

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Guide



Southeastern NY Library
Resources Council



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Introduction

This guide was created by the Ad Hoc EDI committee, a group of individuals from the Southeastern Board of Trustees, staff, and member libraries. The committee was formed in November 2021 to advance Southeastern's strategic planning goals related to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Through many conversations and meetings, the group developed this guide for Southeastern programs, services, and members.

Purpose of the Guide

Advisory committees, the Board of Trustees, and members can use this guide in several ways. The committee sees this guide as a go-to document to review when planning any project, program, or service at Southeastern. The guide will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees regularly; as an active guide, it will inevitably have changes. Some suggestions for how to use this guide are as follows:

- An initial **starting point** for future projects.
- **A foundational document** for future committees.
- A **checklist** for EDI for programs or services. This document will include a list of actions that need to be taken for events to ensure accessibility and create a welcoming environment for all.
- A document that **gathers ideas in one place** and provides clarity for staff, members, & trustees to reference.
- A document will be posted on the Southeastern website. We want to **be models for other organizations**.

Southeastern EDI Statement

Southeastern is committed to the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. We will work actively to dismantle systems of racism, inequality, and oppression in all their forms.

We recognize that systematic racism and discrimination exist within the library profession and in the world. Systematic oppression, everyday racism, inaction, and silence are unacceptable in our profession or workplace. We acknowledge that there is much work to be done by both individuals and institutions in pursuing equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to continuous, proactive growth and action to counter oppression.

In response to our commitment, we are:

1. Committed to taking realistic but impactful steps toward fully incorporating EDI principles in membership and business practices, industry leadership, program development, organizational culture, assessment, and accountability.
2. Designing our services by attentively listening to the needs and aspirations of our communities, especially those whose voices are often underrepresented or unheard.

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3. Serving as conveners and facilitators of courageous conversations, civic discourse, and partnerships to address community challenges. Especially with the EDI Special Interest Group (SIG).
4. Committing resources and finances to support EDI services and initiatives.
5. Encouraging and supporting staff to seek out knowledge and attend professional development opportunities for continuous and proactive growth.

What Diversity Means to Us: Glossary and Scope

The terms we use, including equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, may have unique meanings to different people, groups, and contexts. For libraries, library workers, and the communities served by Southeastern and our members, we are defining them as follows:

Equity

Equity as a concept focuses on whether everyone in an organization or workplace has the same access to information, opportunities, and support (equity of admission). Equity can also pertain to equitable treatment regarding whether someone is treated equally in various situations. This can include equity of pay, assessment/evaluation, and funding.

Diversity

Diversity can be defined as the sum of how people are alike and different. Visible diversity is generally those attributes or characteristics that are external. Invisible diversity includes those characteristics and traits that are not readily seen. We seek to engage, understand, and draw on various perspectives proactively. (Adapted from the American Library Association and the National Education Association.)

Inclusion

Inclusion means an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their unique skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities, and can contribute fully to the organization's success. An organization needs to communicate inclusion. (Adapted from the American Library Association.)

Accessibility

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses broader meanings than compliance with laws such as the Americans With Disabilities Act, and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings. (Adapted from the American Alliance of Museums.)

Guiding Principles/Core Values

The Southeastern mission is to connect the region's community of libraries and cultural heritage organizations to information, resources, support, and professional development opportunities to enhance the capacity for services, advocacy, outreach, and engagement for members.

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The guiding principles and core values for equity, diversity, and inclusion support the organization's vision "To meet the needs of our members with excellence, we aspire to be an inclusive, member-focused organization that serves the libraries and cultural heritage communities in our region with a comprehensive suite of accessible resources and services."

These value statements are shared across our services. These are guiding principles for not just EDI but for the institution as a whole:

- We are a service organization that directly engages with our members.
- We facilitate the discovery and cultivation of ideas among members.
- We bring people together so we can learn from each other through our differences.
- We provide information and training about emerging trends in technology.
- We are a network that creates support systems for members.
- We provide leadership and support to our community, building confidence, competence, and unity.

