

SEASONS OF OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH

MARYLAND NONPROFITS EQUITY PROGRAM AUDIT REPORT TO
NATIONAL DANCE EDUCATION ORGANIZATION
DECEMBER 2021



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the work and investment that occurred before we arrived. Prior to Maryland Nonprofits' engagement, the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Committee had done much to cultivate the ground. We appreciate the NDEO board, leaders, staff, and members for supporting this initiative and insisting that the conversations begin. Thank you to the workgroups, workgroup leaders, every auditor, interviewer, interviewee and survey respondent. To each one who questioned the necessity of this work, thank you.

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When the Maryland Nonprofits Team arrived, we found some anxious, some reluctant, some excited and curious. These are all the signs of readiness.

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THANK YOU NDEO AUDITORS!

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INTRODUCTION

No process that is undertaken to probe sensitive matters such as race, gender, and identity will likely ever be done to the satisfaction of all concerned parties. Yet, at the risk of imperfection, missing the mark, and criticism, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) has embarked on a journey to do just that. It is at their invitation that Maryland Nonprofits has had the honor to help shepherd this important work – the NDEO Equity Program Audit.

What was the impetus for such an invitation, to go beyond JDEI education, and plumb the depths of NDEO’s programs with an equity filter? Surely a number of variables contributed to NDEO’s decision. We launched the audit process in the midst of a global pandemic, Covid-19. Simultaneously, a number of social and political issues that had been brewing on a not-so-slow-boil erupted on May 25, 2020 at the killing of George Floyd by Minnesota police captured live and played out on national television. The response to this tragedy was a global reckoning. The outcry of people in pain and protests were felt everywhere. The public and private sectors were not spared. They felt it, too. Organizations were faced with a decision to respond – one way or another – with either sounds of silence or solidarity. Many were confronted with questions from members, staff, leaders and other stakeholders. They wrestled with the right way to respond.

What kind of world do we want to be a part of or help create? We often ask leaders to consider this question and to grapple with the language of -isms. How can we begin the change and embrace the elements of transition if we are turned off by the language and the conversation?

The seeds and transformative work of justice, diversity, equity and inclusion are often embedded in the organization, discipline or problem itself. What were the pre-existing conditions that made NDEO ripe for this program audit? No doubt there are many, however, we submit that the discipline of dance education itself was one major pathway.

What good is a theory of change if there is no change? Or what is the point of an organizational assessment that does not stoke the embers of truth, transparency and accountability? How does systemic change occur unless it is instigated by a determination to right a wrong?

The work has many elements, names, acronyms and descriptors: Justice, diversity, equity, inclusion (JDEI); E and I, D and I; anti-racism, anti-oppression are just a few. Each one represents a different facet of a very complex and hardened societal construct. Probing such matters on any level, whether as a board, staff, or community can be risky business. We are often trapped by our own terminology. Terms such as racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Arab

racism, ableism, whiteness, white supremacy, white dominant culture, ageism, gender identity injustice, transphobia, xenophobia, and homophobia can be off-putting and offensive to some making it difficult to engage in important conversation. The impact of experiencing such, however, is far worse than the emotions that the syllables arouse. An organization is like a societal swatch, a microcosm of all that troubles and challenges us. Likewise, within an organization often lives the attitudes, behaviors and practices – both written and unwritten – of our self-governance. It can be a place where the best in us and the worst in us have learned – no matter the cost – to co-exist. It can be a place where we’ve learned to not see, not feel and to look away from the systemic and the structural –isms that make a place welcoming and affirming for some and unwelcoming and closed to others. Today, NDEO faces a season – to cultivate new ground, sow seeds of opportunity and take up the priorities proposed in the audit results.

1.1 Seasons for Opportunity and Growth

We present this report with hope. Admittedly, NDEO has much work to do and data to face. The results are what they are – no sugar coating. Additional questions understandably will arise. Nevertheless, we submit that the **discipline** of Dance Education uniquely positions NDEO leaders, staff and members to embrace the work ahead.

Dance Education the Perfect Set Up.

It’s been fascinating to consider the role of dance education *as a discipline* and it’s relationship to becoming more just, equitable and anti-racist. Dance, itself, is an asset. The discipline of dance education, however, positions NDEO board, staff and members for the changing shifts called for in the audit results. The Maryland Nonprofits Consulting Team observed at a few strategies that are built-in to the discipline that set them up for embarking on this work. They are a community of practice where rehearsal and repetition comprise the art of getting it wrong often before the art of getting it right. They hold the capacity to not only DO what is right but EMBODY the right thing.

As teachers they are trained to bring more of themselves, mind, heart and body, to the JDEI work.

Dance educators understand time and space. They know how to build resiliency and strength and train others to do so as well -- teaching learning, listening and embodying.

Enthusiasm and deep care for their work is a hallmark of the profession marked by sustained commitment of hours and contribution to students, the process, and the art of education.

Dance educators tend to prioritize the learning experience. Therefore, with the audit, they dug in and became embedded in the work. They came with a mind to work. finished their assignments and held to timetables.

