

# Equity Action Plan

## Introduction

To serve all residents well, Kokomo-Howard County Public Library must prioritize equity. While public libraries have often emphasized equality, we recognize that [equity and equality are not the same](#).

This plan began in response to blatant incidents of racial injustice in 2020 that, while not new, motivated us to take responsibility for our role in creating “justice for all.”

As we approach this work, we acknowledge the generational effects of historic and contemporary systems that have not afforded equal opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

To enact our mission of creating opportunities for our community to become its best, no form of bias or prejudice has a place at KHCPL; we strive for equity for all regardless of the reason others may perceive them as “less than.” KHCPL needs to ensure that all residents feel welcome, and even more, that they feel as if they truly belong at the library. To achieve this, we acknowledge that we have much to learn and changes to make.

We address two broad areas in this plan: practices to help KHCPL and its employees behave in ways that are free from discrimination and unnecessary barriers, and practices that allow all residents to see themselves at and in the library.

We recognize that to dismantle institutional bias we must combine bold vision with specific, measurable actions. As we begin to implement the plan, we will assign responsibility and start dates for the included actions. It is important to take swift action while maintaining strength and persistence for ongoing work.

## Plan

**Programs and Services Goal:** Welcome all members of our community by reflecting their experiences in our programs, services, and interactions

*Programs and Services Outcome:* Create practical tools and internal processes that integrate EDI principles into our daily decision-making

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Review and revise policies and procedures to make them more equitable for all
- Develop new and revise existing internal documents to incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion in our daily work

- Create an organization-wide display checklist that ensures diverse titles are included in staff-curated displays
- Compose a list of sources for employees to consult when seeking diverse titles for displays, programs, etc.
- Add one or more diversity elements to the KHCPL program planning checklist
- Add diversity/inclusion elements to orientation for and/or onboarding of new employees
- Engage existing planning groups and committees to ensure that annual events, large initiatives, or series prioritize diverse voices, including but not limited to the following:
  - Howard County Reads
  - Summer Reading and other outside presenters
  - First Friday
  - Community Partnerships
- Audit outreach activities to ensure they serve diverse audiences
  - Inventory bookmobile stops by primary audience
  - Prioritize racial diversity when selecting individual outreach opportunities
  - Prioritize racial diversity when planning off-site services
  - Intentionally plan and provide services to marginalized and underrepresented groups, including those living with disabilities and those who are or who have been incarcerated
- Connect intentionally with diverse audiences
  - Invite interested community members to assist us in service planning and development
  - Gather public information on existing barriers in our programs and services
  - Seek out alternate communication tools/streams appropriate for diverse audiences
  - Choose inclusive language and graphics for our marketing materials and other messaging
  - Explore replacing the graphics on our bookmobiles with images that feature diverse individuals

*Budget Outcome:* We demonstrate our commitment to equity by allocating money to activities that support becoming equitable as an organization and as a community.

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Ensure that, annually, 10% or more of designated funds for outside presenters, facilitators, etc. supports individuals/groups from marginalized or underrepresented populations

**Collection Goal:** Offer a collection of materials that successfully act as a mirror that reflects our community's diverse experiences and as a window that provides insight into experiences different from our own

*Collection Outcome:* We offer a diverse physical and digital collection

- Explore options for performing a diversity audit of our collection
  - Research in-house diversity audit methodologies
  - Request outsourced diversity audit information and price quote
  - Be alert to regional, state, or national opportunities that would support or help to further this work
- Actively seek out bibliographic essays, themed review compilations, award lists, and other sources that focus on diversity
- Review our Collection Development Policy
  - Ensure it provides adequately diverse review and informational sources, as well as guidance on developing a diverse collection
  - Review and evaluate retention and weeding language as it applies to materials portraying diverse characters and perspectives

**Workforce Development and Staff Training Goal:** Become an employer of choice for a diverse workforce, providing ongoing, intentional diversity-focused professional development opportunities for employees

*Staff Understanding Outcome:* Our employees spend work time learning about and discussing racism and other inequities and challenges including discrimination and accessibility

