

# The Possibility Spectrum: Increasing Diversity & Inclusion in Arts Organizations

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## ABSTRACT

Many arts and cultural organizations seek increased diversity and inclusion; however, these ideals can be simpler in concept than conception. Each are different values that must be implemented in tandem for success. The author challenges organizations to look internally and acknowledge that if they are not representative of the communities they claim to serve, then the organization is not serving the communities they claim to represent. Data and analysis from five years of case studies on Intiman Theatre's programming reveal practical actions organizations can take to improve diversity and increase inclusion. Through research the author outlines a 12-step plan in three phases, awaken, broaden, and commit, enabling organizations to access their Possibility Spectrum. First presented as a workshop at the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) 36th annual conference hosted by Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, this article updates research, findings, and case studies with the latest available information.

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## What is Diversity and Inclusion?

### **Background and Methodology**

Many arts and cultural organizations seek to welcome diversity and increase inclusion; however, these ideals can be simpler in concept than conception. After a near extinction, Seattle's Intiman Theatre reinvented itself with the mission to produce theater "as diverse as the community in which we live". To reach this mission, the theatre needed to recruit and hire more diverse actors and staff while retraining existing employees in complex issues of diversity and social equity. To meet this challenge, in 2015 the theatre launched the Intiman Emerging Artist Program (IEAP), a pre-professional training initiative intended to find and prepare diverse candidates to fulfill nontraditional casting and staffing opportunities in the theatre arts. In 2017 Intiman expanded their efforts toward diversity and inclusion by launching the Starfish Project, a technical theatre training program for high school students attending schools in marginalized communities. In the midst of growing social tensions in the United States, both IEAP and Starfish embrace straightforward, practical programming that does not avoid difficult diversity issues, but rather prepares space for conflict and complexity to be addressed as part of training. IEAP and Starfish provide useful case studies for equitable and inclusionary practices in arts education programming.

Intiman Theatre has had the freedom to take bold, uncharted steps lined with both successes and failures. The author embarked on a year-long research project of Intiman's educational programs including a literature review; organizational document analysis; interviews with staff members, board trustees, program facilitators, instructors, and students; student focus groups; and anonymous surveys of program graduates. Concrete data and analysis from the past five years of educational programming revealed practical actions arts and cultural organizations can take to improve diversity and increase inclusion. Additionally, the author draws on experience working with international arts and culture organizations as guided by research to formulate a 12-step action plan for like-minded establishments to embark on a guided journey toward diversity and inclusion.

### **What is Diversity?**

At a recent board meeting I attended, Intiman Theatre Board Trustees spent an hour debating what we mean

by diversity. The definition has become highly politicized (Leo & Barton, 2006). I had a strong sense of *déjà vu* as I have been in this conversation many times before and with many types of organizations. Within the context of the United States this often plays out as a group of mostly white people talking about "People of Color" or "POC," by which they mean, yet often do not realize, the global majority. Somehow the American conversation on binary racial identity continues to suggest that a person is either white or nonwhite, and that referring to the latter group as POC is somehow less white-centric. It is not. Moreover, diverse racial identities are merely one small facet of diversity, the importance of which bear different weights dependent upon local historical contexts. However, "It is diversity itself which must be saved, not the outward and visible form in which each period has clothed that diversity, and which can never be preserved beyond the period which gave it birth" (Lévi-Strauss, 1952). Presently the North American and European contexts too often equate diversity with variances in individuals' outward and visible skin tones. At times the definition is expanded to include an individual's accent or attire as other outward and visible assignments. As nationalistic ideals resurge throughout these regions, an individual's country of origin is considered in misinformed, unfavorable, binary citizen versus noncitizen ways (Council of Europe, 2016a).

When cogitating diversity it is most beneficial to consider the more encompassing concept of cultural diversity. Therefore, for clarity, the better question to ask is "what is cultural diversity?" UNESCO defines cultural diversity as a "fact" discoverable only through deeper examination of "social codes" representing,

*lifestyles, social representations, value systems, codes of conduct, social relations (inter-generational, between men and women, etc.), the linguistic forms and registers within a particular language, cognitive processes, artistic expressions, notions of public and private space [...], forms of learning and expression, modes of communication and even systems of thought, can no longer be reduced to a single model or conceived in terms of fixed representations (UNESCO, 2009: 4).*

This expanded definition demonstrates a need for greater diversity and inclusion of women, gender nonconforming individuals, age ranges, sexual orientation, first languages, artistic practices, social norms, and other underrepresented communities and subcultures. Unspecified in UNESCO's definition, but

important for delineation during diversity conversations are neurodivergency, physical ability, religious belief system, country of origin, and socioeconomic class. Stereotyping or underrepresenting categorized marginalized populations can also be culturally dependent. Ultimately the definition of diversity itself is nearly as diverse as the populations it attempts to qualify.