The findings in this report reveal that the National Dance Education Organization faces a unique season of opportunities and potential growth. In such seasons: climate, preparing the ground, cultivation, planting, watering, and growing are all critical to reaping a bountiful harvest. As you read this report be mindful of the seasons, opportunities and possibilities that surface. Keep in mind, opportunities often present as problems. We invite NDEO to seize the moment lest you miss the season and miss your harvest. There are a number of reasons that we believe that NDEO is primed to step into the next phase of Action and Accountability, **if** it chooses to. Here are a few elements that stand out as for touchpoints for success. Enhance transformation. Set them up for taking action.

NDEO Showed Up. The people that comprise the NDEO community vigorously showed up to take on the work of the audit. When NDEO leadership invited board, staff and members to be a part of the audit process, there was not only an enthusiastic interest but overwhelming commitment.

Facing the Feedback. Taking Risks. Regular Communication.

Receiving feedback can be tough especially about a work, or an organization that you love and are invested in. This process and report reveal truths that were hard to hear, and calls for greater transparency and diversity across the board were sounded. At the risk of vulnerability, embarrassment, the organization did not turn away from it. Through regular communication, the leadership kept everyone informed.

Confronting the hierarchy of privilege. There were times when conversations revealed the glaring hierarchy. For example, higher-ed over small studios; advanced and doctoral degrees over no degrees. They were responsive and open to seeing the hard things.

No muted voices. Of those we heard from, the majority of the respondents expressed the desire to embrace JDEI work. However, not all were enthusiastic. We think it important to acknowledge that some survey respondents expressed reservations. *Is this so-called JDEI work going to change us? We're about dance. What does JDEI have to do with dance.?* The strength of all discourse is grounded in the diversity of perspectives, both affirming and dissenting. Great learning and problem solving can emerge from both. No good audit would be worth its salt if we didn't acknowledge all voices.

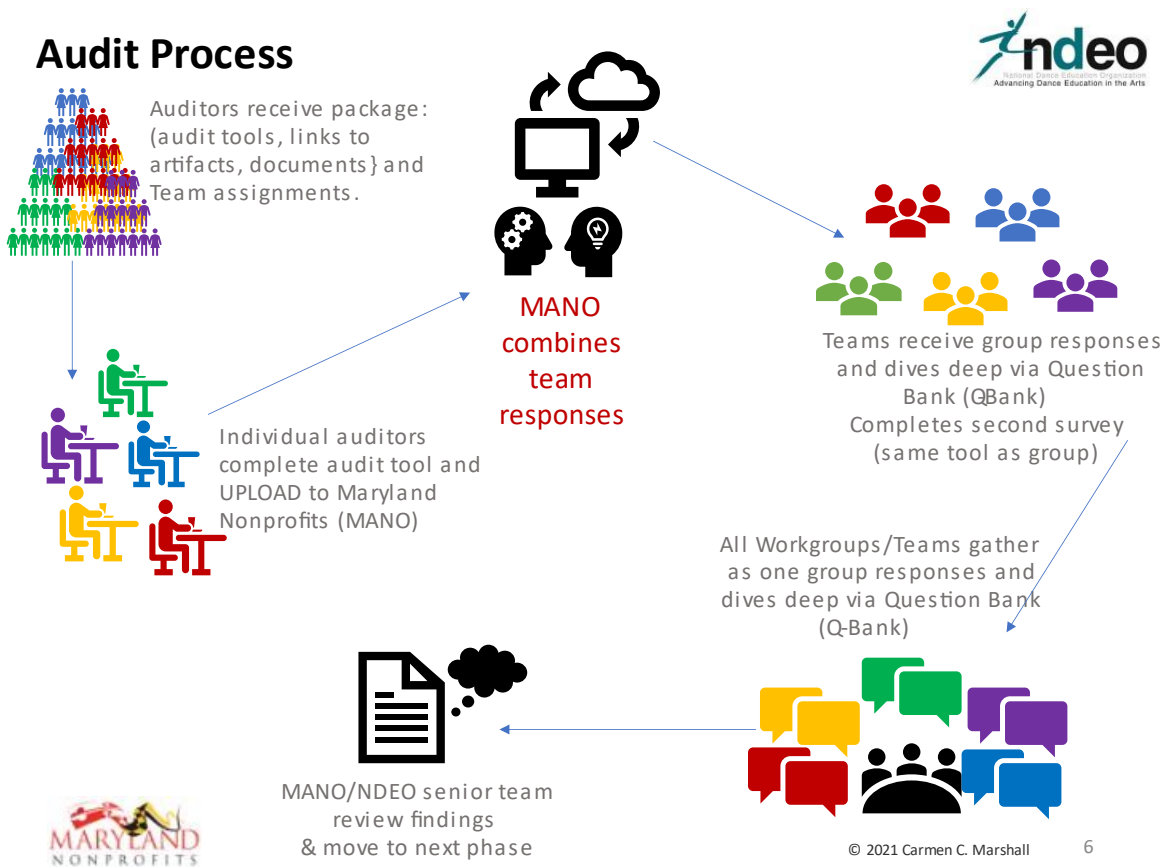
Champions in Our Midst.

