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### DEAI In Nonprofits: Through the Lens of Museums and Gardens

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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**DEAI in Nonprofits  
Through the Lens of Museums and Gardens**

by

Brittany Jones

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Capstone Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Master of Nonprofit Administration Degree  
in the School of Management  
directed by Dr. Marco Tavanti

San Francisco, California

Spring 2021



*This project, research, and labor of love is dedicated to all those out there finding their voice and working to change the world for the better. Say their names, be the change.*

## **Abstract**

This research works to understand and identify diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) practices within nonprofits through the examination of museums and public gardens. Museums and public gardens provide a generous example of nonprofit organizations that must dutifully serve the communities which surround them, as well as examine internal practices and structures. As the momentum of the racial justice movement increased in 2020, following horrific tragedies in the U.S., the work around DEAI is more relevant than ever. Through this research, identification of barriers and challenges which prevent organizations from doing DEAI work is examined. This research is carried out by consolidating information from varying sources through a literature review and a series of expert interviews. The end result of this study is a two-part model for sustaining DEAI work within an organization, as well as providing a kicking off point for starting DEAI practices. The main components in the structural model are the foundational work needed to begin the work, pillars that will strengthen and support the work, and policies, procedures, mission and values that will create overarching support and guidance for DEAI work. Suggested practices, as well as identified barriers, are identified and discussed further.

*Keywords: diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusion, diversity management, vulnerable leadership, workplace culture, nonprofits, gardens, museums, racial justice*

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To my wife, thank you for always being my biggest cheerleader, my confidant, and taking in the earful of ideas that I spoke aloud to make this project happen. Your unwavering support and love must be acknowledged from mountaintops.

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To my interviewees, I cannot thank you enough for your time and your candor. Your experiences and advice on this research journey was unforgettable and inspiring. Leaders such as yourselves breed hope for the future of the sector.

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## **Section 1. Introduction**

Nonprofits within the field of museums, gardens, zoos, and cultural institutions at large play a vital role in communities. These institutions must keep a pulse on the communities that surround them to stay relevant and provide resources, through services, programs, or simply opening the doors to those that they serve. As a professional in the field of museums for the past decade, this subject comes with a personal perspective and connection to the work. With the racial justice gaining momentum in the United States (U.S.) after the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless other people of color in 2020, museums, gardens and cultural institutions found themselves at a crossroads. Statements condemning systemic racism and white supremacy, and supporting Black Lives Matter, emerged along with promises for institutional changes. The promised changes were centered around the idea of making diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEAI) more prominent within the organizations. Conversations around these topics in the context of cultural institutions, as well as nonprofits at large, are decades old. Tragedies are unfortunate and, at times, are the catalyst for change. 2020 has had a positive impact on organizations committing to and implementing DEAI practices. Perhaps 2020 brought clarity to the imperative need for change, causing organizations to evolve, develop, and adopt important cultural changes for which they will be held accountable.

Lonnie Bunch III, the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, said "...museums have an opportunity to not become community centers, but to be at the center of their community, to help the community grapple with the challenges they face, to use history, to use science, to use education, to give the public tools to grapple with this" (Gelles, 2020). This research is more relevant than ever before. A generational push, combined with communities holding institutions accountable, created an environment ripe for change. Understanding what museums and public gardens are doing to address DEAI in their operations, services, and within everything they do, will benefit organizations that have yet to begin the work. There are challenges to committing and practicing DEAI which prevent many from beginning the work. This research aims to identify these barriers and provide insight into how to overcome them.

## Section 2: Literature Review

### Literature Introduction

The topics of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion are not new terms in the world. These topics have been discussed in various ways through research, trade journals, and opinion pieces in every crevice of society for decades. Clearly, there is an understanding that in our society, nonprofits as a sector serve as a center for community. The field is lacking and continues to investigate how to solve the problem of the absence of these practices. This research explores how DEAI, whether named specifically, is being discussed and practiced in the world at large within workplaces. Specifically, the research focuses on nonprofits through the lens of museums and public gardens. The literature review will cover definitions of DEAI, research around workplace culture and management, and DEAI within the context of museums.

Information from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) will be used extensively in this research, as a leader in discussions of DEAI in museums and gardens. The American Alliance of Museums was created in 1906 and has served as the leader in developing best practices and advocating for museums. AAM provides resources, opportunities, and accreditation opportunities for more than 35,000 individual museum professionals, volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.).

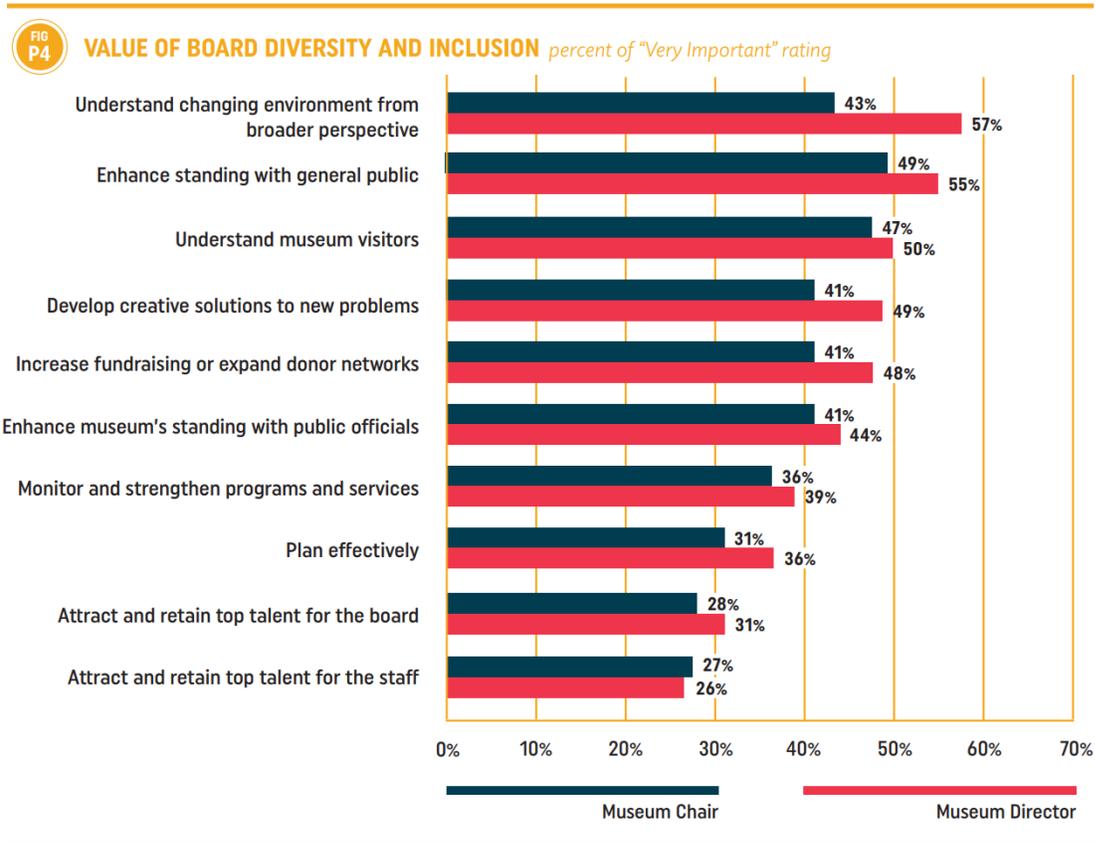
In 2017, AAM commissioned a report, *Museum Board Leadership: A National Report*, where the dynamics of who, what, and why were investigated within the world of museum boards. In the survey administered, 861 museum directors completed the director survey; 841 board chairs completed the board chair survey. Interestingly, at the time the report was published four years ago, diversity and inclusion was a large topic of discussion in the report. BoardSource (2017) notes in the report that:

