Southern Maryland
Regional Library Association, Inc.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Strategic Plan

July 2023

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PART ONE: LAYING THE FOUNDATION: BACKGROUND AND INITIAL EFFORTS

BACKGROUND

Forward / Overview

Southern Maryland Regional Library Association, Inc. (SMRLA) is committed to strengthening its organizational health, culture, and operations over the next three years. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is at the core of that commitment as SMRLA embraces its responsibility to create a more trusting and culturally competent environment that better aligns positive employee, customer, and community experience and addresses the population growth and changing demographic dimensions of the communities it serves.

SMRLA's EDI journey began under the executive sponsorship of Ashley Teagle, CEO and in 2022, SMRLA embarked on this EDI Initiative with its consulting partner, Loutel LLC. Below is a summary of SMRLA's efforts to date.

INITIAL EFFORTS

SMRLA continues to recognize that EDI is critical to achieving its overall organizational mission and has committed to invest in a clear, definitive EDI Initiative, effectuated though an EDI Strategic Plan (the Plan). The Plan will align with SMRLA's overall strategic objectives as set forth in its 2021-2026 Strategic Plan and includes support across SMRLA's communities in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties.

For the first phase of the EDI Initiative and in preparation for development of the Plan, SMRLA:

1. Established an EDI Team[1] that is comprised of a cross-section of SMRLA leadership and employees.

2. Created an EDI Statement Committee (subgroup of EDI Team) and drafted a meaningful, organizational EDI Statement and EDI Tagline statement that can be utilized in a variety of ways to demonstrate SMRLA's commitment.

3. Created a Strategic Planning Committee (subgroup of the EDI team) and drafted a Plan (this document) to develop strategies and actions, provide governance, and drive the EDI Initiative, ensuring employees' voices are heard throughout the process and that there is continued, future success.

4. Supported efforts undertaken by other SMRLA partners: Calvert Library.

5. Utilized Loutel to complete a due diligence review of the current state of EDI including document and process review and review of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County initiatives and efforts (captured in Director Council Minutes, Calvert efforts: Widerstand Diversity Audit, Anti-Racism Audit and Efforts, All Staff October EDI and Training, Equity Lens and Statement).

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[1] Members of that team include: Ashlee Bass, Susan Grant, Jennifer Hopwood, Charles Spalding (EDI Statement Committee); Sarah Hibbits, Debra Phetteplace, Rachel Stein, Ashley Teagle, and Priscilla Thomas (EDI Strategic Planning Committee).

MISSION OF EDI INITIATIVE

SMRLA's EDI Initiative is intended to create an agile and responsive organization comprised of a diverse, inclusive, and empowered workforce that delivers superior performance to SMRLA's stakeholders – employees and Board, public libraries in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties, and each of the Counties' external communities.

The EDI Initiative will drive SMRLA to raise awareness of and support for EDI throughout the organization through the development and embedding of equitable practices, transparent communication, experiences that build collaboration and belonging, education and learning, and investment in talent processes to create more equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Mission and Vision are captured throughout the SMRLA organization:

Mission

The citizens of Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties will have equal access to information through the efficient, economic, and effective sharing of resources among public libraries and all types of information agencies.

Vision

Advancing Library Excellence.

PROGRESS TO DATE

In an effort to proactively address existing opportunities and align with its Mission and Vision, SMRLA has successfully undertaken efforts to build a foundation to embed EDI throughout the organization, including the creation of a Statement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Belonging and an EDI Tagline Statement.

Statement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility and Belonging

SMRLA believes our collective voices make us stronger. As the communities in Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties change, our member libraries strive to be the fabric that maintains - and strengthens - the shared bonds among neighbors and citizens.

Our association is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging as core values that are vital to our mission and our ability to serve all of our stakeholders now and for years to come.

We strive to create a space for our employees, volunteers and library workers to share their wealth of experiences and perspectives, while also providing resources for our members to respond to changes in communities that SMRLA members serve. SMRLA seeks to help our member libraries become hubs of belonging within their respective communities.

EDI Tagline Statement

Our association is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging as core values that are vital to our mission and our ability to serve all of our stakeholders now and for years to come.