There are many JDEI champions in the NDEO community. These champions, pushed and prodded the audit process with important and thoughtful inquiry and testing. The quality and caliber of inquiry helped to further refine our audit process. Each auditor remained exquisitely curious about how things mattered and showed great care.

This is the Beginning. There are many ways to enter a stream. NDEO entered this important work through an audit of their programs. After dozens of hours spent over many months in an individual and group audit process results will not be automatic. Now the real work of taking action on priorities begins.

2 OUR APPROACH

The mission for the audit was to assist NDEO in seeing itself through its programming, systems, and practices that may run counter to its determination to be equitable, inclusive, diverse, welcoming and ultimately just and anti-racist. The primary goal was to identify through examination and assessment those areas, practices and systems that provide opportunities to take corrective action and re-think its way of being, serving and collaborating. Maryland Nonprofits and NDEO conducted their examination and assessment utilizing stakeholder surveys, individual, and group audits.



2.1 The Auditors

Original plans called for the recruitment of approximately 50 volunteers from NDEO’s Board, staff and membership to participate in one of eight Audit workgroups as an Auditor. The Auditors were responsible for conducting the JDEI audit for assigned NDEO Programs and

identifying and prioritizing required changes and actions needed based on audit findings. In particular, we were looking for individuals with one or more of the following characteristics:

- Knowledgeable of NDEO programs;
- JDEI knowledge;
- Regular engagement with NDEO organization or programs;
- Historical knowledge of the organization;
- Genuine interest and commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion becoming realized at NDEO;
- Willing to critically and honestly assess NDEO's programs, policies, and practices; or
- New to the Organization.

Volunteers with leadership, team building and facilitation skills served as Workgroup Leads offering guidance and direction to the JDEI workgroups on assigned tasks.

The response to the request for volunteers was robust with over 100 plus individuals responding to the solicitation. NDEO leadership also did some further outreach to ensure representation from underrepresented groups, such as Native and Indigenous, Pacific Islanders, and Asian Americans. After further review by NDEO Leadership, a total of 90 volunteer auditors were confirmed resulting in 9 workgroups, composed of 10 auditors, each with two co-leads.

2.2 The Audit Process

Training. Maryland Nonprofit offered several trainings to situate the JDEI Auditors and familiarize them with how we were defining JDEI, the audit process and their role as auditors.

Surveys. Customized surveys were designed to help NDEO better understand its JDEI status and opportunities for increased justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion from the perspective of its Board members, staff and membership. These surveys provided a current snapshot of relevant stakeholder demographics, perceptions, and experience with NDEO. The survey results will serve as NDEO's baseline to assess the organization's progress in implementing its JDEI initiative.

All surveys were confidential and anonymous. The Board and Staff response rates were 100%, respectively. The survey response rate for the NDEO membership was 12%. The survey results for each stakeholder group were aggregated, analyzed and reported without individual attribution. The survey results were made available to the JDEI Audit Workgroups as input to the audit process.

4.2.3 Workgroup Process

The JDEI Audit Workgroups deeply examined NDEO programs, organizational systems and power structures to understand where NDEO stood relative to its JDEI journey, and where NDEO needed to go and grow.

Individual Audit

The audit process began with the individual audits. Workgroup members combed through artifacts and documents to build a clearer portrait of leadership and decision making, diversity in membership and programming, engagement and outreach, marketing and communications, and JDEI policy.

To assist workgroup members, Maryland Nonprofits created a JDEI Audit Workgroup Package specific to each Audit Workgroup to facilitate the audit process. The JDEI Audit Workgroup Package described the process, resources, tools, tasks and timeline.

Beginning in June 2021 through July 2021, each Workgroup member worked independently to complete the audit for their assigned area(s) and documented their observations. Upon the completion of the individual audits, Maryland Nonprofits consolidated, analyzed and summarized the results for each Workgroup. The Workgroup specific reports summarized the audit scope, workgroup approach, workgroup members, common themes and trends, and the consolidated Auditors' responses grouped by People, Program and Process.

Group Audit

The purpose of the second audit was to present individual audit findings and upon reflection of the findings, to complete the audit as a team and to dig even deeper. We underwent a thorough process to analyze the discussions for the workgroup audit meetings. In all, we held nine meetings. The workgroups pushed workgroup members to think holistically about their individual audit findings.

They were challenged to:

- 1) Identify issues and needs that should be prioritized
- 2) Identify questions and concerns associated with identified priorities
- 3) Suggest recommendations for growth and moving forward.

We charged every workgroup member to push themselves to think about what else might be possible and to think big.