If organizations would like an environment to be more diverse, look at who is absent from the space. However, if organizations would like ideas to be more diverse, look at who is missing from the conversation. In this way, discover who is needed to fill the void. When trying to fill these vacuums, do not conduct community "outreach" because that concept has the connotation that an organization is dragging the community into their "better" world. Rather, the community needs to take the lead (Houck, 2012). Individuals who are currently absent must be the leaders of diversification efforts. Organizations seeking increased diversity must recognize themselves as community partners, invite community guidance, and desire community leadership to identify the organization as one with whom they can safely and successfully collaborate. Therefore I was delighted when the conversation among Intiman's board and staff diverged from the American norm instead turning to these ladder concepts. Progress had indeed occurred.

The most vital part of increasing this diversity is mindful and appropriate recruiting (Axenson, 2018). Individuals who were formerly excluded, whether intentionally or unintentionally, deserve proper, sincere, and individualized invitations. When I started IEAP in 2015, Intiman's Artistic Director challenged me to fill the program with at least 50% People of Color (POC) to ensure "diversity." Selecting individuals into the program based on their race, ethnicity, or skin color would have been immoral and ineffective in expanding long-term diversification efforts and would not have achieved actual diversity. Instead, I expanded recruiting efforts to ensure a more diverse applicant pool. In the end program diversity not only exceeded the POC goal, but also demonstrated diversity among other underrepresented populations. This was due to recruitment efforts and leaders from marginalized communities partnering in the effort.

## **What is Inclusion?**

Diversity and inclusion are separate concepts which must operate interpedently for success; however, quite

the opposite often occurs. The Society for Human Resource Management's Global Diversity Readiness Index found that organizations within countries with more diverse populations resisted inclusivity, while those within countries with less diverse populations were not systematically less inclusive (SHMR, 2009). When the relationship between two classes is such that all members of one are also members of the other, then inclusion is achieved. Often a missing component is the organization's stake in the community partnership. The stakes are high for the community and need to be just as high for the partnering organization. Too often organizations consider their own costs and benefits to community partnership, but neglect consideration of the costs and benefits for the community with whom they are partnering (Srinivas et al, 2015). Worse the partnership becomes some afterthought done for a bullet point on a grant application or advertisement . Both the organization and the community partner need equal skin in the game. If an initiative could make or break the community, then the organization must allow the initiative to make or break them as well. They need to be brave together with equally balanced high stakes. If an organization is unwilling to take on the same risks as the community group with whom they seek to partner, then the partnership should not be pursued. A truly inclusive organization shares risk and has equal stakes.

Article 2 of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states, "Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace" (2001: 4). The important work of increasing inclusion requires research (Leavy & Harris, 2019). Research should be conducted to better understand who an organization is excluding and who they are including. For instance,

*Race is a socially constructed idea that humans can be divided into district groups based on inborn traits that differentiate them from members of other groups. This conception is core to practices of racism. There is no scientific justification for race. All humans are mixed! And, scientists have demonstrated that there is no physical existence of races. Yet, race is a social fact with a violent and hierarchy that has resulted in differential and disturbing experiences of racism predicated on beliefs that races do exist (Mahiri, 2017: 2).*

This means scientific research has shown that racial exclusion is unwarranted. Furthermore, racial exclusion is racist, and inclusion is antiracist. If an

organization's decisionmakers and stakeholders do not include a representational example of their community, then the organization is excluding the individuals they need to enable diversity. Moreover, exclusion presents hostile working environments in any field (Gibney, 2016; Restrepo Sanin, 2019). Inclusive environments not only enable organizations to operate at their best, but also are a required ethos before an organization embraces diversity efforts.

### Why Do Arts & Cultural Organizations Need Diversity and Inclusion?

Diversity + Inclusion = The Possibility Spectrum. Arts and cultural organizations need both diversity and inclusion to open up possibilities. Research shows that cognitive diversity, the inclusion of diverse thinking and expression, improves teams' ability to formulate and execute successful strategies (Reynolds & Lewis, 2017). Additionally, individuals who work in diverse and inclusive environments are 80% more likely to believe they belong to a high performing organization (Deloitte, 2013). Companies with diverse leadership teams demonstrate financial performance that is more than 50% greater (Barta, Kleiner, & Neumann, 2012). In their 2020-2030 strategy, The Arts Council England recognized diversity and inclusion as a key characteristic of a dynamic organization (2019). Furthermore, equitable education and participation in arts and culture is a human right, therefore individuals who are often excluded or marginalized from cultural participation are being denied their human right (UNESCO, 2006). As such, arts and cultural organizations can facilitate the preservation of human rights. "By becoming spaces for deepening the understanding of different cultures and providing room for participative and creative encounters, cultural institutions may, in our opinion, play a pivotal role in connecting people and in building a more cohesive and open society"

(European Commission, 2014: 5).