“77% of museum directors and 66% of board chairs indicate that expanding racial/ethnic diversity is important or greatly important. Museums fall short, however, when it comes to taking action. According to museum directors, only 10% of boards have developed a plan of action for the board to become more inclusive, and only 21% have modified policies and procedures to be more inclusive” (pg.9).

The report is eye opening for museums, gardens and cultural organizations as it acknowledges that DEAI is important, and was important at the time of the survey, yet leadership also acknowledged a lack of action to progress toward this important work. As seen in Table 1, the value of diversity and inclusion at a

leadership level of these organizations is understood to have significance, with the highest value from museum directors seen in understanding a broader perspective and enhancing relationships with the public. Museums, gardens, and cultural institutions have decades worth of elitism engrained in their history and organizational dynamics, and leadership would benefit to acknowledge these results from the 2017 survey by BoardSource.

**Table 1: The Value of Board Diversity and Inclusion**



Source: *Museum Board Leadership National Report, 2017*

As AAM (2018) shared in its Facing Change report, DEAI is essential to museums remaining relevant to an ever-diversifying US population. Leadership plays a vital role in this work and leadership must occur at all levels of organizations. Museums and public gardens have the added task and responsibility of telling stories through their power of exhibition and interpretation. In this regard, these

organizations provide space for community-building and inspiration. DEAI efforts for these organizations make moral and financial sense as we watch the world rapidly evolve socially and demographically.

### **Explanation of Definitions**

Throughout the review of research, definitions of terms vary from organization to organization. For the sake of this research, this section will clearly define the use of terms and definitions for the purpose of this research. Many of the definitions have been adapted from the American Alliance of Museums definitions to align with the industry in discussion. Some definitions are further explained to provide more context for the research at hand.

**Diversity.** Diversity can be defined as all the ways that people are different and the same. This applies at the individual level, as well as for a group of people. It is important to acknowledge that although some may seem the same and be assumed so, they are different. Diversity identifiers can include but are not limited to language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures and dynamics.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”) (n.d.), define diversity more broadly, as a dimension that can be used to differentiate people from another. HUD also explains that the definition of diversity can be far more complex than acknowledging differences, as it defines who we are as individuals. Diversity expands beyond the individual though, and can be identified more broadly on an organizational level.

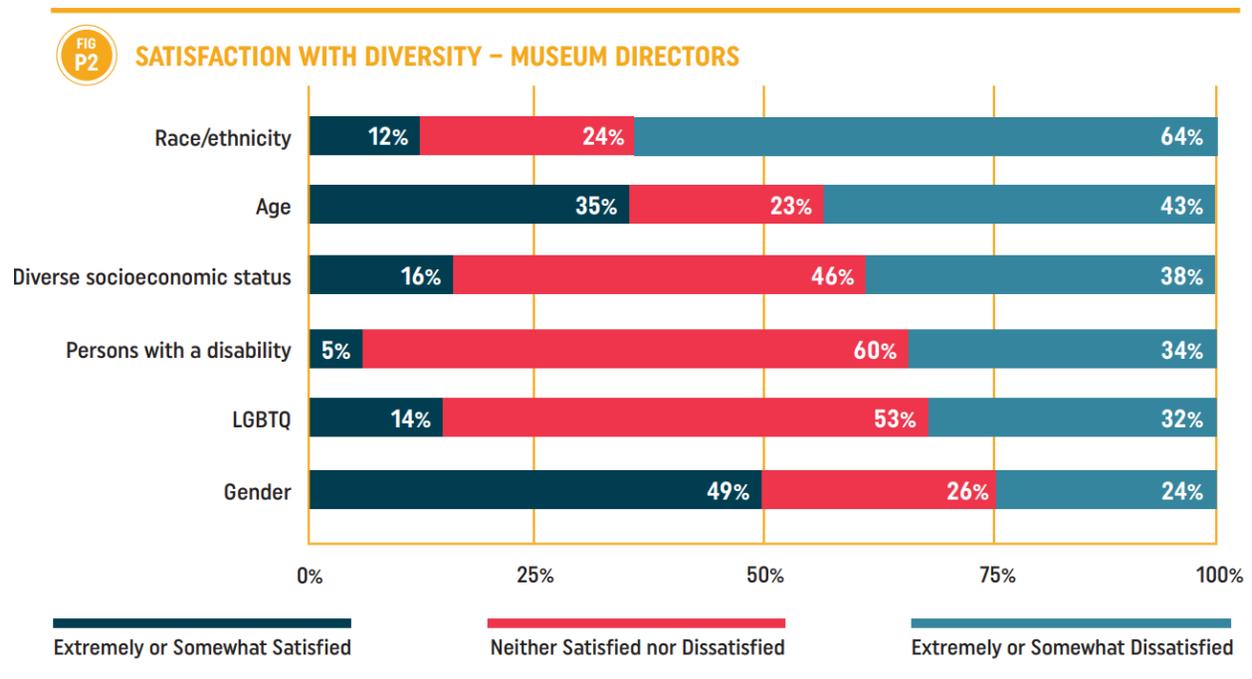
Organizational diversity alludes to demographic identifiers of employees, commonly race, ethnicity and gender. Diversity is more encompassing than one’s racial identity and diversity can often be defined for someone through multiple identifiers and identities. The importance of working with organizational diversity is ensuring that multiple perspectives are represented and heard in the workplace.

Diversity continues to be a commonly researched topic in the professional sector and in relation to human resource management. Often, many research reports cited U.S. census data, stating that the United States is expected to increase diversity such that one in five Americans will be 65 or older by 2020. Further, more than half of Americans will be members of a racial and/or ethnic minority group by 2044 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Further reports have since been released and revised as recently as 2020. Updates to the data state that the non-Hispanic White population is projected to shrink from 199 million in 2020 to 179 million people in 2060, even as the population in the US is projected to grow. The aging

America is expected to see one in five Americans 65 or older but it is now by 2030. Further, by 2060, one in three Americans, 32% of the US population, is projected to be a race other than white (Vespa et al., 2020). Our country is changing and we are no longer a dominant white identifying population. Nonprofits, specifically museums and gardens, are at a turning point of needing to adapt to this ever changing world.