3 AUDIT FINDINGS | PEOPLE | PROGRAM | PROCESS

“Although some diversity exists (various facets) and is celebrated genuinely, it is predominately white, female org.” – NDEO member

Overarching Themes and Trends

- **WHITE DOMINANT CULTURE**- Staff and membership is overwhelmingly white and female
- **OPTIMISM**- There is clear optimism that this JEDI process is a necessary and long overdue step in the right direction. However, admission that JEDI work needs to have set goals and timelines to be impactful.
- **WE CAN DO SO MUCH BETTER** Many voices shared that the organization can do much better. Sense that NDEO is taking the first step with the audit, but so much more JEDI work needs to be done

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An organization doesn't exist without people. When it comes to becoming a just and more equitable and anti-racist, people are central to the problem and the solution. To understand NDEO's posture and desired new direction, the auditors were asked to view the data over three domains – people, program, and process.

What do you see?	What does it mean?	Why does it matter?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision makers and staff mirror membership – predominately white women • Minimal diversity across decision makers, program administrators, <u>committees</u> and management teams • Minimal demographic information on decision makers, program administrators, committees and management teams • Minimal diversity across applicants and participants • Lack of demographic information on applicants and participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent gaps exist throughout the organization • Specific strategic goals are needed to center JDEI as a top priority in actuality across all leadership and decision-making levels • These gaps have not gone unnoticed by the majority of respondents but there appears to be significant lack of transparency as many respondents did not always know. • Satisfied with status quo • When people do not see themselves, sends a message • Lack transparency points to a the need to address the power differential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of transparency in this area can potentially breed mistrust • Gaps = opportunity for org to go deeper in it’s commitment to JDEI and anti-racism work • Left unchecked, it sets the organization up to remain unchanged • Puts the walk in the talk; Members want to see change and authentic commitment lived out in the life of the org • NDEO not representative; others perceived as not welcome, not valued • Disaggregate data to keep up with disparities and correct them • This is an opportunity to address the power differential

People

“You can’t be inclusive without representation. It is imperative that the members, staff and board need to be diversified as everyone is mostly white. The first thing to look at is who.”- NDEO member

“It felt like white people, teaching other white people, how to teach white kids.”- NDEO member

When we hear the word “people” what does that trigger in one’s mind? If we are being honest with ourselves, we are thinking about people that we identify with or people we are familiar

with. We also think of people that look like and think like us. Another key mental picture that comes to mind when one hears the word “people” is people who are part of the group. As a membership organization, NDEO represents an identity and is comprised of people that convene, learn together, teach one another, and develop professionally together. When we completed the audit process, we found three consistent themes across all workgroups when group members were asked to investigate the aspects of the organization that dealt with people.

Theme: White Dominant Culture

There was astounding acknowledgement that the staff and membership of NDEO is predominantly white and female. This observation and statement was discussed and interwoven in several other aspects of the audit findings. For example, the most obvious takeaway is that the membership and staff of NDEO is indeed mostly white and female (this can be observed both via survey data and anecdotally). As members dug deeper, more disparities revealed themselves. The audit results and discussions pointed to the lack of diversity in leadership and decision making and in each program realm.

However, those participating in this journey connected this observation to other very important connecting points. The homogeneity of the organization was discussed by some as a facet of how NDEO was founded and whose voices were included juxtaposed to whose voices were silenced. Additionally, the white female dominant membership and staff discussion led some members to discuss access and to point out that access to NDEO is most vibrant in spaces where white females are most abundant both in numbers and leadership. Membership questioned how dancers moving in communities of color, communities that are not steeped in academia or K-12 education, or dancers that do not have the prototypical formal training get access to NDEO and have the resources to fully participate as it is currently designed. The consistent observation about the demographics of NDEO also spurred discussions around the desire for additional data. Members noted that more data should be collected to better understand how participation looks when disaggregated by race.

Buttressed in discussions regarding the white dominant culture of the organization were realizations that NDEO lacks transparency. The majority of members noted that they are unaware of who is making decisions and how decisions are being made. This speaks to the importance of knowing who has voice and ensuring that voice is not limited to those in positions of leadership and power.

An Important Note

It is critical to note that for many Black, Latinx, Asian and other non-white members, this journey of putting JDEI work front and center for NDEO was deeply personal and painful. Black, Latinx, Asian and other non-white members expressed that they have made consistent efforts in the past to push on systemic racism in NDEO and have been silenced, dismissed, and/or rejected. It is important to highlight here that the process of prioritizing this work and the optimism associated with moving forward has awakened a feeling of emancipation and healing for many Black, Latinx, Asian and other non-white members juxtaposed to a feeling of reckoning and new growth for many white members.

Theme: Optimism

When we discussed the people of NDEO and the JDEI work that should happen going forward, members repeatedly shared that this is a process that is absolutely necessary and is a long overdue step in the right direction. As a group, many discussed how the timeline from May 2020 through the present has been transformative on a personal and professional level when it comes to learning about systemic racism in the U.S. Members also resounded that this process has also been about their own personal journeys of coming to understand where and how systemic racism operates in the world of dance.

