includes several Chinese and Chinese-American trustees, does not include representation from several of the other communities we serve (in the recent past we have had Korean and African-American board members); welcoming artists and other community members onto the board who may not have large giving capacity, but who can expand our base of support in other ways.
- **We are committed to exploring more avenues for increasing DEI at our institution as our resources grow.** We believe that our citywide DEI impact will be stronger if we focus on achieving more focused goals that are within our capacity and expertise: continuing to insure that we remain an institution inclusive of the diversity of global cultural expression. We also recognize the need to be more inclusive across other types of diversity, and will seek the resources necessary to increase our capacity to do so. In the case of physically disabled people, we need major infrastructure and technology investments in order to become more fully accessible, especially to potential employees and board members. Our Development and HR capacities are also limited on the staff level, and finding the resources to enable us to have dedicated Development and HR staff will enable us to expand our DEI commitments further. We are committed to looking beyond the horizon of our current resources, toward continual improvements in DEI as we grow.

PROCESS

The process of developing this DEI plan for Flushing Town Hall (FTH) was undertaken between October 2018-February 2019. Two meetings with all staff of Flushing Town Hall were held in October 2018, based on the evaluation framework provided by the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA). Notes on the meeting were provided to the consultants retained by DCLA for the purpose of assisting the Queens CIG institutions (the team of Manley, Bishop & Gonzales), who held a series of conversations with staff leadership (Executive & Artistic Director Ellen Kodadek and Deputy Director Sami Abu Shumays).

At the suggestion of FTH staff leadership, the consultants then met with staff without either Kodadek or Abu Shumays present, to allow for more staff voices to be heard. On the basis of this meeting, the notes from prior meetings, follow-up conversations with staff leadership, and conversations with other Queens CIGs, Manley, Bishop & Gonzales then provided FTH with a template for the DEI plan with detailed recommendations of tactics and strategies.

Deputy Director Abu Shumays then compiled staff and consultant recommendations into a single document, organized around institutional priorities and capacities. He submitted the rough draft to volunteers from the Staff and Board, as well as to the consulting team, for further feedback in late January 2019; The draft completed February 2019, incorporates that input. A few minor changes were made between February and April 2019, and the draft plan was approved by the executive committee on 4/10/19.

STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Flushing Town Hall's DEI plan is categorized into strategies and tactics around five main areas:

- Programming & Mission
- Hiring & Recruitment
- Retention & Promotion
- Diverse & Equitable Leadership
- Inclusive Organizational Culture

Within each of the main categories, we have highlighted primary goals and indicators, as well as a series of tactics divided into: those already practiced by the organization that we feel important to maintain, new tactics and approaches that we believe can be accomplished in the next 1-3 years, and new tactics that we believe would deepen our DEI commitments, but which are dependent upon increased resources not available at the present time.

I. Programming & Mission

The tactics in this section are centered on mission and programming, however they will also serve to foster a more inclusive organizational culture.

Goals:

- Maintain the organizational commitment to our mission and to the same standard of high-quality, diverse programming that we have been recognized for.
- Seek resources to enable increased access and further diversification of programs.

Indicators:

- Programs continue with comparable levels of diversity as at present
- Audiences diversify further, and begin to include more types of diversity.

Institutional commitments to maintain:

- The practice of land acknowledgement (began summer-fall 2018) and the expanding collaborative relationship with the Matinecock tribe of Long Island.
- Programs must continue to reflect the diversity of the community: Our location, Queens, is one of the most diverse locations on the planet and we must continue to offer programs relevant to a wide cross section of residents. Materials are offered in a variety of languages to accommodate employees, audiences and artists.
- Education & Family Programs must continue to reflect the same commitment to presenting diverse cultural traditions by master tradition bearers, as well as high-quality international work for school and family audiences, and must remain a central component of our overall mission.
- Collaboration with numerous community-based organization partners for programs and audiences has been consistently successful in increasing the diversity of programs and expanding our reach into communities; this must continue as a dominant strategy.
- Retain the practice of offering space grants for artists and community organizations. These space grants provide free space to artists for the development/creation of new work. In addition to diversifying our programming, this practice makes FTH a more inclusive and welcoming organization to the arts community. In 2017, we donated approximately \$60,000 worth of free space, and in 2018 we donated

approximately \$30,000 worth of free space; while the amounts will vary based on demand, we retain the commitment to making space available at comparable levels.

- Free & Low Cost programs: we maintain accessibility to our local community, which includes low-income populations and a high percentage of students living below the poverty line, by offering many programs at very low cost (most ticket prices are under \$20, with many in the range of \$10-\$18, and discounts for members, seniors and students) or for free; All programs should remain free to teens aged 13-19, a practice begun in January 2017.