When examining diversity at a leadership level, within the board level of museums, BoardSource (2017) found that museum directors were least satisfied with board level diversity in areas of race and age, as seen in Table 2. The data further shows that there is a greater amount of satisfaction in gender diversity, a number that has likely changed drastically in the last few decades. This provides at least a small glimmer of hope that diversification, although slow burning, can happen and those in leadership positions need to continue to advocate for increased diversity through multiple identifiers.

**Table 2 - Museum Directors Satisfaction with Diversity in the board seats**



Source: Museum Board Leadership National Report, 2017

Often, when researching and reading about diversity, race and ethnicity are the primary subjects of discourse. However, it must be noted that diversity is an expansive definition as it pertains to the world of museums, gardens, and cultural institutions. One thing is certain, the movement away from “box-checking” when it comes to diversity will no longer cut it for organizations. This “optical empathy,” Grant (2020), acknowledges in her article is becoming more recognizable to the layperson. Diversity practices must breach beyond the surface level.

**Equity.** Equity is a word often used in the workplace and can be confused with equality. Think of equality as everyone, regardless of title, gender, age, etc., having a seat at the table. Equality, treating everyone the same, often breeds more inequalities. Equality denies differences and makes assumptions on the basis that everyone is treated fairly. As Wong (2019) argues, if we treat everyone the same, it is a recipe for inequality. Wong further debates that acting race-blind or gender-neutral, will and can codify biases that every person's lived experiences and needs are the same.

Equity is when all of these people have equal opportunities and support to get a seat at the table. According to AAM's (2018) Facing Change Report, equity is the glue that holds diversity and inclusion together because equity acknowledges power dynamics and historically exclusive practices. Responding to everyone's different needs levels the playing field (Wong, 2019). Equity plays a key role in DEAI practices, as Bernstein, et. al (2020), explains that it places the outcome at the system or organizational level rather than the group or individual. It addresses systemic and structural injustices. This also furthers the concept that equity work may only truly stick when it is done at an organizational level.

**Racial Equity.** Themes of racism and systemic oppression surface in the research following a year of societal pressures to acknowledge issues following the deaths from police brutality in 2020. Beyond the generic definition of equity, one must also acknowledge racial equity in this research. Walker (2019) explores racial equity as a difference and suggests examining policies, practices, attitudes and messaging that eliminate outcomes based on race. Racial equity is one part of racial justice and, therefore, is addressed when examining root causes of inequities.

**Accessibility.** Accessibility pertains to how someone accesses something, and in the context of this research, is defined as equitable across all human ability, experience, socioeconomic status and other

differentiators of identity. It addresses compliance and how space is made for all of one's characteristics (American Alliance of Museums, 2018).

Throughout the literature review, there were clear gaps in scholarly literature on accessibility beyond the American Disabilities Act ("ADA") which was passed in 1990. The ADA put legal repercussions in place for employers who discriminated against employees based on the individual's disability. Accessibility in the context of this research includes people with physical disabilities, as well as experiences, socioeconomic status and differentiators which align with AAM's definition. It is nearly impossible to talk about accessibility without talking about equity. Physical impairments, such as mobility, visual, neurological, affect how an individual experiences their workplace, an art exhibit, a zoo, and life in general. An organization that makes it difficult for those with disabilities to experience it as those without physical disabilities do, creates an inequitable environment.

As Peruzzi (2020) suggests, museums rarely center communications around accessibility. In a pivot to become more technologically savvy during the COVID-19 pandemic, did museums consider virtual programming not aligning with screen reader software? Did webinars offer captions? As Peruzzi (2020) notes, these are basic accommodations but the burden is too often placed on the person with disabilities to request them. From an organizational perspective, assumptions are made about job duties, like the unspoken assumption of needing two hands to hang a piece of art. However this may be due simply to a lack of imagination on the organization's part. Moody, et. al (2017), states that a gap is typical between intent and reality in the workplace for those with all abilities. Accessibility in practice must consider a level of proactiveness from the organization, to dismantle this cycle of the burden being on the one who needs the access.

**Inclusion.** To finish out the DEAI acronym, we conclude with inclusion. Inclusion is arguably the glue of DEAI work. These terms and definitions rely on each other for true systemic change, inclusion stands to be the glue. An environment that is diverse, equitable, and accessible breeds inclusion. Inclusion is the culmination of all the hard work put into becoming a more diverse, equitable, and accessible organization. Inclusion also wears many hats, as it's definition may vary from one to the next. Inclusion is the employee's perception of feeling a part of the work, the organization, or the cohort of employees. Inclusion is the visitor of the museum or garden feeling seen, heard, represented, or understood. As Brimhall (2018), states, "inclusion is conceptually distinct and different from other work-related constructs like job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior in that inclusion is about feeling

valued and appreciated for personal unique characteristics.” Most of the literature reviewing inclusion was specific to workplace inclusion, which is important for this research, but does not address inclusion as an external practice for those which nonprofits, like museums and gardens, serve.

### **A workplace for change and commitment**

There is this infamous quote, originally from Peter Drucker, that says “culture eats strategy for breakfast” (Hyken, 2015). To expand, strategic planning is not the only measurement of success in an organization and based on this quote, culture may be the truest form of measuring success. It is important to point out the human factor in an organization and in the work around DEAI. O’Keefe, et al. (2020) explain that culture is responsible for a group’s action in the workplace and is used to make informed decisions. There is a clear, but under researched, connection between DEAI and the culture of the workplace’s relationship. Successful DEAI practices cannot begin without addressing and creating a culture for it to succeed.

An important factor for manifesting change within an organization is first understanding the culture within the organization that exists. As Hyde (2018) argues, a leader instilling any change must work with, not against, culture to achieve positive outcomes. Understanding the culture, seen as values, beliefs, rituals, decision-making mechanisms, and processes of inclusion and exclusion, are all vital to any successful change. A leader can shape culture if they can understand how to identify it.

Kalev et al. (2006) notes that organizational structures that allocate responsibility for change, rather than target programs for bias, may be more effective to create real change in practices in an organization. Structures for responsibility are affirmative action plans, diversity committees, and diversity staff positions. Kalev et al. (2006), believes that structures are followed by managerial diversity while diversity training and evaluations are not, further concluding in their research that appointing a manager or committee to create change is more likely to be effective than annual diversity training, periodic diversity evaluations, and decentralized programs like mentoring. This is an interesting development in the research as it acknowledges the accountability factor of DEAI work. Blanketed training and evaluations may take the ownership of DEAI out of any one person's hands, and when no one is claiming to own the process, it easily can become the dreaded HR training, lacking true connection.

This furthers the idea that change must be systemic to be lasting. Working in silos, within departments, and through individuals creates a fragmented workplace culture with inclusive pockets. Kalev et al. (2006), further argues that diversity must be tasked to a specific officer, person, or group, like a task force, or progress is seldom monitored and accountability goes out the window.