Some believe that diversification could cause their organization to fail. The truth is that it could... if an organization only tries to appear more diverse without being willing to expand who they are through inclusion. The 'new' Intiman nearly had this fate. Initially organizational diversity increased as did commitment and support for the organization. Intiman appeared to be doing the right thing but had not yet achieved the crucial inclusion of increased diversity. At first there was great triumph when the organization finally paid off 100% of their debt in 2019. Shortly thereafter the theatre nearly collapsed again when the board voted to close the theatre for good. This result seemed counterintuitive, but deeper study of the organization revealed that although more diverse faces had been invited, underrepresented and marginalized voices were still not fully embraced. Increased diversity without increased inclusion led to tokenization. While this type of diversity can have short-term gains, the ultimate results are more problematic than not seeking diversity in the first place. Luckily for Intiman, there were initiatives like IEAP and Starfish that practiced diversity and inclusion saving the theatre from demise once again. These assets were recognized and utilized by current Artistic Director Jennifer Zeyl who showed a willingness to listen and eagerness to transform the organization to meet the needs of the community.

Conversely, inclusion without diversity is how many arts and cultural organizations operate today through "audience engagement." These organizations include others through invitations to watch what they do without being willing to change what they do or how they do it (McQuaid, 2014). This is because actual diversity can be a scary concept. As stated previously, if not done in earnest an organization can fail. To open The Possibility Spectrum organizations must endeavor for both increased diversity and inclusion. Not addressing both issues ignores the power dynamics known to

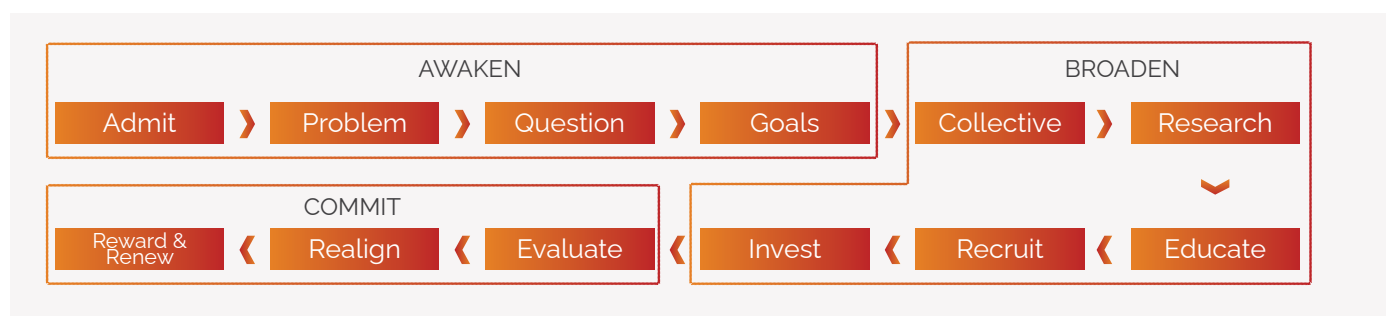


FIGURE 1. 12-STEPS TOWARD DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Source: Based on the author's research and experience.

critical theorists who study these relationships with the goal of creating a more equitable society (Allen, 2011). It is important to take an honest look at the board, executives, and other leaders within an organization. If organizational decisionmakers are not representative of the communities they claim to serve, then they are not serving the communities they claim to represent. The 12-Steps toward Diversity and Inclusion, as pictured in Figure 1 below, breaks the effort into manageable action items based on research and experience. Twelve steps is a lot, but diversity and inclusion is complicated, and The Possibility Spectrum is worth it.

## 12 Steps toward Diversity and Inclusion

As portrayed in Figure 1, deepening organizational involvement with diversity and inclusion can be delineated into three phases: Awaken, Broaden, and Commit – the ABC's of The Possibility Spectrum. To awaken an organization must admit that it has a problem, identify the actual problem that exists, question whether the organization itself has the answers to solve this problem, and set measurable goals to alleviate the problem. To broaden an organization should form a Collective of people who can answer outstanding questions, conduct relevant cultural research, educate those within the organization, recruit appropriate stakeholders, and invest in the new and remaining people involved with the organization. Finally, the organization needs to commit to the effort by evaluating their progress, realigning their goals, and recognizing, rewarding, and renewing their efforts to achieve their goals toward diversity and inclusion.

### ***Step 1: Admit You Have a Problem***

As with other 12-step programs, the first step toward positive change is admitting you have a problem. Doing so is requisite in awakening the organization to The Possibility Spectrum. The organization must acknowledge that they are addicted to the perceived safety of homogeneity. Not everyone will get on board at first, but that is ok. Real change and growth takes time. However, it is important to acknowledge the degree to which each of the organization's stakeholders realizes change must occur. Margaret Booker founded Intiman in 1972 as "Seattle's classics theater" showcasing Eastern European plays. By the early 1990's the theatre was operating under the tagline "New Masters / Classic

Works." In subsequent years, Intiman became known for "large, majestic productions" and was heralded as "Seattle theatre's indisputable star." Intiman's list of accomplishments grew to include a Tony Award, a Pulitzer Prize, and commissioning award-winning original work. Despite awards and accolades, in 2010 Intiman announced bankruptcy, abruptly laid off its staff, and canceled the season after producing just one show (Tucker, 2015; Taylor, 2011; Kiley, 2011). A number of factors contributed to Intiman's closing, but subsequent finger-pointing has been plentiful. The fact remains that a well-established, highly regarded, award-winning theatre shut its doors. Intiman was forced to admit they had a problem and change was needed to survive.