Membership is excited and ready to roll up their sleeves to do this work, which is commendable. Members also expressed that they do not want this to be a “one and done” or performative action item for the organization. Virtually all members that discussed optimism around this process were steadfast in their conviction that the process needed to have clear timelines, goals, and next steps.

Theme: We can do so much better

Many voices shared that the organization can do much better and needs to genuinely prioritize an action plan for JDEI work. Specific strategic goals are needed to center JDEI as a top priority in actuality across all leadership and decision-making levels.

JDEI Front and Center. Not episodic or performative. This was a consistent refrain among members. As we journeyed through the second audit workgroup meetings, it became clear that the majority of those participating in the audit process felt that in order to continue this work authentically, a few things need to happen:

- **There must be a plan that leads to action.** Action will require substantive involvement from Black, Latino, Native and Indigenous members and this involvement must not be limited to JDEI work or siloed.
- **Clear timelines and goals.** Members acknowledge that this may be heavy lift that needs focus. This work needs to be braided into the work of the organization and needs to be defined and spelled out in terms of short, mid, and long term goals.
- **Amplify voices and make affinity groups fully operational.** Nearly every audit workgroup meeting discussed the benefits and importance of ad hoc affinity groups that had formed recently. Members also made clear distinctions between safe space and brave spaces.
- **Clear Decisions.** Members want to see change and authentic commitment lived out in the life of the organization. They queried, “how far is NDEO willing to go to dismantle some existing practices and institutional fixtures?” We noticed that this came up fairly consistently in discussions around **publications and coursework**. Dismantling is not easy work and members called on NDEO for clear decisions.

PROGRAM

“To be a member you need to pay and this makes it not accessible to people of diverse populations. Higher education institutions are able to budget for their staff to be members, and other organizations that are not higher education might not be able to budget for memberships. Feels like we are missing a whole part of dance education in the US because of this.”- NDEO member

Overarching Themes and Trends

- **ACCESS AND BARRIERS**- Barriers impact access for diverse populations. Barriers highlighted include:
 - Financial
 - Geographical
 - Not being a school or private dance studio
 - Publications are higher ed centric and mostly comprised of those with PhDs. This limits access to others outside of academia that can contribute to the field and research

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What do you see?

- No consensus on whether NDEO has a **JDEI policy** or *whether course content is aligned with JDEI policy*
- No consensus on whether NDEO has a **Plan to Bring People into Leadership Regardless of Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion, Ability and Sexual Orientation**
- No consensus on whether NDEO has a **Plan to Expand Engagement with Members Regardless of Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Religion, Ability and Sexual Orientation**
- No consensus on **Availability of Safe Space and Supportive Atmosphere**
- NDEO Website, Newsletter, Social Media Images and Stories do reflect people of diverse populations to some degree but less so for program marketing material.

What does it mean?

- Lack of consensus combined with a lack of clarity on these issues continue to point to a glaring lack of transparency
- NDEO has a huge opportunity to pay specific attention to sharing its intention and strategic plans with the NDEO internal, and where appropriate, its external communities
- As long as there is no plan, there is no action; No action -- for the moment the group remains homogeneous and the same as before – without substantive involvement from Black, Latino, Native and Indigenous, for example.
- What assumptions are we making about who benefits?

Why does it matter?

- Anti-racism is defined as active and on-going action; Without this clarity NDEO activities appear not to be in alignment with core values
- Organization could be/is perceived by those from diverse populations as the “out-group”
- Words and pictures are not enough. May be perceived as “lip-service” only. Could be perceived as if there are no “real” or substantive relationships, testimonies or witnesses to support
- Without the necessary changes programs will not meet the needs or interests of diverse populations.
- opportunity to address power differential
- opportunity to encourage and embed new practices

“Dance instructors come from various education backgrounds. Skill and education do not always fit together. My mentor does not know about NDEO and their lack of formal education would nearly shut down access to NDEO.” -NDEO member

An Important Note

As members moved through this process, important questions of what dance styles are lauded and held up as the standard were raised over and over again. Turning the mirror inward and delving into definitions and standards is very much at the heart of JDEI work. Recognizing our shared value and humanity and rejecting hierarchy pushes us to move past white supremacist notions of standards rooted in white European conceptions.

Barriers to Access. NDEO is an organization that currently provides ample access to dancers in the K-12 space, higher education, and private dance studios. However, access is most concentrated in areas close to major cities. Members discussed distinct barriers that came up consistently. First, we observed clear themes around financial barriers in the initial individual audits and throughout workgroup second audits. The fact that NDEO requires that members pay dues and pay for travel and lodging for conferences is a significant barrier. Members pointed out that many dancers are being left out that do not have the financial wherewithal. Members felt this personally—in some instances some could point out how they themselves were unable to participate in NDEO due to lack of finances, or knew other dancers that could not participate due to finances. Connected to this was the barrier of program type. Members shared that community dance programs are often left out of NDEO and that many of these programs serve a substantial number of non-white students. Discussions ensued regarding the ripple effect of this reality—the absence of community dance programs limits the inclusion of non-white dancers and instructors and maintains the status quo of what dance genres are honored and revered and allows minimal diversity in membership and leadership to persist.