## **Leadership and Management's place in DEAI**

A workplace culture shift may be needed to instill DEAI into an organization. To do so, leadership must be onboard, aware, and championing this change. As Mason (2020) argues, leadership must support change, otherwise the change itself is unlikely to succeed. As important as it is to allow change from any and all directions, DEAI work has its best chance at success when it is bought into by leadership.

The Centre for Global Inclusion, published the *Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks* in 2021, as a way for organizations of any type, size, or mission, to benchmark themselves in DEI efforts. Molefi, et al. (2021) argues that many organizations may achieve benchmarks, but does not offer reassurance in their research that any organization is achieving them all. Meaning, there is no perfection in this work and no one example of any organization doing everything right. It begs the question whether all the benchmarks can truly be achieved. Molefi, et. al. (2021) further suggests that most organizations often start DEI from a place of compliance, which is identified as one of five approaches to DEI work. The other four approaches and reasons for driving DEI practices include, advocating for social justice, building DEI competence in individuals, honouring dignity, and developing the organization for improving performance. Leadership may need to justify this organizational change, and this guidebook provides reasoning for the leaders implementing change. It also proves that authentic change can be sparked from a variety of intentions.

When it comes to exploring management tactics and theories, diversity management stands out in research. For the sake of this research, diversity management is defined as practices of organizations to manage diversity among all stakeholders of the organization, drawing on the definition of diversity previously discussed. Pichler and Kossek (2008), state that “diversity management practices are successful when they accomplish: (1) promoting perceptions of organizational justice and inclusion, (2) reduc[e] discrimination, and (3) improv[e] financial competitiveness.” Diversity management practices, as theorized by Yang and Konrad, in Manoharan, et al. (2021), suggest that diversity management starts with corporate strategy. Bringing us back to Peter Drucker's infamous, culture and strategy argument. Which came first, the strategy or the culture?

But why diversity management? Research shows (Yang & Konrad, 2011), governmental regulation and legislation play a significant role in pressuring organizations to manage diversity through affirmative action and employment equity legislation in historical context. The intention behind this DEAI through this lens is compliance based. Justifying reasoning and defining its purpose is helpful, and

Yang and Konrad (2011) report that actual implementation of diversity management is under research. Further, successful diversity management happens when it is done outside of silos, and not narrowly focused or implemented within specific organizational systems or processes.

Change management in organizations is necessary in enacting DEAI work. The term change management is not referenced as frequently as I would have expected in this research, however I find it important to acknowledge in this literature review. Change management, defined by Huong (2014), refers to “planning, organizing, leading, and controlling a change process in an organization,” often to align with strategic goals. Therefore, change management is practiced when organizations practice diversity management, benchmarking, and ultimately embark on practicing DEAI.

Jim Collins (2005) argues, in his theory of “First who, then what,” that you must first get the right people onboard and the wrong people out before the important work can even start. Collins (2005, p. 14) says, “greatness flows first and foremost from having the right people in the key seats, not the other way around.” As management pertains to DEAI, it is important to get the organization equipped for the work by assessing and getting the right people in place for the work to authentically stick. This may mean that some will leave the organization, through lack of buy-in or misalignment of values, and leadership should be prepared for some to exit and provide opportunities for others to enter into DEAI work.

### **Authentic Change is Hard**

This work in DEAI for organizations must span beyond diversity. Diversity was the most easily accessible reference material in this research. The research focused mostly on racial and ethnic diversity. Lehan et al. (2020), argues that this work is often too narrowly focused on and becomes a matter of mere box checking. Further diversity can be a bragging point in conversation for leaders, but seems to not be prioritized beyond conversations behind closed doors. Museums and public gardens may easily fall back on their external programming to tick their boxes of DEAI. A study done in 1999, by Dr. Maria Allison, reviewed perspectives of employees of color within park and recreation departments. One of Allison’s (1999) takeaways is that agencies need to move beyond providing ethnic festivals or celebrations, one time diversity training and seminars, and programming that is fleeting. Authentic changes come when efforts breach the surface level and have intention beyond appeasing. Substantial plans, strategic plans, must be made for any sort of meaningful change. Ballard et al. (2020), argues that the shift for change in DEAI practices has veered away from its social justice roots and has become a conversation around the economic benefits of diversity. One may argue that any change may be a good change as it appears to be

harder to practice than to preach. It is, however, worth noting that the intentions behind this work are not universal, whether it be for social justice, economic benefits, employee satisfaction, or anything in between.

### **Historic Context of DEAI in Museums and Gardens**

Dr. Johnnetta Betch Cole, who served as both director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and as the president of both historically Black colleges for women in the United States, Spelman College and Bennett College, and Laura Lott, president and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums, gathered, edited, and published a series of essays, research reports, speeches, all pertaining to DEAI in museums. The book is titled *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*. This publication explores perspectives of frustration, hope, and encouragement from leaders in the museum sector spanning back over two decades. The frustration stems from authors in these essays finding themselves repeating the motions throughout history, fighting for change within the museum sector to be more diverse and inclusive (B. J. Cole & Lott, 2019).

Garibay and Olson (2020), published a report from the Cultural Competence Learning Institute on the state of DEAI practices in museums. The report showed many findings, including the prioritization or lack of DEAI work in museums. The study found that museums focus less on the internal organizational dimensions of DEAI compared to public-facing aspects.

There is some focus on DEAI practices in recruitment and hiring staff cases (e.g., seeking out candidates from minority populations, reviewing job requirements for adverse bias) than at later stages, with fewer organizations reporting reviewing compensation and performance processes for adverse impact/bias. Half (50%) of responding museums reported “always” reviewing staff compensation and pay equity to check for adverse impact/bias. Only 35% reported “always” reviewing their performance and leadership pipeline process for bias (Garibay & Olson, 2020, p. 7).

A glimmer of hope from the study concludes that regardless of size, both in budget and staffing, the majority of museums use some form of DEAI-related practices. Due to the large range of definitions of DEAI from organization to organization, broad generalizations about the form of DEAI work are hard to make. As AAM’s Facing Change report (2018) acknowledges, one must not get bogged down in the definitions, which may create a barrier in and of itself.

Morrissey and Dirk (2020) find that museums engaging in ideations and processes about identity may be seen through exhibits, collections, community partners, programs, but rarely through institutional operations. This aligns with Garibay and Olson's (2020) research as well. This furthers the notion that public institutions, like museums and gardens, often deflect their DEAI practices to external facing programming. Museums, gardens, and public cultural institutions must reflect on how DEAI is practiced not only externally to its audiences, but also internally through organizational structure. Systemic changes in how these types of organizations were founded and have operated for decades are needed beyond face value programming initiatives.

Further diving into the field of museums, Foreman-Wernet (2017) examines elitism in arts organizations and the importance of communication with audiences served. Less calls to action and more engaging in conversations are key to audience engagement. DEAI work requires a commitment to communication to all stakeholders and Foreman-Wernet's study can provide some advice on methods of communication. Just as leadership must be brought into DEAI, so must staff at all levels, and through all people affiliated with the organization, and the audiences it will engage. Understanding the important platform that museums and gardens have, it is important to find opportunities to amplify voices and participate in conversations whenever possible.