Policies and procedures to implement within 1-3 years:

- Be strategic about program growth, building on our current strengths: Jazz, Chinese, Korean & Latinx programming, cross-cultural programming and work for young audiences, to continue to expand audiences; and continue to expand and diversify these programs with strategic goals such as the expansion of Native American and South Asian programs. (1-3 yrs)
- In tandem with programmatic growth, continue to modestly expand marketing resources, maintaining a balance between cross-audience marketing, target marketing, and institutional branding (e.g. evaluate the new relationship with World Music PR Firm “Rock Paper Scissors”) (1-3 yrs)**
 - Expand multi-lingual outreach and advertise in a wider cross-section of community based publications including community news and foreign language papers (1-3 yrs)**

Long Term Goals dependent on increased resources:

- Significantly expand marketing resources & outreach to more communities.
 - Develop a multi-lingual website and consistent multi-lingual brochures and flyers.
 - Add more community outreach staff.
- Expand disability access for programs, by exploring capital projects, technology & software accommodations, increased staff capacity, and staff trainings, to make the space and organization accessible to a wider spectrum of disability. Current capital projects and funding requests to DCLA which will enhance disability access include the elevator and restroom upgrades. **
- Develop new arts education and family programs such as: dedicated programs for teens; curation of programs by young people; intergenerational programs; family focus groups to source more program ideas; develop training for parents as arts partners.
- Create initiatives to support endangered languages and cultural practices in collaboration with local communities, such as the Matinecock and Garifuna communities with whom we have existing relationships; expand where feasible in collaboration with other communities and organizations (such as Citylore with whom we have partnered previously).
- Offer stipends to Space Grant artists.

*** note that these are also “Inclusive Organizational Culture” goals for section V.*

II. Hiring & Recruitment

Goals:

- Ensure a diverse candidate pool for hiring that is reflective of the constituents/communities we serve.
- Develop a standardized protocol for hiring and recruitment for the organization to ensure application process is open and equally accessible to all.
- Locate alternative resources to publicize job opportunities to different pools of potential applicants.

Indicators:

- Policies have been reviewed and revised on the established timeline.
- Candidate pool is demonstrably more diverse.

Institutional commitments to maintain:

- FTH has provided work visa support for numerous employees, we will continue to do so.
- Hiring policies to retain:
 - Listing of salary & benefits in job descriptions; explain position & requirements thoroughly; practice of “interview assignment,” which helps candidates understand the job and demonstrate capability; valuing of experience as much as (or more than) credentials; allowing for on-the-job learning

Policies and procedures to implement within 1-3 years:

- Create a standardized job description ("JD") which avoids gendered and other exclusionary language; is task/outcome oriented; is explicit about the extent of on-the-job learning; is explicit about timelines of hiring process, and timelines for work & what work day looks like; and includes an organizational DEI statement. *(1 yr)*
- Review all aspects of hiring and recruitment process to align with DEI plan. *(1-3 yrs)*
- Draft a hiring and recruitment policy and/or procedure to memorialize existing practices and/or enhance existing practices. *(1 yr)*
- Create and use a "checklist" of outlets with which to share job postings, including organizations/outlets with reach into currently underrepresented groups. Outreach to some outlets may depend on increased resources (see below) *(3 yrs)*
- Consult with The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) and the NYC Commission on Human Rights on ways to increase accessibility for a disabled workforce. Where trainings are available for free from MOPD and the Commission on Human Rights, offer trainings to staff and board. *(1-3 yrs)*

Long Term Goals dependent on increased resources:

- Train staff involved in the hiring process in implicit bias.
- Add physical accommodations & staff trainings necessary to welcome a disabled work force.
- Dependent on meeting goals (see sections I. and V.) to develop greater physical accessibility to individuals with various kinds of disability: expand outreach to the disabled community for hiring; partner with organizations to develop a more diverse pipeline; Include multiple ways to apply and interview for a position both in the posting itself and in communications with the outreach partners (e.g. phone applications and interviews).

III. Retention & Promotion

Goals:

- FTH has limited opportunities for staff advancement, as a small organization without multiple levels or positions available; salary levels are lower compared with larger organizations; **our primary goal is to maximize retention under these conditions.**
- Maintain open communication between managers and staff on performance, goals, and professional development.
- Foster professional development that is open and accessible to all;
- Develop pathways to leadership that fosters the growth of staff in the organization with a particular focus on those staff who come from underrepresented communities.