In 2012, under innovative Artistic Director Andrew Russell, Intiman reimagined itself into a festival model focused on positive impact and effecting social change. Instead of breaking their traditional \$6.5M budget over a nine-month season, Intiman produced a summer festival of plays with an underlying thematic element, worked within a \$1.3M budget, and spent capital they already possessed instead of relying on attendance to remain solvent. Then Intiman engaged with long-term strategies to ensure availability of liquid capital. A former business director who worked with both the old and new Intiman, stated that the revived Intiman "huddles around our mission like a campfire, holding everything up to the light of that mission" (Yingling, 2015: 17). This made Intiman agile to bend through uncertainty and passionate about serving as a catalyst for positive social change. The death and rebirth of this regional gem is lesson to other theaters on how to stop the final curtain call. Previous ideas of success need to be measured in a new way. Intiman's survival has set the stage for purpose and efficacy in the theatre arts and beyond because they were forced to admit that they had problems. Other organizations need not wait until this final reckoning to do the same. Indeed, in 2019 another near closure of Intiman revealed that Intiman had yet to identify all of their actual problems.

### ***Step 2: Identify the Actual Problem***

After admitting they have a problem, organizations must determine what their genuine issues are. Here is a hint: the actual problem is not "diversity". If an organization is not as diverse as it would like it to be, then it must dig deeper to ask why. Forget about the blame game, it will take unnecessary time and provide no useful answers. Inherent self-serving attributional

biases lead people to believe successes are their own and failures belong to others (Levine et al., 2017). After Intiman's near failure, articles abounded discussing who was responsible. In reality, everyone was. Asking why something went wrong is far more important than pointing fingers to one person or group in a chain of events. Intiman's actual problems were threefold. The theatre was not on mission, the staff and board were not as diverse as the community they served, and the productions were not fully relevant to the community. In the end it was unclear who Intiman was playing to which resulted in dwindling audiences.

To mitigate this organizations should mirror who they want their audience to be. In doing so the right voices will be among their decisionmakers to offer programs that a diverse community actually wants. Updating Intiman's mission statement to align with their new stated goals was the open acknowledgement of the theatre's perceived problems. Although this initial revision was done without community input, which would prove unfortunate, it was a recognition of the need for change and action toward renewed goals. Nevertheless, Intiman as a whole was not yet moving into Step 3 which involves questioning whether the organization has the answers it needs or whether they require experts from within the community to answer these questions in a way that moves the organization in the desired direction. In 2020, Intiman embarked on a year-long, community-centric strategic planning initiative to further delineate digestible and actionable priorities. Public town halls, community focus groups, and stakeholder interviews served as the basis for the design of a new strategic plan and community-conceived mission to, "use the power of story and education to activate dialogue, confront inequity, and build collective joy."

One often overlooked aspect of enabling inclusive diversity is providing accommodations for those with [dis]abilities. The International Labour Organization (2016: 7) states, "Reasonable adjustments, often referred to as accommodations, are an essential component for promoting diversity and inclusion at the workplace and the right to equality in employment, vocational training and education [...] so that he or she may enjoy the same rights as others". A common response is to make reasonable accommodations if requested, but it can be frustrating or even embarrassing for an individual with accessibility needs to continually ask organizations for accommodations to enable equal participation. Partnerships with accessibility organizations who can ensure the

institution is accommodating needs before they are requested and to a greater degree than the minimum required by local laws is imperative. Arts and cultural organizations must proactively set an environment of inclusivity by removing barriers to accessibility rather than further marginalizing individuals by compelling them to ask for equity.

### ***Step 3: Question Whether You Have the Answers***

Once an organization has identified the actual problems, they must also recognize that they likely do not have all the answers needed to solve them. Indeed, no one person or entity has all the answers. Organizations must cogitate which questions they have answers to, and which need expertise, context, and local action from community members (Wright & Wright, 2010). All parties should come with questions and an eagerness to participate in open communication. Pertinent questions include: Are we as diverse as our community?; What communities are we not reaching?; Are we relevant to those communities?; How can we be relevant to those communities?; Is our programming timely?; and is there a way we can be more responsive to events that matter to our community? Ultimately organizations seeking greater diversity and inclusion must ask, "Which of these answers do we not know?" The organization will later (Step 5) form a Collective of community members who can help to answer these questions.

The ultimate goal is to resolve why specific community identities are not participating. Generally the reason is either, 1) The invitation was insincere; or 2) The conversation was irrelevant. So, the solution is not to convince participation in an irrelevant conversation, but instead amend the conversation to be more relevant to the community identity. If an organization aims for greater diversity, then they are likely not yet diverse enough to understand their own relevance to a diverse community. In reflective community conversations participants must be willing to realize their ideas or even belief systems are wrong and be open to the ideas and belief systems of others. To ensure equal representation it is important to maintain an awareness of underrepresented voices and democratically yield space for their input (Krasner et al., 2006). To do this, the organization may have to create that space. For instance, during Intiman's "Power from the Mouths of the Occupied" performances curated by #BlackLivesMatter, the first several audience rows

were reserved for members of the Black Community. This was to ensure a safe space and the opportunity for appropriate representation. Even local Grammy Award-winning artist Macklemore came to one of the performances and did not sit up front despite his celebrity status.