### **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

For the methodology of this research, it was a qualitative approach utilizing primary and secondary resources. The literature review provided secondary resources through the Gleeson Library. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews.

Using a semi-structured interview guide, nine people were interviewing to provide more experience-based perspectives and reflections about their commitment to DEAI work. All of the nine interviewees currently are employed in the museum and/or public garden sector. All of the interviewees hold senior leadership positions as CEOs, Directors, or Board Leadership. The purpose of these interviews was to help provide insight on the research questions:

RQ1: How are DEAI practices being implemented in museums and gardens?

RQ2: What barriers exist that prevent museums and gardens from implementing DEAI practices?

The interviews provided experiential data that the literature review was lacking and helped create a more dynamic set of data to analyze for the topic. All interviews were semi-structured, with a few of the same questions asked to all interviewees, but allowed for the interviewer to follow up with questions eliciting further insight as desired. Questions asked during the interview are seen in Table 3.

**Table 3- Semi-Structured interview questions**

<b>Interview Questions</b> (in no particular order)
How is your organization practicing DEAI?
What qualities does a leader need to possess to do this work (DEAI)?
What does workplace culture look like in an organization practicing DEAI?
What would you say are barriers that prevent museums or gardens from prioritizing DEAI?
What is different now? Diversity and Inclusion has been talked about for decades, what is catalyzing change now?
What are you hopeful for? What makes you excited about this work?

*Source: Author's Creation, 2021*

## **Section 4. Data Analysis**

### **Data Analysis Introduction**

While interviewing and researching DEAI in museums and gardens, it became apparent this would not be a one-size-fits all process. The analysis of the data collected from the interviews is further explained below. Themes with the expert interviews are identified to help in formulating a figure of foundational DEAI work as well as a model for building a DEAI structure. The interviewees were able to speak with candor and honesty as they shared their experiences in how DEAI has both challenged and rewarded their organizations.

### **Expert Interview Themes**

**Board and Leadership.** The most recurring and emphasized theme throughout the interviews was leadership's direct role in DEAI practices. Nearly unanimous, it was agreeable that DEAI cannot

authentically happen without buy in from board leadership and executive directors or CEOs. As much as I am hopeful that change can stem from the bottom up, the interviews confirmed that lasting change must happen at the top for true systemic change. For this reason, the board was often identified as a barrier to DEAI work. Without buy in from the governing authority of the organization, the sentiment is that nothing could truly stick. Leadership, within and also beyond the board, has a responsibility to find a connection to DEAI that creates authenticity in its execution and implementation.

The question of leadership qualities came up in each interview, to identify the characteristics needed to champion DEAI work. Not to my surprise, words rarely associated with leadership arose, such as humility, vulnerability, being able to sit in discomfort, not having all the answers, and empathy. These values and qualities ring true Brene Brown's work in leadership and the power of vulnerability. Brown (2019) states "integrity is choosing courage over comfort; it's choosing what's right over what's fun, fast, or easy; and it's practicing your values, not just professing them".

Similar to Collins (2005) theory of "First who, then what", in moving leadership from good to great, the interviews followed suit, acknowledging that having the right people at the table, and allowing the wrong people to bow out, is critical in this work. Leadership interviewees acknowledged the personal work needing to happen in order to pursue DEAI work. Having the right people in place, and allowing those not bought in and aligned to bow out, furthers the process of building strategy around DEAI.

**Barriers or Excuses.** All interviewees were asked to identify why organizations can not or will not pursue DEAI work. This was asked to identify barriers or challenges preventing these organizations from practicing DEAI. As one interviewee said "... it's really fear that they're going to screw it up, and they will because that's what this work is. If we knew what we were doing if we would all be doing it". (P01, Expert Interview, March 2021) Fear was a recurring answer to these questions with most of the interviewees. Fear plays a serious role in leadership not doing this work, as the fear of failure, fear of shame, fear of not having all the answers were acknowledged.

It became apparent that barriers may be identified under the guides of an excuse. Money and capacity were mentioned in interviews as points of contention in practicing DEAI. When money and finances were referenced, and seldom were they, it was often in regards to hiring consultants and outside entities to prepare organizations or educate on DEAI. Capacity referred to staff capacity and the ability to work on DEAI beyond current job duties. However, interviewees also acknowledged that finances and capacity can also act as an excuse disguised as a barrier. As one interviewee noted that money and staff

resources “...are barriers to anything, they are barriers to successful existence. You do not need money to be an equitable organization.” (P05, Expert Interview, April 2021). The feeling of needing a consultant to do the work was expressed through some interviewees as a way to bring in an outside perspective in the work. It however can be argued that financial decisions, in any organization, are priority decisions. Further, staff capacity does not hold up as an adequate barrier to the work. In order for DEAI work to be successful in practice, it was acknowledged and practiced at all levels of an organization, and through every employee. Although an excuse may be a harsh term, I conclude that financial and staff capacities do not hold up as a viable barrier for DEAI work. Led with confidence and conviction, DEAI can and should be incorporated into all job functions without the need for drastic investments. Further, I argue that by incorporating DEAI into an organization, the economic value of the organization itself increases. With the country continuously and rapidly diversifying, it would only make sense that an organization practicing DEAI is an organization reflecting the changing world around it, funding and financial opportunities will follow suit.

Not to say that any of this would or will be easy. It requires systemic changes. As one CEO of a museum in California stated:

The daunting thing about some of this work and why there is resistance, or why it's slow, is because it is systemic. Yes, it is systemic so you can't just say we're going to do it through programming or, we're going to collect work by POC artists or we're going to recruit trustees of color to the board, or we're going to advertise in different publications for jobs, or we're going to hire a Diversity Director. It's so systemic and you have to think about every aspect of the organization, and so many aspects of museums are deeply connected with traditional colonialism and white supremacy.” (P03, Expert Interview, March 2021)

Although the board leadership itself can be a barrier to this work, if not bought in and truly engaged in the work, there are elements of the board that may also be barriers. Getting the right board at the table also can prove to be a barrier. Things like “give or get” policies, exclude those with limited financial resources or relationships to donors. Boards of nonprofits can be exclusionary in and of themselves, if one does not come with some specialized working skill or financial means to have a seat. A few leaders that were interviewed acknowledged this systemic issue, and have begun the work of eliminating the barriers to allow for a more inclusive and

diverse board experience through more transparent and collaborative recruitment strategies as well as eliminating financial requirements.

**Effective DEAI Leadership.** The qualities a leader should possess to do DEAI work is explored through the interviews. Seeing as systemic change has to be championed from the top, it felt imperative to acknowledge qualities of leaders doing the work. Common leadership traits to be successful in DEAI implementation, mentioned in nearly every interview, are humility, vulnerability, tolerance, and strategic thinking. The word “humility” came up frequently, followed by the acknowledgement that leadership must be willing to do the personal work and embody humility for DEAI practices to authentically take hold. Eating a slice of humble pie as a leader allows employees and stakeholders to build trust in the organization. The personal work in this context means, examining one’s own biases, learning terminology, remaining educated on current events relevant to DEAI. A leader must be willing to change their perceptions and thought processes to align with DEAI and allow it’s organization to follow the leader’s footsteps.