Indicators:

- Staff are retained by the organization over the long-term
- Increased participation in professional development activities by staff
- Internal communication is robust so that staff feel heard and included
- Staff are supported in career advancement even outside the organization

Institutional commitments to maintain:

- Gender-neutral language throughout all benefits materials.
- Non-cash incentives to supplement salary (e.g. additional vacation days)
- Participation in professional development & conference attendance, by sharing opportunities widely and covering costs for staff when possible
- The 'open door' policy of senior leadership to hear and respond to needs that are not otherwise articulated in employee handbook.
- The PTO policy that offers a "Floating Holiday," so as to value all religious/cultural holidays equally and not inadvertently penalize or reward a particular religion or belief system.
- Time off with pay during winter break
- Flexible hours for part-time and full-time staff
- Partial coverage of health-insurance premiums and off-plan stipends for full-time staff, such that staff contribution levels do not increase.

Policies and procedures to implement within 1-3 years:

- Institute the new NYC and NY State-mandated Sexual Harassment policies (begun already, with trainings to commence Spring 2019). *(1 yr)*
- Review all HR policies including the staff handbook, reporting structures, processes to request accommodations, sexual harassment reporting procedures, complaint reporting procedures, and trainings to ensure appropriate alignment with DEI goals. *(3 yrs)*
- Review compensation, in order to set goals for more equitable compensation and the closing of pay gaps *(1-3 yrs)*
- Evaluate on-boarding / training of new staff; include a checklist of items to be reviewed and accomplished within 30/60/90 days including a review of all HR policies, formal professional development policy, reporting structures, open door policies, trainings, DEI statements etc. *(1 yr)*
- Make staff evaluation more frequent. Be clear on goals, expectations & type of growth; Be more explicit about using staff evaluations as a mentoring tool for staff development. *(1 yr)*
- Professional development:
 - Encourage cross-department learning by exploring program and marketing development across departments. Help to understand what other staff do. *(3 yrs)*
 - Support staff to find new jobs – since small org with limited advancement possibility. Be candid and open about that fact, so that supervisor and employee can make a plan together, and supervisor can support future job prospects. *(3 yrs)*
- Increase frequency of staff meetings to promote more cross-departmental knowledge and increase socialization. *(1 yr)*
- Make more transparent to all staff open positions, job descriptions and associated salary ranges. *(1 yr)*

Long Term Goals dependent on increased resources:

- Based on compensation review, Offer competitive salary and benefits, regular raises, a plan for raises (e.g. stepped grades for salary increases based on evaluation, similar to the Smithsonian museum).
 - Implement a plan to provide cost of living increases on a regular basis to staff.
 - Develop a formal policy for raises (e.g. connected to the annual review process).

- Explore increasing PTO and other benefits policies for part-time employees.
 - Solicit suggestions from staff and create a “Wellness Program” for staff that may include arts workshops, yoga, meditation, work stress alleviation techniques, mental health services, and general decompressing activities, or which might include workshops providing legal or financial advice.
 - Establish a timeline and identify resources to provide staff training on the following topics: Implicit bias, harassment (all forms), microaggressions, de-escalation techniques and cultural competency; Solicit input from staff on desired trainings and use trainings to respond to employee complaints.
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IV. Diverse & Equitable Leadership

Goals:

- Increase the diversity of the Board to reflect the community served by our institution; Diversify Governance and Executive committees.
- Develop succession plans for Executive & Artistic Director and Board Leadership to insure institutional continuity around mission, programming, and DEI goals.
- Ensure that the senior leadership of the organization is sensitive to the needs and cultures of the constituents/communities we serve.

Indicators:

- The Board becomes more diverse over time
- Succession plans exist to insure continuity of mission and leadership
- Senior leadership remains diverse

Institutional commitments to maintain:

- Allow corporate donors to underwrite the Board give/get in order to include more diverse board members who otherwise would be unable to join.
- Allow non-board members to serve on board committees to include more diverse voices.
- Provide accommodations for board members to participate in meetings so as to not exclude working people, parents, disabled etc. (conference call-in at present).