Goal Statement in Southeastern's Strategic Plan

Southeastern's [Strategic Plan for 2021-2026](#) includes the following goal statement, outcome, and actions related to EDI:

Goal Statement

Foster a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion in libraries and cultural heritage organizations.

Outcome

Reflect on the diverse community served by our members.

Initiatives/actions

Infuse equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and anti-racism best practices into Southeastern operations and services.

What we are doing now

- Steps that we are taking now toward this goal include:
- Being a forum or platform for facilitating conversations.
- Sharing the work being accomplished in the Southeastern Newsletter and in the notes from SIGs (LibGuides).
- Using this guide we're creating! - having a clear guideline/policy to provide.
- Being a model for the member organizations.
- Continuing to learn best practices so we can model and lead.

Future actions

See the Services section below for an outline of Southeastern's service areas and their action steps. Other measures to advance this goal statement and initiatives include:

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- Making our checklist available for members to learn how to make programs inclusive.
- Continuing to learn best practices so we can model and lead.
- Communicating the work outlined in this guide with members.
- Recruiting trustees and committee members to serve that represent the diverse community they serve.

Challenges and Barriers

We identified the following challenges and barriers to implementing the goal statement and actions.

- Engaging the membership.
- Acknowledgment from library leadership and member organizations that EDI is a priority.
- Spreading the word about statements and policies that already exist.
- The need for more & continuous education.
- Being inside the system, we're trying to change (e.g., challenging civil service tests).
- Not knowing the actions to take even to begin.
- Getting people to the table (EDI has become less of an "it" topic) – also, the "What now?" piece.
- The practical applications of the best practices and learning what those best practices are.

Operations and Services

The emphasis in this section of the guide is on what Southeastern is currently doing and the recommendation for new initiatives within the scope of the council's mission and Plan of Service.

Internal Operations

Governance

The Board of Trustees is responsible for council governance. It will adopt and revise bylaws, maintain a current Plan of Service, and establish policies to achieve Southeastern's mission according to Southeastern bylaws. Southeastern staff is responsible for implementing programs and services outlined in the Plan of Service and Strategic Plan.

Committees

The Board of Trustees may establish standing committees, ad hoc committees, or interest groups as needed, composed of direct members or members of school library systems or public library systems. The role of a council committee is advisory to the Board and staff in related areas. Southeastern has four standing committees: Continuing Education Committee, Digital Advisory Committee, Hospital Library Services Committee, and Regional Interlibrary Loan Committee.

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The recommendations of the Ad Hoc EDI committee are to create a council committee to address the work that they started and to review and implement the suggestions in this guide, including, but not limited to, promoting the EDI statement in the strategic plan and in this guide, progress toward anti-racism in libraries, promoting and recommending professional development, and any other concerns or ideas developed by the committee.

Policies

Southeastern has a Civil Rights, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commitment Policy that outlines the steps to diminish the likelihood of discrimination or harassment concern and also promotes Southeastern's mission of service through a visible and evolving commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

With that commitment in mind, the policy explains how Southeastern works to prevent illegal discrimination, how we respond when a report of unlawful discrimination is made, and how we work to build a collaborative, supportive, and inclusive environment.

The policy lists major initiatives where Southeastern will engage in an evolving process to create a flexible, responsive, and inclusive work and service environment. Major initiatives of this process include:

- A recruitment and development strategy that uses proven techniques to attract and retain employees from populations statistically under-represented in the workforce;
- A procurement and contracting strategy that uses proven techniques to attract and retain vendors from populations statistically under-represented, including certified Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBEs);
- Personnel policies that maximize the opportunity while minimizing barriers to access and performance;
- Re-evaluating practices through solicited and unsolicited input and critique and objective assessment.

Additionally, Southeastern maintains several policies that protect the rights of staff and anyone conducting business in Southeastern:

- [Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Intervention](#)
- [Employee Code of Conduct](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Prevention](#)
- [Vendor Code of Conduct](#)
- [Visitor Code of Conduct](#)

Member Services

Code of Conduct and Related Policies

As mentioned in the previous section, Southeastern has a code of conduct policy for staff,

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visitors, and vendors. These policies aim to protect the interests and safety of all employees, guests, trustees, and people conducting business with Southeastern, including the civil rights of others.