The concept of strategy and strategic thinking was presented as a necessity for leaders to embody for DEAI to have success organizationally. Incorporating DEAI into strategic plans and also creating specific DEAI strategic plans, allow for an accountability tool and a benchmarking tool for organizations to utilize. Without strategy built into DEAI plans, the work will struggle to be led into the future. Therefore, leaders must possess a sense of direction for the work and the organization.

**Examples of DEAI in Practice.** The interviews presented a range of DEAI examples in practice. Most respondents noted the process for board and employee recruitment as something being worked on. Most interviewees acknowledge that instinctively organizations look inward at employees and leadership when beginning DEAI work and start by examining their professional pipelines. Mention of access to job postings, hiring more diverse candidates, recruiting more diverse board members, were all practices of DEAI in the interviews. Staff and board committees are also a common practice of starting DEAI work in these organizations. Some committees included community members, while others were made up of staff and board members only. Staff training, on biases, inclusive practices, diversity management, and the like were mentioned as well as a method of practicing DEAI. There was a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for learning for leadership, the staff as a collective, and on individual levels. Many

interviewees felt they are only just dipping their toes in DEAI and so practice may have felt minimal due to the level of knowledge they still wished to gain.

As one CEO, leading the helm of a museum and garden in California noted, “the work is seen in a shift to being a visitor-centric organization, and allowing the visitor base to drive what you do for them” (P09, Expert Interview, April 2021). In this example, DEAI provided an opportunity for the organization to shift from being collection focused and preservation focused, to focused on how the visitor experiences it’s property and acknowledging that visitors can drive purpose. Lastly, the interviewees who were further into their journeys than others agreed that establishing policies and procedures creates systemic change in organizations. Having an action plan or board policy acts as an accountability tool for all.

**Pandemics and Racial Injustice.** This research and interviews were conducted during a global pandemic. 2020 was also a year full of turmoil as the country had to face it’s racial injustices and systemic racism head on. Following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others in 2020, the Black Lives Matter Movement gained momentum as the outcry from communities across the country would no longer stand for these unjust murders. With that, many museums, gardens, and cultural institutions made statements addressing racial injustice.

An organization called MASS Action, meaning Museums As Sites For Social Action, began a content analysis in 2020 of institutional public statements that were released in the wake of the murder of George Floyd.

“Over the past two months, the MASS Action collective has been aggregating data from the 1,088 AAM-accredited museums in the US. [*We chose AAM-accredited museums as a starting point, wanting a representative sample of type of museums, geographic area, and budget size.*] Of these 1,088, 572 made a racial equity-related statement on their website or on social media; 512 did not.” (Martin, 2020)

The consensus from all nine interviewees was that 2020 did not ignite the DEAI work in their organizations. The work had started prior to 2020, however most in the role of CEO at their organizations acknowledged that 2020 lit a flame under the work. It sped up what was acting as a tedious and slow process. There is a common belief in the world that tragedy breeds change. The tragedy our nation faced in 2020, and continues to face, is igniting systemic changes in museums, whether they like it or not.

## Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

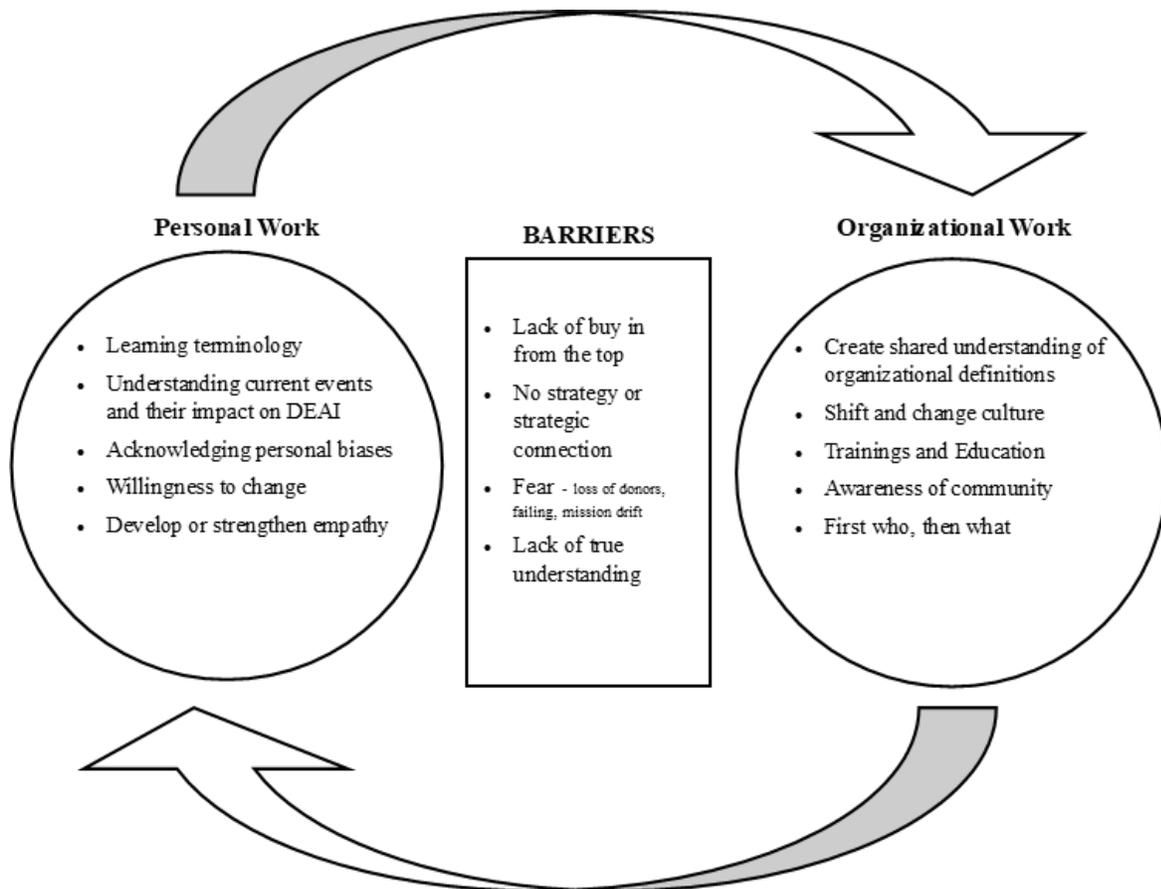
From the literature review and the interview data, DEAI in nonprofits, whether specifically in museums and gardens, or the nonprofit sector at large, is not one-size-fits all. There are no universal definitions for diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Figure 1 describes a model of the foundational work needed to be done on an individual level and organizational level while acknowledging common barriers that may act as roadblocks in the process. It is important to note that an organization cannot progress without first completing both sides of the work. There is no requirement to complete one before the other. It is also important to acknowledge that the reason why an organization practices DEAI may be unique to each organization. Having a “why” is important, and should reflect the personal and organizational work done.