### **Step 4: Set Measurable Goals**

With your organizational questions in hand, define desired outcomes and how the organization will know if they are achieving them as desired by outlining clear and measurable goals (Rose, 2015; Bowles & Nadon, 2013; Chamberlin, 2011; Jay, 2011; University of Westminster, 2009). Here is a hint: a goal should not be to "increase diversity" which can neglect inclusion and lead to tokenism. Instead goals should set the right environment where diversity thrives and inclusion abounds. A setting which cultivates diverse inclusion is the goal. Another goal could pertain to why the organization wants or needs diversity. Aforementioned research showed that organizational diversity and inclusion advances strategy development and execution, improves team performance, increases financial success, and enables democratic participation. Also consider the community's goal in partnering with an organization. If the community is moving closer to their goal, then the supporting organization has been listening well. Be creative in designing measurable goals that are germane to an organization's and the community's desired outcomes.

The most important consideration in goalsetting is that the beginning is not the starting point. Backward planning results in higher motivation and better performance (Park, Lu & Hedgcock, 2017; U.S. Department of the Army, 2015). Start with the end goal and work backwards, from end to beginning, to outline the steps needed for goal achievement. For instance,

when I launched the pilot IEAP in 2015 the ultimate overarching purpose was to start a pre-professional theatre training program to provide networking opportunities for diverse artists and increase inclusion through industry placement. Using this stated purpose I developed end goals, measurable objectives, and impact indicators as listed in Table 1. Each end goal listed in the left column is a qualitative metric to reach the program's purpose. The center column shows the measurable quantifiable objective aligned with the end goal. The far right column lists what impact indicators were monitored to measure the objective, and thus end goal success. By working backwards I conjectured that I needed to find untapped potential, decided receiving greater than 100 qualified applicants was a positive measurable objective of this goal, and denoted that the number of applications would be an appropriate impact indicator to track for objective achievement. When designing goals, objectives, and impact indicators, a useful acronym to keep in mind is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Trackable (Chamberlin, 2011).

### **Step 5: Form a Collective of People with Answers**

Now that the organization is awakened through Phase I, it is time to move into the broadening of Phase II by forming a Collective of people who can answer outstanding questions. Organizations must actively seek and adopt an inner circle of diverse people and voices for partnership needed in collective creativity (Parjanen, Harmaakorpi, & Frantsi, 2010) and cyclical organizational improvement (Gattenhof, 2017). The Collective can refine Step 4 goals. Members of the organization are observers, facilitators, partners, and mentors. Comparing it to a sporting event, the community is the field, community members are the

End Goals	Measurable Objective	Impact Indicators
Find untapped potential for summer 2015	>100 qualified applicants	# applications
Start a professional theater training program	Build actionable curricula	instructors quality & quantity
Ensure racial equity of 20-30 participants	>50% POC; >50% women	Cohort diversity %
Network with industry professionals	½ Seattle Center orgs	# & locations of networking events
Showcase emerging artist talent	>200 attendees in 2 days	Audience attendance
Bridge to professional employment	¼ secure relevant jobs within 2 months	# & level of arts orgs who hire alumni; # alumni who are hired

**TABLE 1. INTIMAN EMERGING ARTIST PROGRAM GOALS**

Source: Developed in partnership with Intiman Theatre's former Artistic Director Andrew Russell.

players, and those within the supporting organization are the assistant coaches (with specialized skill and expertise in offense, defense, etc.). The head coach, however, must be a community stakeholder and not the Artistic Director despite the way many arts organizations operate. Artistic Directors, Executive Directors, and other organizational leaders should be key players on the field but cannot run the game. The traditional 'top-down' approach is ineffective without 'bottom-up' involvement (Wright & Wright, 2010).

It was a difficult to not become the head coach of IEAP. After all, why was I as a white womxn selected to design and run the program? POC communities in the US have been underrepresented for so long that it can be difficult to appreciate the role of non-POCs (aka whites) in increasing representation. Many allies and accomplices are wary of becoming a White Savior, while POCs can exclude non-POC voices because they have been overrepresented. It is important to have balanced representation through concepts like Team Leadership and Co-Directorship and allow for adaptive organizational responsiveness to think beyond traditional structures (Leo, & Barton, 2006). Those with the power to oppress must take responsibility for yielding space to those who seek greater representation. It is not the responsibility of oppressed populations to fix a deficit created by oppressors, but to work together with allies toward progress. When designing IEAP I had worked outside of the US for so long that I could not comprehend why certain voices are underrepresented in American Theatre. So I sought the expert advice of program applicants themselves to help design IEAP's curricula. Since the program was openly geared toward increasing diversity and representation, the applicant pool was extremely diverse. Within the application itself I surveyed each applicant on the types of training and networking opportunities they needed, and their goals and expectations. Based on this Collective feedback, I designed the very first IEAP curriculum. In subsequent years this line of inquiry continued, but I also actively sought feedback of program alums to continue to improve each year's curriculum. I also sought the input of local community leaders of color. Their feedback was instrumental to the program's success.

