

FAQs: Equity Action Plan

On June 1, 2022, the NEA held a [Listening Session](#) to provide an overview of the NEA Equity Action Plan. The archive of the Listening Session can be found [here](#).

Following are answers to the questions asked during the Listening Session:

1. Q: What is the Equity Action Plan and where can I find it?

A: The NEA is committed to supporting equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice for all Americans in the United States. This commitment is reflected in the [NEA's Equity Action Plan](#), which can be downloaded or accessed at <https://www.arts.gov/equity>. This plan is in alignment with the Arts Endowment's [FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#), in which the cross-cutting objective states, "The NEA will model diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts through all its activities and operations."

Goals of the equity plan include:

- Address and reduce the gap between availability of arts programming and the participation of underserved groups.
- Expand engagement with underserved communities through webinars and key partner organizations.
- Develop concrete policies and procedures for providing access accommodations for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency.
- Determine feasibility of expanding demographic data collection related to grant beneficiaries, staff, and leadership of grant recipient organizations.
- Increase awareness of contract and procurement opportunities to HUBZone and other underrepresented groups.

2. Q: What is the Equity Action Pilot Program and who is eligible?

A: The Equity Pilot Program is an initiative that will support a range of eligible organizations throughout the arts and cultural ecosystem that have demonstrated a commitment to equity within their practices and programming (e.g., programming that is reflective of the community they serve, planning activities that are inclusive of diverse voices, etc.) and have undertaken consistent engagement with underserved groups/communities that have rich and inspiring artistic and cultural contributions to share. This initiative will also support sharing these organizations' stories with the broader arts and cultural sectors.

Specifically, the NEA will support this work through capacity-building subgrants and professional development activities including learning opportunities and peer-networking. These activities and subgrants are intended to help organizations better understand their communities and to approach their operations and programming in ways that will expand their reach. Subgrants will be awarded to a range of organizations, such as those that: center arts and cultural activities within their community; work at the intersection of the arts and other domains (such as community development, health/well-being, or economic development); and are diverse in terms of geography, scale of operations and programming, and budget size.

3. Q: How will the Equity Action Plan support underserved communities?

A: The NEA is committed to advancing equity and equal opportunity for all Americans, including individuals of all backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, veterans, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency and those in rural and urban communities alike. The NEAs Equity Action Plan provides a roadmap for the creation of meaningful and innovative programs and initiatives to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans (see answer to question two above). The Arts Endowment will make organizational adjustments to bolster the agency's ability to successfully implement this equity plan.

4. Q: How will the NEA use training to address equity issues in their arts grantmaking process?

A. The Office of Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity (OCRREO) will pursue the following strategies to support the implementation of the Equity Action Plan (see answer to question one above):

Strategy 1: Educate the staff

OCRREO will partner with the Office of Human Resources to deliver a series of trainings centered on equity and civil rights laws which will equip staff with the necessary knowledge and information to implement this plan and perform their work through an equitable lens within the framework of the civil rights laws.

Strategy 2: Educate the public and provide technical assistance

Equity begins with nondiscrimination. OCRREO will host webinars to educate applicants, grant recipients, and federal contractors about the civil rights laws, guidance, and directives that apply to the receipt of federal funds. OCRREO will also model equity and provide technical assistance to federal funds recipients on best practices to develop, deploy, and accomplish equity goals.

Strategy 3: Conducting enforcement and compliance efforts

OCREEO will begin strategic planning for implementation of compliance reviews on organizations receiving federal funds from the NEA. OCREEO will partner with the Office of Research and Analysis and Department of Justice, as appropriate, to collect data on demographics and complaint activity, and the organizations' Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility strategies. This process will ensure that organizations are complying with civil rights laws and approaching their work through an equity lens.

5. Q: How will the NEA use data to support equity efforts?

A: As stated in the agency's FY 2022-2026 strategic plan, the NEA will prioritize data-driven methods to broaden and deepen engagement with underserved communities. In practical terms, this means we will design and deploy tools such as maps and dashboards to assist program staff with understanding the types of organizations and communities represented in our applicant and grantee pool. This knowledge will help NEA staff to adopt more pro-active measures in engaging with underserved organizations and communities—thus serving a related objective of the strategic plan: to “expand public access to the NEA’s programs and award-supported activities.”

Beyond using data from applicants and grantees to drive more equitable outcomes, the NEA will continue to monitor demographic and geographic characteristics of U.S. arts participation and the arts labor force, using data from other federal government sources. These insights will be reported to NEA leadership for consideration in view of policies or programs. Finally, the NEA's current five-year research agenda has prioritized “the state of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts” as a topic for applicants to the agency's two research awards programs. Data and findings from these prospective studies will contribute to broader equity efforts in the sector.

6. Q: Will NEA provide external training on data collection best practices?

A: Staff are currently exploring this possibility, especially with the advent of new and revised forms that will be used to collect data from NEA applicants and grantees as part of the grantmaking process. The new forms and data fields pose an opportunity for learning—both for the NEA and for its constituents—not only about the insights generated from these data-collection tools, but also about potential improvements to the quality of data reporting. The NEA will engage with its Data Governance Board and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies on how best to educate applicants and grantees about the new requirements, in a manner that will benefit both the agency and eligible grantee organizations.