The personal work needed to practice DEAI authentically, with its strongest chance to truly stick, involves acknowledging one’s own biases, whether it be through a professional assessment or through one’s own self reflection. To truly acknowledge biases, a basic understanding of what the terms diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion means to the one doing the work is also important. Drawing on one’s own personal examples of these words manifested in their lives will help to create lasting connections to the work. Awareness of current events, the community to which one belongs to or simply enters frequently, are all influential in aligning DEAI in relevant and tangible tactics. Lastly, the willingness to change on a personal level is deeply important in DEAI work. There is an infamous Maya Angelou quote, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” (Angelou, 2012) Systemic changes, being a better organization for the good of humanity, means willingness to change when new information is presented.

The organizational work mimics the personal work. An organization must define its terminology. All those involved in creating DEAI practices need to be on the same page. With organizational change, comes culture change. As staff are expected to learn and adapt, so too will the culture within the workplace to breed a more inclusive environment. A basic kicking off point for any organization is to provide training and resources for its stakeholders. Knowledge is power, and for true buy-in to DEAI, an organization is going to need power behind it. Which leads to the next point, which is that an organization must know the community to which it serves, to which it sits in, to which it wants to reach further to. Who are you providing access to? Who is feeling included within your walls? Lastly, organizations have

to get the right people in the door before it can begin to achieve this work. Through the change in culture, and further education of staff and all, the wrong people will leave, and the right people will stay or be welcomed in. It is up to the organization at large to determine who needs to be at the table before they start on what needs to be done.

**Figure 1 - Elements of Personal and Organizational DEAI work**



*Source: Author's Creation, 2021*

Barriers affect the personal work from affecting the organizational work, and vice versa. Through both the literature review and expert interviews, there needs to be champions at the top level of the organization for DEAI to even have a fighting chance at being in practice at an organization. Leadership buy in is incredibly important for the DEAI work to lift off. If there are no champions at the top,

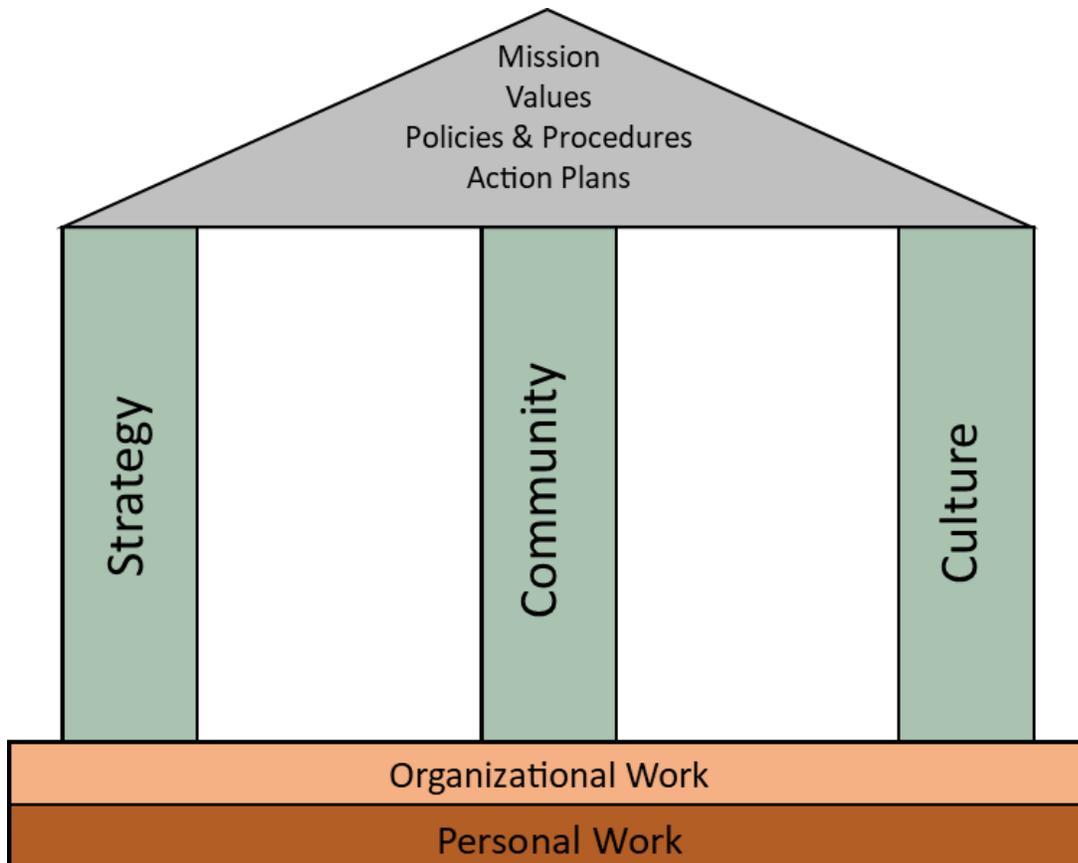
motivation to the personal work, or organizational work will be fleeting or even deflating. Strategy, in the form of the mission itself, a strategic plan, or policies in place, can create a barrier to DEAI work.

Without strategy, walking the walk may prove to be challenging if there is no direction, goals, or vision to connect it to. Fear, a common theme in the expert interviews, can be a crippling barrier to DEAI. The fear of failing, of saying the wrong thing, of losing donors, of mission drift, all weigh heavy on the collective consciousness of organizational leadership as well as individuals committed to DEAI work. It can be so crippling that in fact it can stop the work right in its place. An individual who has done the personal work may hit a roadblock of a leadership team fearful of “doing it wrong” to the point where excuses, such as money and staff capacities are used to elongate the process. Vice versa, an organization that has committed to doing DEAI work may hit a wall when on an individual level, a board president or a CEO, is stopped in their tracks at the fear of losing a donor relationship they may have cultivated for years. Without truly understanding the purpose of the work, DEAI can not excel. This is not surface level work, if it cannot breach the surface on an individual and organizational level, it can quickly be halted.

A secondary model, seen in Figure 2, was created to provide a structural tool for successful DEAI implementation in any organization. The foundation of the structure, previously mentioned, requires individual and organizational work. The pillars that sit atop the foundation are strategy, community, and culture. Strategy provides direction for an organization and attributes to progress. Everyone, but importantly leadership, must keep a strategic mindset when leading the organization. Community is the reason at which nonprofits, especially museums and gardens exist. Community gives purpose to the work, the mission, and the progress an organization works hard to achieve. Culture in the workplace breeds change, inclusion, tolerance, and without a healthy workplace culture, DEAI work can not trickle into everyone’s work.