### **Step 6: Conduct Cultural Research**

Arts organizations must conduct cultural research for diversity and inclusion, but also Heidelberg (2010) predicts that they must use this research offensively in order to continue to thrive during economic downturns.

Conducting cultural research with the guidance of the newly formed Collective will prepare arts organization for the organizational change that must occur in order to successfully increase diversity, expand inclusion, and potentially help them the weather difficult financial times. The organization must have an understanding of self and an understanding of others unlike themselves (Council of Europe, 2016b; Kolb, 2008). There are two key steps to this research. Step 1: Develop cultural self-awareness and Step 2: Develop cultural awareness of others (Fong et al, 2016). There are truths and myths within cultures and understanding one's own culture is imperative for effective communication. Additionally, every organization has its own culture. These norms cause groups to behave in certain ways and be viewed by cultural outsiders favorably or unfavorably. An outside interviewer of individuals within a culture can be an effective way to identify invisible threads that operate within a group or organization. Similarly, a survey of individuals from outside a culture can yield interesting information with regard to how a culture is viewed by cultural outsiders. With the relevant information about one's own culture and perceptions of this culture among others, cultural awareness of others becomes possible.

While I was working with the US Embassy in Mauritania I was charged with facilitating a program which sought to decrease *Al-Qaeda's* recruitment of Mauritanian youth. As a cultural outsider, forming a Collective of local advisors to conduct research was indispensable. They were able to interview and survey community members whose feedback guided program design and implementation. Additionally, the direct support of and partnership with local Mauritanian Ministries ensured initiative success. The end result was a series of Sports and Cultural Festivals in vulnerable communities which proved efficacious in countering violent extremist ideologies and reducing *Al-Qaeda* recruitment. Absent the requisite cultural research performed by the expert local Collective and partnership between two governments this initiative would have been impossible.

Groundwork is essential for developing a better understanding of other cultures. Organizations must know their communities, study their communities, understand how to communicate with those communities, and accept that the organization is an outsider to the community. Transformational educator Paulo Freire observed, "How is it possible for us to work in a community without feeling the spirit of the culture that has been there for many years [...] Without



understanding the soul of the culture we just invade the culture" (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990: 131). There is no better way to learn about the community than to talk to people, meet other local organizations, and be within the community. No organization can accurately reflect their communities without becoming a part of them. Ultimately, conversations should be about and for the community as they take the lead while the organization facilitates. Organizations can gain buy-in by partnering with key leaders from that community and having them host the conversation. In every way possible, let the community take the lead.

It is important to conduct Step 5: Form a Collective before conducting cultural research so that there is a knowledgeable support system to ensure accurate information gathering. In 2006, the Irish Arts Council recognized the country's increasing diversity and named diversity as a core value including, "diversity of arts practice; the range of ways in which artists make work; the range of ways in which people experience the arts; and the increasing cultural diversity of our society" (2010: 4). Recognizing the knowledge and capacity gaps between arts organizations and ethnic and cultural minority communities in Ireland they worked with the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform to strategize for partnerships to close knowledge gaps.

Arts and cultural organizations can consult with the Community Collective while conducting cultural research. Additionally, there are a wealth of free resources. The US Library of Congress hosts Country Studies at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/countrystudies/>; Nationmaster supports cultural analytics at <http://www.nationmaster.com/>; Gapminder has impressive cultural research and photographic documentation at <https://www.gapminder.org/>; The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) hosts World Heritage Publications at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/publications/>; and individuals can contact their own embassy within a country of interest for cultural information. Nonetheless, a true understanding of any culture or community involves operating within and among the community.

While doing work in South Korea I learned that even South Koreans needed to research North Korea in order to effectively communicate due to cultural differences from years of separation. Not all Koreans I worked with, however, recognized the need to conduct cultural research to understand these intricacies. Many believed that South Koreans could effectively reach North Koreans simply because of their common lineage. In one effort K-pop music was offered because

the music genre was so popular locally there was belief that a North Korean audience would similarly love it. Many did not (Lee, 2015). Conversely, older folk music that Korea shared before the country's division remained popular in North Korea and became a fantastic way to create common bonds. This was not the music that many South Koreans wanted to play, but it was the music that many North Koreans delighted to hear. On the other hand, in more recent years there have been some young North Korean defectors that attribute their escape to K-pop influences (Denyer & Kim, 2019). The intricacies of subculture matter.

## ***Step 7: Educate Those Within Your Organization***

After completing cultural research educate those within your organization. Keep in mind that there are plentiful free resources, and the organization should have a Collective to help. Training is necessary to navigate inevitably tense conversations. It is vital to "have educational experiences that facilitate learners' seeing and understanding the nearly limitless range of micro-cultural positionalities, practices, choices, and perspectives of individuals below the surface of broad notions of culture" (Mahiri, 2017: 173). First share learnings from cultural research with others within the organization and encourage them to also conduct their own research to share with the team. Then invite members of the Collective to teach and train, but be careful to not expect these individuals to be the "model" person to answer on behalf of all underrepresented people groups. Finally, turn to available resources to help the organization reach its educational goals.