Advancing Library Excellence

PART TWO: THE BUILDING BLOCKS - STRATEGIC PLAN

Through a collaborative process with the Strategic Planning Committee, four main areas of focus were prioritized: **(i) Strengthen Organizational Communication, Processes, and Trust, (ii) Cultivate Cultural Awareness that Supports EDI – Belonging, Inclusion and Respect, (iii) Increase Cultural Competency through Integration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Learning, and (iv) Invest in Talent Process to Create and Preserve a Diverse Workforce.**

Below is each Objective, specific Goal, the Actions to be deployed, and the respective Phase. More detail including tactical Action steps and Measures of Success are contained in the Full Strategic Planning Document previously provided. Phase(s) assigned to each action indicate when the action will be initially undertaken; it is the intent that once undertaken, respective actions will continue, mature, and be embedded into culture. It is important to note that SMRLA must live in each Phase and fully complete it before moving to the next Phase to ensure that actions are fully integrated and sustainable.

1.   **Objective One: Strengthen Organizational Communication, Processes, and Trust**

Goal: Create better systems of communication, transparency, and trust within the organization and departments, more effectively communicate leadership commitment to EDI.

2.   **Objective Two: Cultivate Cultural Awareness that Supports EDI – Belonging, Inclusion and Respect**

Goal: Create an infrastructure that supports and fosters a culture where people feel valued, collaborated with, supported, and able to fully be part of the organization.

3.   **Objective Three: Increase Cultural Competency through Integration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Learning**

Goal: Embed EDI content, discussion, and educational opportunities throughout the organization to create understanding, empathy, and insight into the different lenses through which people see the workplace and the world.

4.   **Objective Four: Invest in a Talent Process to Create and Preserve a Diverse Workforce**

Goal: Identify, attract, and onboard a pipeline of talent for the organization and Board across diverse dimensions through more intentional and innovative outreach, recruitment, and hiring.

Building Blocks

STRATEGIES

Objective One: Strengthen Organizational Communication, Processes, and Trust

Goal: Create better systems of communication, transparency, and trust within the organization and departments, more effectively communicate leadership commitment to EDI.

Strategy	Action	Phase
1A. Identify and establish a communication method for SMRLA internal team	Select and put into place a communication method that will be used repeatedly to communicate information and updates to the internal SMRLA team.	Phase I
	Continue to utilize chosen communication method for team communications. Goal is to utilize method so frequently, that the organizational behavior is shifted to utilize this method.	Phase II, III
1B. Develop communication plan for organization that supports both "outgoing" and "incoming" communication	Develop a communication plan. Plan should include: what information should be communicated; who should receive that information; when that information should be delivered; how the information is delivered; what communication will be shared; and how those communications will be tracked.	Phase I
	Creation of Pulse Survey to gather valued input, feedback and perspectives from SMRLA staff. Questions to cover employee engagement and SMRLA culture.	Phase II
	Pulse Survey data collection and analysis to be performed following Pulse Survey completion to establish SMRLA's internal measures.	Phase III
	Results can also be shared along with tools and practices with the wider SMRLA community.	
1C. Identify and invest in assessment mechanism to gather input and measure impact of EDI work	Identify a method to gain feedback and insight from the organization. The feedback and insight gathered will be used to measure the impact of EDI work, e.g., survey and input tool that permits scaled and open input [the Loutel VIBE Assessment Tool™].	Phase I
	Share with the organization the interest and value in receiving their perspectives. Explain how their feedback is valued and meaningful to focusing EDI efforts.	Phase II
	Include these efforts as part of the overall Communication Plan.	

	Design and launch first assessment to align with overall EDI goals and objectives as well as structure assessment to include scaled responses and open-ended questions. Communicate intentionally the value and need for response and input and create clarity in assessment launch; integrate assessment data into overall EDI plans and update as required.	Phase III
1D. Build on communication and transparency from the leadership team to deepen trust and create internal team communication process	Establish place for leadership and employees to learn about each other, connect, and collaborate on projects. In each of these connections: - CEO to continue to hold one-on-one meetings to ensure team members continue to feel connected to and familiar with leadership (termed "One on One with CEO").	Phase I
	Expand "One on One with CEO" Program to "One on One with Management members/team" to increase cross-departmental relationships and cross-functional work products.	Phase II
	Continue established key staff meetings at regular and frequent intervals with standing agenda to be in place. Integrate department head/manager updates to executive leadership and opportunities for individuals to present at Director Council or Board of Trustees meetings.	Phase III
1E. Communicate investment being made and instill importance of EDI focus, initiative, efforts and provide regular update on progress	Communicate EDI focus and initiative to all team members. Share: purpose and intent; value of focus; EDI Statement; overview of what will be doing in next 1, 2, 3 and 6 months to include and inculcate into organization.	Phase I
	Share EDI Statement and EDI Tagline with team along with communicating that team will be instituting "EDI/Culture moment" at meetings with 3 or more employees in attendance.	Phase II, III
	Continue to communicate EDI focus and initiative to all team members, provide update on focus for next 1, 2, 3 and 6 months to include and infuse into organization. Call out any asks, tasks, input or work product required.	
1F. Increase trust and authenticity throughout the community by investing in consistent communication processes and	Continued use of chosen communication method for all communications and ongoing investment in regularly scheduled All Staff Meetings.	Phase I
	Addition of Departmental Meetings and Cross-Functional Department Head/Manager Meetings to overall meeting cadence to ensure vertical and horizontal information and communication cascade.	Phase II