The roof of the structure protects the organization from straying from it’s work. It provides policies, plans, and procedures that both staff and leadership can lean on. It also holds everyone accountable to DEAI through these large ideals, values, and documents.

**Figure 2 - Structural DEAI Organizational Model**



*Source: Author's Creation, 2021*

To conclude, the following recommendations are presented within this research to nonprofits wishing to embark on practicing DEAI.

1. Policy - Create organizational policies that hold everyone accountable to practicing DEAI in every facet of the organization
2. Strategy - It is the CEO/Executive Director's responsibility to make strategic connections to DEAI work. This increases the likelihood of buy in from leadership and board members. This furthers the longevity of DEAI work in an organization.
3. Culture - An inclusive workplace culture that is able to adjust and change to meet the needs of the employees is a culture that will breed successful DEAI work.
4. Adapt - DEAI is ongoing and ever changing. Organizations should acknowledge there is no end goal in DEAI work. Through this acknowledgement, organization must be adaptable as the world continues to change around them.

## **Section 6: Conclusion**

This research investigated diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion in nonprofits through the examination of museums and public gardens. A model, to kick start how an organization can build their organization around DEAI, was created. In order to practice DEAI in nonprofits, barriers and challenges were identified to assist in identification and ultimately pushing through barriers.

This research utilized a literature review to determine where academic research identified focal points of DEAI, and assisted in defining the terms of DEAI, identifying workplace culture and management practices that align with successful DEAI, and how it is being presented through present day examples. The series of expert interviews contributed themes to best management practices, identification of barriers to DEAI work, and how a global pandemic and the rise of racial justice in 2020 catalyzed DEAI in museums and public gardens. Comparing and combining these two sets themes and topics allowed for the development of two models. The first, identifying the foundation of DEAI work through personal work and organizational work and the need for both to happen for success to occur. The second model includes six components, foundation, both personal and organizational, three pillars that drive and support DEAI work - community, strategy, and culture. Last, the “roof” of the model, which is the organization’s mission, policies, procedures, and formal processes that solidify DEAI work and integrate it into everything that is done.

Limitations identified in this research include the perspective of the principal researcher, acknowledging there may be a bias as I am actively involved in DEAI within my career. The research interviews also were specific to those in leadership positions and further research should be done with employees at all levels of organizations. As much as there is an emphasis on leadership needing to buy-in in order for DEAI to be successful, the perspectives of all employees and stakeholders should be further investigated.

The academic research has been slow in advancement on elaborating on all definitions of DEAI. Most of the emphasis in literature falls within diversity, in a racial and ethnicity lens, and in inclusion. With the generational push, millennials and generation z, aging into positions of power, I am confident the research will follow suit. The publications in the professional world are full steam ahead with addressing DEAI as a whole and not as a piecemeal.

DEAI is not going anywhere anytime soon and if nonprofits intend to change as the country around them changes, there must be constant learning, changing, and adapting. DEAI is not a static concept that can be completed and allow leadership to move onto the next “thing”. DEAI is fluid and with that, nonprofits must continue to prioritize the work through strategy, mission, and futuristic thinking. The process is inclusive, repels stagnation, and must contain a level of humility. Nonprofits can champion DEAI, but only through challenging foundational work and continuous adaptation to create a more diverse, equitable, accessible and inclusive world.

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## Appendix A: List of Interviewees, Titles, and Locations

	Name	Title	Organization and Location
P1	Andrew Plumley	Director of Inclusion	American Alliance of Museums Washington, D.C.
P2	Elon Cook Lee	Director of Interpretation	National Trust for Historic Preservation Washington, D.C.
P3	Lori Fogarty	CEO	Oakland Museum of California California
P4	Casey Sclar	Executive Director	American Public Gardens Association Pennsylvania
P5	Laura Lott	President & CEO	American Alliance of Museums Washington, D.C.
P6	Damon Waitt	Director	North Carolina Botanical Garden North Carolina
P7	MaryLynn Mack	COO Board, VP	South Coast Botanic Garden American Public Garden Association California
P8	Brian Vogt	CEO Board, President	Denver Botanic Gardens American Public Garden Association Colorado
P9	Kara Newport	CEO	Filoli - Museum and Garden California

## Appendix B: Summarized Semi-Structured Interview Answers

<p>How is your organization practicing DEAI?</p>	<p>IDI assessment, Bias training, creating shared definitions, DEI working group of just staff, board committees, developing commitment strategy, multiple language text and signage, staff training and capacity building, inclusive board nomination process, diversifying board members, creating policies and procedures, emphasis on representation in everything the organization does, surveying staff</p>
<p>What qualities does a leader need to possess to do this work (DEAI)?</p>	<p>Courage, Humility, Empathy, vulnerability, bravery, patience, determination, self reflection, authenticity, tolerance, strategic thinking, positive intention, ability to sit in discomfort, not knowing all the answers, commitment to learning, curiosity, conviction</p>
<p>What does workplace culture look like in an organization practicing DEAI?</p>	<p>understanding how each staff person views the world, acknowledging DEAI may mean something different to everyone, multigenerational collaboration, meeting people where they are and not where you wish they were, a work environment of abundance rather than scarcity</p>
<p>What would you say are barriers that prevent museums or gardens from prioritizing DEAI?</p>	<p>Fear of failing, fear of shame, not knowing where to start, boards, lack of understanding, not prioritizing the work financially, knowledge and the need for constant learning, biases and assumptions, leadership , board term limits prevent diversifying the board quickly, donors may not like the change, volunteers, fear of mission drift</p>
<p>What is different now? Diversity and Inclusion has been talked about for decades, what is catalyzing change now?</p>	<p>Younger generations are not allowing it to be pushed aside, the public is holding organizations more accountable, access to information is instant</p>

## **Author's Bio**

Brittany is a Florida native from Miami, currently living in the Bay Area in California. Brittany serves as the Director of Events and Programs at Filoli, a nonprofit museum and garden, and has been with Filoli for nearly four years. Brittany manages Filoli's Public Events, Rentals, and hospitality services including the Quail's Nest Cafe and Garden Bar. Brittany assisted in Filoli's first ever Pride celebration in 2019. This event was especially meaningful to her, as she identifies within the LGBTQ+ community, and found passion in providing safe and comfortable spaces in public gardens for the community. Brittany also sits on the DEAI Task Force at Filoli, formed in 2020, and assisted in developing the DEAI Action Plan and DEAI Policy for Filoli. Prior to joining Filoli, Brittany served as a Visitor Services Coordinator for the State of Florida where she helped open The Grove Museum. In that role, she assisted in the creation and execution of an interpretive plan for visitors. Brittany also spent five years at the Deering Estate in Miami, FL, where she coordinated all research and conservation efforts on the property, developed school programs, and led interpretive programs for the public. She is a graduate of Florida International University with a BA in Environmental Studies and a minor in Anthropology. Brittany also earned a Masters in Nonprofit Administration (MNA) from the University of San Francisco, following the completion of this research capstone. What she loves most about her career experience and her time at Filoli is the joy it brings her to connect with people and connect people to places.