Consider training in effective communication, conflict resolution, racial equity, white fragility, multiculturalism, social justice, and equal opportunity. The UN Human Right Council (UNHRC) has numerous resources at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Home.aspx>; For training aids on racial equity consider [racialequitytools.org](http://racialequitytools.org) or [raceforward.org](http://raceforward.org) and their publication [colorlines.com](http://colorlines.com); For information and workshops on LGBTQ2+ issues check out [thesafezoneproject.com](http://thesafezoneproject.com).

The work of self-education is never completed. Train and educate both those within the organization as well as those the organization wants to recruit to the organization. As new individuals enter the organization ensure they become well-educated on pertinent issues. As new information comes to light or cultural shifts occur, stay up-to-date with these changes. As

new, often more diverse leaders enter the field, update the information repository to add room for these new voices.

As a womxn US Army Special Operations Officer working in a male-dominant environment while in Afghanistan, it became evident that female voices were not included in the conversation. Cultural research revealed that Afghan women had insights which they could only share with other female-identifying individuals in a closed environment. For years both the US and Afghanistan overlooked this population. Indeed only recently has Afghanistan permitted mother's names on their children's birth certificates (Barr, 2020). By educating Special Operations units on these cultural norms they began conducting women's shuras, similar to a town hall, with women US Army teams. These successful events further demonstrated the necessity and benefit of female Special Operators to conduct such work in a culturally appropriate manner. The value of Afghan women as well as Special Operations women began to be realized.

### ***Step 8: Recruit Stakeholders***

Job postings and casting calls are not enough. "If you build it, they will come" only works in the movies. You need real and true invitations. Many organizations will post employment opportunities with standardized equal opportunity statements. This is not enough as it does not signify a culture of inclusivity (Axenson, 2018). The organization should now have an inner circle Collective of diverse voices and viewpoints. The organization must also foster an outer circle by recruiting stakeholders. First the organization may need to redefine their expectations of what they think they want and who is qualified to do it. Then organizations must endeavor to find who they actually need. No more "why won't they apply" attitudes. Increasing targeted recruiting equates to increasing diversity. Find the right person and train knowledge and ability gap areas. To convince the right person to accept the organization the invitation must be sincere and intentional. Effective invitations are built through honesty and sincerity. People could argue that organizations should ignore identity and treat everyone equally, but that is impossible as well as unjust. Organizations have a moral and ethical responsibility to value and respect diverse identities (Byrd & Hughes, 2018) and proactively conduct inclusive recruiting practices (Arts Council England, 2019). Sincere invitations account for the beauty and value of identity from a position of respect.

Once a new individual accepts the invitation, greet them like a new neighbor. In many cultural traditions, a community member brings a new neighbor a delicious homemade treat in a reusable container. The generally accepted response is for this new neighbor to return the cleaned container or even fill it with their own homemade good. In this way the new neighbor feels welcome and reciprocates. In this same way, give newly recruited stakeholders something for showing up. While developing the pilot IEAP a Collective community leader cautioned that since I invited marginalized populations to apply, those who were not accepted into the program could feel further rejected and disenfranchised. She urged me to give every applicant something for applying, even if they were not selected to the program. Heeding her advice, every applicant became a member of the "Inti-fam" receiving special invitations to events. Additionally, the most well-qualified applicants who were not accepted received personalized letters offering a fast-track to in-person auditions the following year.

The most imperative qualifications of stakeholders are potential, personality, and possibility. The organization can train and educate on most other things. Find the people the organization wants to be around and who are mission-aligned. Look for people who can grow into the job. I once applied for a job with Seattle Repertory Theatre (SRT), but I was not the best fit. Instead, SRT saw something they liked in me and created a position for me that was a better fit. If an organization really likes someone they can generate a job for them. SRT saw a need, and my potential to assist with that need, and made a position for what I could bring. In the end I was able to assist SRT with essentials not in the posting I applied for, to include diverse recruiting for the Professional Artist Training Program (PATP), providing resources and training for hiring managers, creating an interview rubric for equitable hiring practices, and developing weighted evaluation criteria to remove unintentional biases. After years of work to create an inclusive environment, in 2020 first majority minority cohort was welcomed into the PATP.

### ***Step 9: Invest in People***

Sometimes it is necessary to professionally develop the people an organization needs (McDonough, 2002). Train them in the skills they will need to meet the requirements of becoming the inner circle. Help those whom the organization recruited to become successful. Remember that potential, personality,

and possibilities are the most important qualifications. Other knowledge or skill gaps can be filled by investing in people. "Companies that build successful Diversity initiatives create a management infrastructure to support them" (SHMR, 2009: 27), and a growing number of arts and cultural organizations recognize the need for the leadership among these organizations to better reflect and represent the diversity of the communities they serve (Arts Council England, 2019; Citizens for Europe, 2018; University of Western Australia, 2008). However, long-term systemic marginalization of minority communities have created a void in available leaders who fit traditional qualification models to fill these roles; therefore it is imperative to both adjust organizational thinking on who is a qualified leader as well as provide training and leadership opportunities to those who can grow into these roles.