Policies and procedures to implement within 1-3 years:

- Expand Board Recruitment
 - Evaluate the current process of recruitment, with a focus on the most important qualities for board service, ensuring the most diverse candidate pool possible. *(3 yrs)*
 - Create a board tier with an alternative give/get or other options to give, to welcome artists and other community members. *(1 yr)*
 - Develop new strategies for reaching into the communities we serve with programming but which do not currently have board representation (African-American, Latinx, and South Asian communities). *(1 yr)*
- Staff Leadership & Succession:
 - Create and implement an annual staff evaluation process for senior leaders including annual review of the ED by the Board. *(1 yr)*
 - Develop a realistic succession plan for current ED/AD as well as board chair, in order to insure mission and program continuity, equity and diversity. *(3 yrs)*
- Staff Leadership Hires:
 - Adopt a diverse candidate slate policy for senior positions; Adopt and deploy the Rooney Rule for top hires. *(3 yrs)*

- Ensure the Job description ("JD") for senior leadership employs language and an approach that is inclusive and: 1. avoids gendered and other exclusionary language, 2. uses experience and education equivalence where appropriate. 3. is task-outcome oriented. (1 yr)
 - Always advertise open senior level positions internally; Interview internal candidates before or concurrent with external search. (1 yr)
- Create more opportunities for staff and board interaction; Develop more informal social activities for bonding within board. (1 yr)

Long Term Goals dependent on increased resources:

- Add a development director to the organization; make sure the hiring process includes the DEI goals above and in section II.
 - Increase HR Capacity: Structural problem in that HR officer = deputy director, in a position of authority. This should be broken off as a separate director of HR without supervisory authority.
 - Consider a shared HR position with other local Queens CIGs to pool resources.
 - Add administrative support for the Executive and Artistic Director.
 - Create a program for ongoing board training on a variety of topics. Provide DEI and implicit bias training to avoid tokenization in the board recruitment process.
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V. Inclusive Organizational Culture

Goals:

- Ensure robust internal communication and a welcoming organizational culture; Ensure that our institution supports diverse identities, forms of expression, learning and communication styles, family structures, cultures and religions, particularly among groups that have been historically marginalized.
- To maintain a physical environment in which all people, regardless of age, condition or limitation, have access; Make capital upgrades to enhance or improve the accessibility of the facility to people with disabilities, seniors, families with strollers (e.g. elevators, ramps).
- Ensure that members of the communities we serve and staff who are limited English Proficient (LEP) and low-literate are able to access information, programs and services.

Indicators:

- Staff from historically marginalized groups are retained by the organization
- Staff feel there are multiple mechanisms to communicate with leadership
- The facility becomes more physically accessible over time
- Different communities and community groups continue to participate in programs

Institutional commitments to maintain:

- Land Acknowledgement and collaborative relations with the Matinecock tribe
- Inclusion of non-decision making staff in high level staff meetings to contribute ideas and insights.
- Ongoing consultation with community organizations for their expertise in particular communities and cultural contexts

Policies and procedures to implement within 1-3 years:

- Increase multi-lingual services & capacity (See section I.) (3 yrs)
- Evaluate outreach to specific cultural communities to insure that we avoid tokenization and that culturally-specific events have a balance of community participation (1-3 yrs)

- Diversify the Chinese Cultural Committee, and Chinese cultural programs; explore ways to include more diverse voices from within the Chinese community itself, by considering factors such as age, country of origin, education, and when the individual (or the individual's family) immigrated to the U.S. (3 yrs)
- Review and modify the way staff meetings are conducted to insure we include diverse voices and ways of communicating. (1 yr)
- Include feminine hygiene products in first aid kits and bathrooms. (1 yr)
- Evaluate all mailing lists and internal staff communication methods to ensure true inclusiveness. (1 yr)
- Have dialogues with staff (both at staff meetings and in private conversation) on the topic of individual identity expression, so that all staff know that the organization is open and welcoming of diverse identities, including pronoun usage, dress, and other forms of expression. (1 yr)
- Review policy for reporting complaints to ensure that there are multiple reporting mechanisms and a clear chain of reporting. (3 yrs)
- Standardize policies around celebrating staff birthdays, work anniversaries, and other life events. (1 yr)

Long Term Goals dependent on increased resources:

- Review current capital planning (funded and unfunded) for additional opportunities to create inclusive spaces (such as gender neutral/family bathrooms, lactation rooms, staff gathering spaces).
 - Provide implicit bias training; harassment, inclusive workspace training, de-escalation training (specifically for public facing staff), and cultural competency training. Include trainings as a fixed line item in our organization's budget.
 - Replicate the Chinese Cultural Committee and hire additional outreach coordinators for other communities.
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VI. Accountability and Reporting

- Review DEI plan and progress on a quarterly basis at staff meetings
- Create and implement a tracking mechanism.
 - Provide quarterly progress reports to the Board.
 - Provide update reports to DCLA as requested
- Dependent on increased resources, create and implement internal and external (audience) surveys that reflect the goals of the DEI plan.
- Currently, the Deputy Director, as chief HR officer for Flushing Town Hall, will be accountable for DEI implementation. With greater resources enabling the hiring of a separate HR officer, responsibility for DEI goals would transfer to that individual.