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Provide ongoing, diverse informal educational alternatives that stimulate learning, discussion, and self-examination among employees
  - Facilitate Project Ready reading/discussion groups, using modules that have a general focus appropriate for employees in all positions
  - Hold events similar to the Human Library for staff only; rotate staff through several events over the course of a year
  - Offer reading/viewing discussion opportunities that vary in depth, preparation time, etc.
- Provide formal educational opportunities for employees
  - Become familiar with local and regional individuals (e.g. IUK Diversity Officer) and organizations (e.g. Family Service Association of Howard County, Peace Learning Center, Bona Vista, and Area 5) that offer applicable classes, workshops, etc. and schedule presentations from these groups
  - Utilize webinars and other virtual forms of applicable education

- Seek to collaborate with other local entities to provide joint learning opportunities for employees
- Ensure that during each calendar year, every employee who is employed by January 2 of that year attends at least one formal or informal educational session that relates to racism and/or other inequities

*Hiring Outcome:* Our employees reflect the diversity of our community, including its racial and ethnic makeup.

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Advertise/share job ads in additional places:
  - Create a plan for advertising open positions, including job posting sites that reach diverse audiences
    - Librarian level positions should be advertised through appropriate state and national sites, including the Indiana Black Librarians' Network
    - Positions that require/prefer college or combinations of education and experience should be advertised through appropriate state and local sites, including Ivy Tech Community College and regional Historically Black Colleges and Universities
  - Share job ads with local leaders of diverse/inclusive groups
- Share concern with ILF about the need for statewide action on attracting and retaining diverse library employees
- Require additional training for all employees involved in hiring
  - Budget for and select appropriate options for implicit bias training, including live training and/or online training from organizations such as the Peace Learning Center
  - Select and share appropriate materials on inclusive hiring
  - Require the completion of appropriate modules of Project Ready, including "Cultural Competency, Cultural Humility" and module(s) on bias
- Be proactive in working to educate a diverse range of students about libraries as a career option
  - Identify and connect with local high school guidance counselors
  - Research and seek to participate in local career fairs
  - Self-fund or look for grant-funded opportunities to hire interns/students, mentoring them and providing work experience at the library

*Budget Outcome:* We demonstrate our commitment to equity by allocating money to activities that support becoming equitable as an organization.

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Prioritize employees' equity-related knowledge and skills when approving or denying continuing education requests
- Maintain adequate staffing levels to allow time for employees to participate in appropriate formal and informal networking and education
- Develop long-term organizational diversity by prioritizing funds for mentorship and internship programs that focus on or attract diverse applicants

**Community Relationships Goal:** Build meaningful relationships with underrepresented communities as a foundational step in enacting our mission

*Partner Outcome:* We increase our impact in the community by learning from and working with local partners

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Work collaboratively with local organizations whose purpose is to gather or serve people of color, prioritizing joint efforts projected to impact our community positively
  - Local chapters of state or national organizations such as the NAACP or Indiana Black Expo
  - Organizations unique to our community such as the Carver Center or Embracing Hope of Howard County
- Work collaboratively with local organizations whose purpose is to gather or serve marginalized groups such as those living with disabilities, prioritizing joint efforts projected to impact our community positively
  - Local chapters/arms of state or national organizations such as Mental Health America
  - Organizations unique to our community such as Bona Vista, Bridges Outreach, and Turning Point Systems of Care
  - Segments of local government such as the Howard County jail and probation office
- Engage with new audiences by partnering with organizations or businesses that serve people of color or via projects that will benefit racially diverse groups
  - Go into the community to connect with people where they live, gather, learn, etc.
  - Provide support, publicity, etc. for special projects such as the Douglass School restoration effort
- Create environments that encourage employees to learn from local residents and organizations
  - Provide paid time for employees to serve on boards and in organizations that will allow them to observe, learn, build relationships, and open streams of communication with diverse audiences

- Invite local people of color to join or serve as paid facilitators of our informal discussions or learning sessions
- Model inclusion in our selection of speakers for Staff Development Day

*Budget Outcome:* We demonstrate our commitment to equity by allocating resources to activities that support becoming equitable as an organization and as a community.

Changes to achieve this outcome:

- Seek out and contribute personnel or other library resources to events and initiatives that work toward a more equitable community