Imbalance in Publications Process. During the audit process, members also discussed the higher education centric nature of publications. The publication process is rooted in processes that mirror academia and limits access to others outside of academia that can contribute to the field and research.

Geography Blind Spot - Limits Access. Last, geography was a common theme when barriers were discussed. Members discussed that NDEO is strongest and most accessible in major cities and concentrated on both the west and east coast. Members shared that rural communities and locales with limited access to major metropolitan cities are often entirely left out. The challenge that members saw in this reality is that dance education and dance innovation is happening everywhere and several voices and contributions are missing with this blind spot.

Members offered recommendations that state affiliates be included more earnestly in NDEO to tap into hard-to-reach communities.

PROCESS

“The impact of lack of transparency also affects the sense of belonging to the organization.”

- NDEO member

“This audit is a wakeup call for the organization to improve in their processes. The various [programs] need to collect demographic information, and target specific individuals for a more diverse population.”

-NDEO member

Overarching Themes and Trends

- **TRANSPARENCY** - General lack of full transparency on decision making, power, voice, and authority (i.e., consistent “don’t know” responses, comments indicating lack of clarity)
- **DATA COLLECTION** : NDEO should collect more demographic data across the board. There are many unknowns around the composition of NDEO programs and members

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What do you see?

- Very limited disaggregation or breakdown of Board, Staff, Members and Program Participants demographic data by race, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- Limited visibility into diversity of input
- Limited visibility into the diversity and inclusiveness of the review process for organizational and program marketing materials
- Limited to no advertisement of opportunities to participate, apply, or access NDEO resources to a broad segment of the community to include diverse populations by organization or programs
- Limited visibility into the diversity and inclusiveness of the course content development and conference speaker selection
- Process for participating in NDEO programs somewhat open and accessible to people of diverse populations; much less so for people with disabilities

What does it mean?

- Limited to no NDEO processes in place to capture demographic data on a consistent basis
- Blind spots exist throughout and across programs and process
- No representative feedback and input into NDEO processes creates more blind spots
- Raises questions about “in-group” and “out-group” potential

Why does it matter?

- How can NDEO measure their JDEI progress if there is no baseline or ways to measure change in demographics?
- To increase organizational equity, at a minimum clarity around demographics is critical to identifying and addressing disparities and inequities
- It can be an invitation to become indifference and/or perceived indifference
- Creates perceptions that may not be aligned with org values and mission

A note on the audit regarding members with disabilities:

It is important to note that the audit also revealed that while the process for participating in NDEO programs was somewhat open and accessible to people of diverse racial populations; this was much less so for people with disabilities. MANO experienced several workgroup discussions where inequity for dancers with disabilities was mentioned as an area not to be forgotten.

Theme: Lack of transparency

The lack of transparency and limited visibility on how decisions were made and by whom was a pervasive finding throughout the entire audit process. The process revealed a tremendous amount of “don’t knows” when members were asked questions regarding decision-making, who has voice in the organization, and how input was solicited and gathered. When we probed and dug deeper it was revealed that there is limited visibility around how the organization gets diverse input. This shows up in the lack of a review process for organizational and program marketing materials, but also in general decision-making regarding programs and offerings. As workgroup members grappled with these findings, discussions surrounding the lack of diversity and inclusiveness in course content development, conference presentation selections, and the publication process were highlighted as areas where big blind spots exist across programs and processes. Lastly, members were consistent in their assertion that addressing the lack of transparency needed to be high priority going forward.

Theme: Need for additional data collection

The audit revealed that NDEO does not collect adequate demographic data to fully understand gaps and opportunities in their JDEI work. The preponderance of “don’t know” responses and comments in the audits revealed members have little to no understanding of the disaggregation of demographic data by race, ethnicity, and gender in all facets of the organization. Gathering data is critical to the development of NDEO’s JDEI work. In fact, the absence of more rigorous data collection will severely limit the measurement of JDEI progress—NDEO will need to better understand baseline demographics to chart a path for improvement. This realization was echoed in workgroup audit meetings. Members continually discussed the need and desire for additional data and it’s linkage to setting clear benchmarks and goals for the development of sustaining JDEI work.

ACTION ACCOUNTABILITY

“Lots to do, but lots we CAN do.” -NDEO member

4 Moving on Priorities

Four priorities rose to the surface across all workgroups. These priorities were also echoed in our analysis of surveys and individual audits. The priorities and recommendations put forth by membership are not quick fixes and will require continuous commitment and recalibration along the way. There is real challenge and discomfort with dismantling structures and ways of being that have been built up over time. As the organization works to agitate and disrupt the status quo, there will inevitably be challenges and temptations to restore equilibrium back to the norm (Heifetz and Linsky, Leadership on the Line). This tension is where growth and evolution will be planted.