tools and ensuring consistent dissemination of information to overall organization, departments and individuals	Expand team meeting cadence and agenda processes to share with wider community, including Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County libraries, sharing approach that can help each of those communities to increase communication and trust within their own teams and among the wider SMRLA community.	Phase III
1G. Communication and sharing of EDI initiative and investment and best practice sharing with the wider SMRLA community - Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams	Build on trust with communities that SMRLA serves by sharing EDI Strategic Plan efforts. Focus of Phase I is to share SMRLA's EDI investment and efforts. At Director's Council, sharing what SMRLA is doing, what is coming next, how things are going. Continue to build trust with communities that SMRLA serves by sharing EDI Strategic Plan efforts and progress to date with Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams. Focus of Phase III is to be a regional resource for EDI. Creation of tool kit and opportunities to share practices and offer to help Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams on EDI tools and processes.	Phase I Phase II Phase III

Multi-Phase Strategy

Objective Two: Cultivate Cultural Awareness that Supports EDI - Belonging, Inclusion and Respect

Goal: Create an infrastructure that supports and fosters a culture where people feel valued, collaborated with, supported, and able to fully be part of the organization.

Strategy	Action	Phase
2A. Create an internal team that will be responsible for supporting, disseminating and communicating EDI efforts throughout SMRLA	The EDI Team will own the Plan (this document) and will have responsibility for driving strategy and disseminating EDI information, updates, as well as serve as an organizational EDI resource. EDI Team to schedule and commit to monthly meetings with leadership to provide updates and assess how strategic efforts are proceeding, as well as share organizational feedback. Create strategies to include all employees throughout the organization (Strategic Planning team should ideally be created from cross section of departments and levels). Utilize this team to solicit ideas, feedback, suggestions from employees and empower them to implement solutions to those opportunities. Continue to build and mature strategies to include all employees. Utilization of Pulse Check to gain insight on organization. Collect intentional feedback (scale and open-ended inputs) to gauge feelings of inclusion and belonging.	Phase I Phase II, III
2B. Create and share EDI Statement and tagline	Collaborative creation of EDI statement and tagline by team. Share EDI statement and tagline with organization, solicit input on immediate ways to integrate into environment and culture. Creation of listing of organizational processes, documents, tools, templates, etc. where EDI Statement and/or tagline will be added. Identification of item to be updated, timeline to update, whether statement and/or tagline will be added, and accountable to complete. Once listing created, identified documents updated. Creation of template/document repository to ensure most up-to-date version of templates, documents and tools is utilized and easily accessible for the team to locate and use. Assignment of person/people accountable for keeping template/document repository current.	Phase I Phase II, III

2C. Develop employee engagement experiences and opportunities that build culture, collaboration, and belonging	As part of scheduled All Staff Meeting and Team Meetings, create opportunities and space for people to share their experiences and backgrounds to increase understanding and awareness.	Phase I
	Continue to build on these opportunities and efforts to increase understanding and awareness through sustained commitment to meetings, agendas, and events to sponsor collective and effective engagement.	Phase II, III

Belonging, Inclusion, Respect

Objective Three: Increase Cultural Competency through Integration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Learning

Goal: Embed EDI content, discussion, and educational opportunities throughout the organization to create understanding, empathy, and insight into the different lenses through which people see the workplace and the world.

Strategy	Action	Phase
3A. Integrate shared EDI vocabulary and language	Include EDI Statement and tagline and continue to solicit input on immediate ways to integrate into environment and culture.	Phase I
	In larger meetings of 3+ people, institute EDI moment at beginning of meeting.	
	In larger meetings of 3+ people, add to the agenda an "EDI word" and increase awareness for EDI terminology, or, create "EDI Learning Moment" and create EDI do-and-don't awareness.	
	Establish common language through the creation and use of an EDI Glossary and incorporate into multiple SMRLA operational and procedural processes and documents.	Phase II
	Create EDI Calendar (e.g., "Chase's Calendar of Events") and use to identify and highlight Cultural Events.	
3B. Invest in and create EDI Training Plan to increase awareness, exposure and understanding	Identify organizational EDI needs. Once these areas are identified, prioritize findings to highlight organizational areas where gap in EDI awareness and knowledge is creating organizational risk.	Phase I
	Training needs should be identified to address organizational levels: Board of Trustees, Management team, all staff, etc.	
	Prioritize training needs keeping need, risk created, and timing in mind.	
	Once training plan is complete, prioritize and sponsor EDI-topic learning opportunities. For example: allyship; growth mindset; unconscious bias; generational diversity; psychological safety.	Phase II