Job Listings

Southeastern posts regional jobs on our [Employment Opportunities page](#) on the Southeastern website as a service to members seeking new employees as well as individuals looking for employment opportunities. On this webpage, in addition to the job postings, we will list regional pay standards, cost of living, and other resources.

Programs and Services for Members

Southeastern's programs and services are based on the goals in the [Plan of Service](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). As a library system in New York, we recognize the values and goals of the Regents Advisory Council on Libraries and the framework outlined in [their Vision 2022 guide](#). Southeastern's core services are listed here, including recommendations for committees to take to advance EDI in their respective specialties:

Resource Sharing

- Coordinated Collection Development Aid for Academics (CCDA):
 - Recommend sources for increasing diversity or accessibility in collection development.
- Interlibrary Loan:
 - Ensure that all member libraries have access to inter-library loan services and a shared union catalog of member collections so that their community has equitable access to resources.
 - Teach and promote best practices for inter-library loan such as making library materials available in accessible formats.
 - Work toward providing a virtual union catalog with an accessible website and the ability to translate website text into multiple languages.

Hospital Library Services

- Promote resources or programs that inform hospital library patrons about EDI concepts and practices in a medical context.
- Ensure that hospital library collections include resources that enable medical staff to equitably and inclusively care for the health of underserved populations in their communities.
- Use and promote training materials and programs that are accessible and that raise awareness about disparities in access to consumer health and medical information.

Digitization

- Encourage members to contribute digital collections that are inclusive and diverse.
- Provide a forum to make cultural heritage items discoverable, inclusive, and

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accessible.

- Create resource descriptions that use inclusive terms and subject headings that adhere to emerging best practices and standards.

Professional Development

- Continue to use and adapt best practices at programs and events, including:
 - Using community agreements and code of conduct
 - Creating an environment of respect
 - Using closed captions
 - Making land acknowledgments.
- Pay speakers and increase the visibility of presentation opportunities in underrepresented communities by meeting people where they are; for example, working with members to tap into local talent.
- Develop a checklist for members to learn how to make programs inclusive.
- Support staff at all levels through professional development.
- Provide equitable access to our programming, including options for hybrid or Zoom attendance.
- Sponsor programming that is inclusive and relevant.

New Services

Beginning in 2021, Southeastern started to plan and implement new services for members and their communities that further social justice and digital inclusion efforts.

EDI audits for members

Southeastern budgeted funds to support EDI audits/assessments, workshops, and consultation services.

Programs that support digital inclusion

New digital inclusion projects were sponsored with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to the New York State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS; [imls.gov](https://www.imls.gov)) in 2021. These projects included Digital Navigators of the Hudson Valley <https://hvconnected.org/> a service to train and support people working in libraries and other organizations to assist community members with various technology needs. New tools and resources will guide future digital inclusion work, including the [2022 Digital Inclusion Toolkit](#) published by the New York State Library and the National Digital Inclusion Alliance.

Programs that support library workers

Consider offering internships for students interested in working in libraries. The American Library Association's [Inclusive Internship program](#) can be a model for starting a program.

Timeline

As previously stated, this plan will be reviewed regularly. For the first year of

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implementation, 2022/2023, Southeastern will:

- Secure approval from the Board of Trustees.
- Establish a standing committee to continue the work of the Ad Hoc EDI committee using this guide.
- Fund the EDI Assessment program for members.

Communications

This guide will be posted on the Southeastern website, shared with each standing committee, and promoted through conversations and meetings with members.

Ad Hoc EDI Committee Members

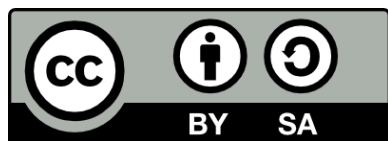
This group was founded in November 2021. We want to thank the following people for attending many Zoom meetings throughout the year and for devoting their time to help Southeastern advance its EDI initiatives for the region's libraries. We are thankful for their expertise and contributions to this guide!

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Acknowledgments

If you are interested in talking to us about this guide, please don't hesitate to contact Southeastern. When referencing this document, please acknowledge Southeastern NY Library Resources Council in your materials.

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