Priorities

- **Diversify leadership and membership**

Throughout the process, members repeatedly highlighted the need to diversify leadership and the membership base of NDEO. As a whole, members shared that diversifying NDEO will provide the groundwork to (1) rebuild who the decision makers are and, (2) will expand access, input and engagement from dancers and dance educators that have not been connected to the organization.

- **Remove barriers to access**

Overwhelmingly, members shared that a top priority needs to be removing financial, educational, and membership barriers to joining and fully engaging in NDEO. This work will require significant reframing--members suggested sliding scales or free membership, and questioned the value of NDEO being steeped in academic procedures.

- **Institute more transparency**

The audit process revealed the lack of transparency to many members and this bubbled up as a top priority to tackle early and head on (for example, as evidenced in the consistent don't know responses on surveys and in the audits themselves). As one member shared, “This is an opportunity to educate those in charge that transparency is an issue.” Building transparency offers a great opportunity to foster trust and to set a new standard for how power, decision making, and input functions in the organization, especially as it intersects with race.

- **Devise and implement a strategic plan that includes JDEI**

Members would like to prioritize the development of a strategic plan that emphasizes JDEI. Moreover, members shared that the strategic plan must be anti-racist and include anti-bias action items. This priority was seen as one that would require authentic and comprehensive work. Put simply, “It’s not just about a quick fix – it’s about completely transforming the way the organization functions.” As members discussed this priority, it was clear that there is a desire for reasonable timelines, clear goals, and accountability. The strategic plan should have a clear north star of where you want to evolve to. This north star should be understood at all levels of the organization and by all members.

In addition to determining priorities, members also offered recommendations during the consolidated audit workgroup meetings. These are *recommendations* and not directives. However, these recommendations were consistently mentioned across all workgroups and should be grappled with, discussed at length, vetted, and seriously considered.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS



6 THE PATH AHEAD

NDEO stands at the crossroads of great opportunity. It is an opportunity and season of expansion. To sustain the work successfully will require an ongoing commitment and intention on the part of leadership, staff and members. The Maryland Nonprofits Consulting Team, encourage you to see this work of JDEI on becoming truly anti-racist as an asset and world changing work. Dismantling harmful systems, removing burdensome practices are worth the effort for **all** NDEO members, board, leaders and staff.

Burdensome systems negatively impact everyone. It is a burden for those who live and work under it. And, maybe not so obvious, it is psychologically damaging for those who preserve the systems of oppression. This is an opportunity to embrace a season that liberates the entire NDEO Dance Education community.

Educate Equip Empower Empathize Embody

Is JDEI vision clear?
Are goals strategic and concise?
Is there alignment?

Year 1

Identify A&A Committee
Values-driven process
JDEI Strategic Goals
Clarify vision
Determine Year One Priorities
Identify easy-to-accomplish immediate goals
Feedback Mechanism
Ongoing JDEI Education for all stakeholders
Disaggregate data
Proactively engage community early
Evaluate progress

Year 2

Shore Up A&A Committee
Establish benchmarks
Determine Year 2 Priorities
Address Barriers and Burdens
Identify recommendations
Celebrate progress
Elevate JDEI education
Optimize JDEI relationships with colleagues
Connect and collaborate with others on journey
Report on strategic plan progress

Year 3

Shore Up A&A Committee
Establish benchmarks
Determine Year 3 Priorities
Identify Barriers and Burdens
Report on strategic plan progress
Lessons Learned
Evaluate progress
Celebrate progress

YEAR ONE: We can do so much better

Identify Action and Accountability Team.

Determine Year One Priorities.

Policy Development.

Be specific about which systems, behaviors, practices and barriers are being addressed.

Establish Timeline.

Identify Resources.

Values-driven process. Ensure values are in alignment with JDEI.

Create JDEI Strategic Goals.

Clarify vision. What does NDEO look like if it is anti-racist and equitable in Year One?

Identify easy-to-accomplish goals to create momentum.

Create Feedback Mechanism.

Ongoing JDEI Education for all stakeholders

Disaggregate data

Establish lines of accountability to those historically excluded.

Shore up communication to cure opaque processes and procedures.

Create opportunities for ongoing JDEI education.

Guiding Questions

- *Is the Action and Accountability fully inclusive? Is it multi-cultural? Is it a paid position or volunteer? Is it a hybrid?*
- *Does your feedback mechanism allow you to hear from all members including BIPOC, Disability, and LGBTQIA+ communities?*
- *How will you be in communication with and accountable to those historically excluded?*
- *How will priorities be determined?*
- *Are you considering the data from this report?*
- *Are your processes and procedures transparent to stakeholders? Reduce the “I don’t know” factor.*
- *What is your engagement strategy?*

YEAR TWO: We can do so much better

Shore up Action and Accountability Team.
Determine Year Two Priorities.
Timeline. Resources.
Shore Up A&A Committee
Establish benchmarks. Track progress.
Address Year 2 Barriers and Burdens
Celebrate progress
Elevate JDEI education
Optimize JDEI relationships with colleagues
Connect and collaborate with others on journey.