3C. Support opportunities for Leadership/Managers/Board of Trustees education and coaching	In line with EDI Training Plan, identify EDI areas for training and coaching for Board of Trustees /Managers/Supervisors.	Phase I
	Determine if more formal opportunities may be required to address and/or meet specialized leadership training and development needs such as individualized and cohort executive sessions or coaching focusing on specific areas.	Phase II, III
	Share the collected content of training with tri-county community, with Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams to strengthen the EDI ecosystem and collaboration between the teams.	
3D. Be recognized as Regional leaders in EDI and share strategy, tools, and training plan with other libraries	Roll out the collected content of this training to the wider SMRLA community, with Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams. This collective learning exchange can help to strengthen the EDI ecosystem and collaboration between the teams.	Phase II, III

Cultural Competency

Objective Four: Invest in a Talent Process to Create and Preserve a Diverse Workforce

Goal: Identify, attract, and onboard a pipeline of talent for the organization and Board across diverse dimensions through more intentional and innovative outreach, recruitment, and hiring.

Strategy	Action	Phase
4A. Integrate EDI Statement and tagline in recruiting efforts and organizational outreach	Include EDI Statement and/or EDI Tagline into recruiting process.	Phase I, II, III
4B. Establish organizational EDI data beginning with creating baseline understanding of team and Board composition	Collect current EDI data and diversity demographics for the SMRLA team across, for example: gender; race/ethnicity; recruiting source; tenure; etc. This analysis should include team and Board. Collect current EDI data and diversity demographics for the Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's County teams across, for example: gender; race/ethnicity; recruiting source, etc.	Phase I Phase II
4C. For each role in the organization and for new roles that are identified, identify role details and establish position description template/document	Create position description template/document to be used for all roles that take into account organizational values, inclusive language, and that strive to be free from bias. Position description template should include: position title and reporting structure; position summary; position responsibilities; position requirements; and any required notice such as lifting, travel, etc.	Phase I, II
4D. Create recruiting plan for organization	Create organizational chart for organization and Board of Trustees that reflects person in role, position title, reporting structure. Organizational chart should be assigned to individual that will have responsibility for keeping it current and ensuring updated organizational charts are distributed as appropriate. Create recruiting plan for the organization. This should be done for both internal team and Board of Trustees' positions. For each role identified in the recruiting plan, identify potential recruiting source, for example: online posting; recruiting firm; organizational referral. Consider developing an approval process for opening and recruiting for a new role.	Phase I Phase II Phase III

4E. Identify and Develop Talent acquisition strategies directed to building diverse talent pipeline	From Recruiting Plan, reconfirm and engage recruiting need and resources for each role. As part of incorporating EDI focus, identify community organizations that can help to broaden presence and outreach within the region(s) served.	Phase I
	Establish strategic relationships with student communities, and professional organizations and associations focused on women, minority, LGBTQ, and other diverse members. Identify local search firm that specializes in diverse talent recruiting.	Phase II
4F. Create inclusive and equitable interview processes	Create an interview process that addresses and supports EDI through the use of EDI sensitive interview questions and EDI targeted questions, diverse interview teams, a diverse interview process (for example, in-person, virtual, via-phone, or TTY), standard candidate rubrics, and other inclusive and equitable interview methods.	Phase I

Diverse Workforce

CONCLUSION

The decision to approach the EDI journey more strategically will be instrumental in taking SMRLA to its next level of growth, innovation, and success. The commitment to SMRLA's own statement - *our association is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and belonging as core values that are vital to our mission and our ability to serve all of our stakeholders now and for years to come* - and aligning behavior to that tenet is what will take SMRLA forward in this work. Development and embedding of equitable practices, transparent communication, experiences that build collaboration and belonging, education and learning, and investment in talent processes to create more equity, diversity and inclusion will create a more authentic culture of trust, voice, and belonging. Ultimately leading to an even better experience for all who work at, with, and are served by, SMRLA.

Committed to
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion,
Accessibility and Belonging