Guiding Questions

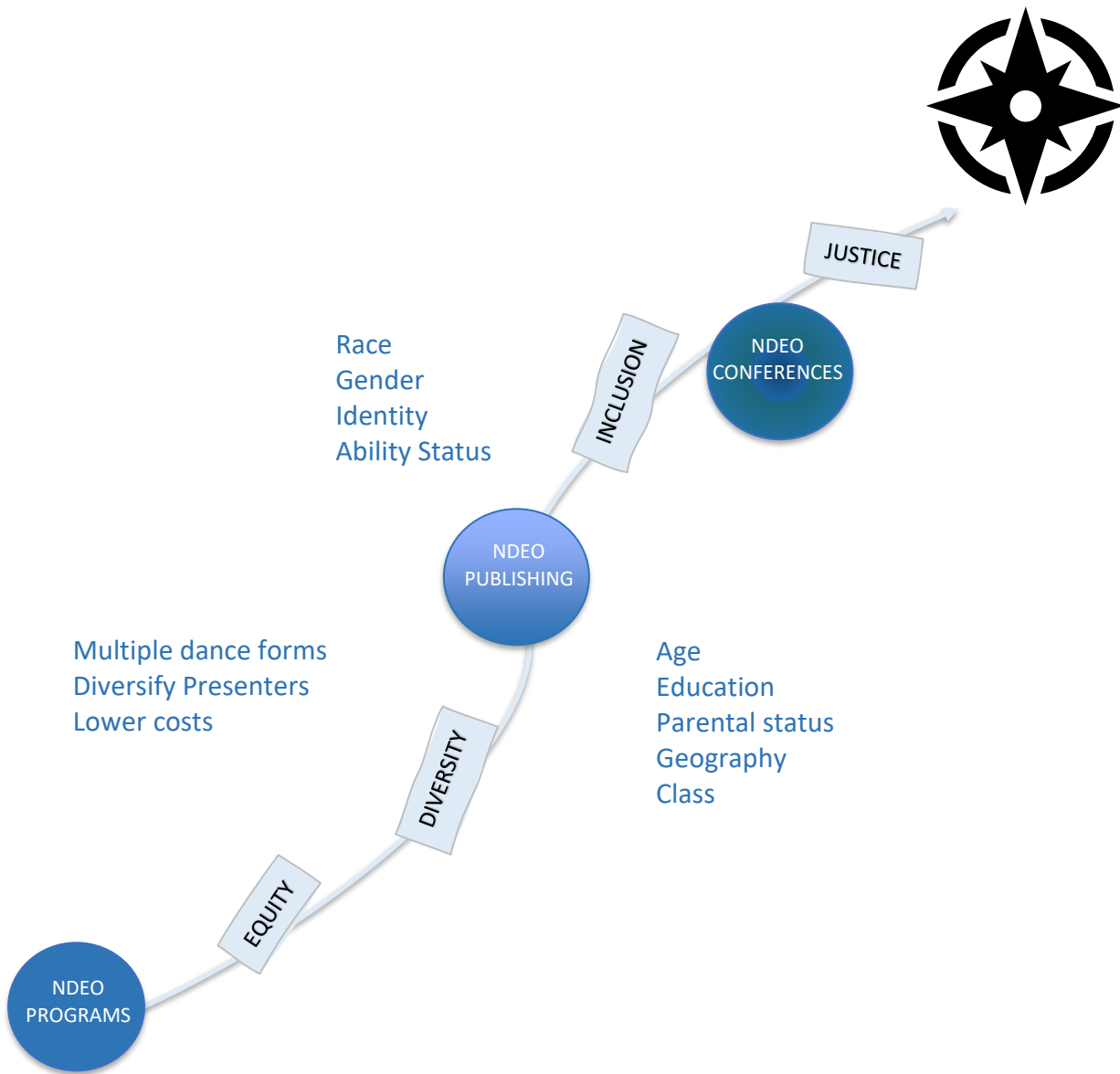
*Is the Action and Accountability fully inclusive? Is it multi-cultural?
Are Year 2 Priorities in line with data reported?
Are you tracking progress? Where are the gaps?
Where are you having most success?
Is your feedback mechanism open and transparent?
What other resources do you need?
Who else needs to be invited to the conversations and decision making?
What changes have occurred in Year 1 can you celebrate? Need support?
How are you driving accountability?*

YEAR THREE: We can do so much better

Shore up Action and Accountability Team.
Determine Year 3 Priorities.
Establish Timeline.
Identify Resources.
Elevate JDEI education.
Report out on remedies and approaches taken to address barriers and burdens.
Connect and engage early and often with Dance Ed community and other stakeholders.

Guiding Questions

*How are the Action and Accountability Team progressing? Where do you need support?
What is the moral of people on the board? Staff? Members? Other stakeholders?*



NDEO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

7 APPENDIX

List of Surveys Reports

List of Board Members

List of Staff

Definitions

MARYLAND NONPROFITS TEAM

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