IEAP came into existence to cultivate the diverse talent that Intiman was seeking. The Starfish Project took this concept a step farther by providing technical theatre training to high school students many of whom did not realize careers in technical theatre existed, nor the number of available offstage occupations. Research revealed that these students still lacked accessible pathways into the industry, so Intiman responded in a rather revolutionary way by partnering with a local community-level state college, Seattle Central College, to become their theatre-in-residence and provide a new 2-year Associate Arts (AA) degree emphasis in Technical Theater for Social Justice (TTSJ) which will launch in Fall 2021. TTSJ Students will work as apprentices on Intiman mainstage shows while exploring ways to confront social justice issues through their technical theatre work. Professional theatres-in-residence are uncommon in American higher education. Moreover, AA-level technical theatre students working directly on productions for a Tony Award-winning theater-in-residence had yet to be imagined. This is a necessary evolution for the industry to become more diverse and inclusive.

Creating access points to enable organizational diversity and inclusion might seem difficult. It can involve designing new ways to find the talent which the organization seeks. It could require creating additional positions, designing internships and training programs, hiring additional staff, increasing board size, or even inventing an entirely new collegiate program. When doing so be sure these new stakeholders are not asked to speak on behalf of an entire population as if they are exemplars on everything related to their skin color, gender identification, cultural identity, or any

other diversity marker. People should only be asked to speak for themselves. There is a fine line between forming a Collective of experts for help and guidance and tokenization of someone based on their attributes or identity. Just as an organization should not rely on one individual to speak on behalf of an entire group, they should also not endeavor to understand a group without consulting with people who identify as group members. Moreover, traditionally underrepresented voices must be allowed the space and respect which has so often been excluded. The difference is actual inclusion that requires organizations to invest in those they are attempting to include.

Despite Intiman's successes with IEAP and Starfish, the theatre fully retiring 100% of their debt, and the company winning the 2019 Mayor's Arts Award, the board voted to dissolve the organization. Many asked how such a thing could happen. Intiman had finally overcome years of struggle and was seen by many as a beacon of racial equity and social justice for the community. A primary component was in Intiman's failure to train and invest in new voices added to the board. While the board was diversified, inclusion was not increased. Many new trustees had never been board members of any organization before and felt tokenized. Overall the board was neither well-trained nor well-equipped in either their governance responsibilities or the operations of the theatre. Artistic Director Jennifer Zeyl stepped in to prevent Intiman's final curtain call. Under their direction Intiman has been engaged in a year of research, reflection, and community conversations resulting in new, exciting, more inclusive directions. Community stakeholders were directly involved in this evolution during the strategic planning process. The board is being rebuilt and Intiman is investing in trustees by training and preparing them for success in their roles. Meanwhile, staged productions are paused, but flagship educational programs of IEAP and Starfish returned in spite of COVID-19 allowing Intiman to continue to invest directly in community members.

Research indicated quantitative markers of success from IEAP, yet qualitative indicators were more varied. Immediate responses from program participation were overwhelmingly favorable, but many IEAP Alums felt unsupported after program completion and lost trust with the company. Empowered by the research findings, IEAP 2020 shifted gears to support IEAP graduates by inviting them back to adapt and perform Sojourn Theatre's "The Race 2020" while earning a stipend for the work and credits as the creative team of this Intiman show. When COVID-19

closed down performance spaces, Intiman kept its promise to these alums, produced the show virtually, and maintained the full participant stipends. In many ways these virtual performances were more accessible than traditional theatre as Intiman was able to host more than 1,000 audience members tuning in from around the world.

This same year, Intiman also made the unique decision to turn its annual fundraising campaign into a grant opportunity for artists who had previously worked with Intiman or participated in Intiman's educational programs. Half of the money raised was given to artists who were most impacted by job loss and financial hardship due to the economic effects of this pandemic. Intiman publicly put its money where its mission is.

### Step 10: Evaluate Your Progress

As the organization charges ahead toward increased diversity and inclusion, it is time to broaden the effort. Take time to check in on those measurable goals from

Step 4 which were targets to help identify strategies toward progress and not an end in themselves (Rose, 2015). Ask the Collective and the community for feedback. Conduct satisfaction surveys and analyze results. Progress evaluation is imperative to enable organizations to make evidence-based informed decisions (Bresler, 2007; Bailey & Richardson, 2010; Chiaravalloti, 2014; Norton et al, 2016).

Using the stated metrics and goals from Step 4 listed in Table 1, IEAP demonstrated success and was expanded upon. The pilot year in 2015 received 125 applicants, the selected cohort was 73% POC and 61% womxn with concentration in leadership roles, program participants received 150 hours of tuition-free training from industry professionals, more than 300 people attended three showcase performances, and 17 professional arts organizations cast or hired program alumni within two months of program completion. Also, these Intiman-tracked qualitative and quantitative statistics were readily available for donors and grant applications to help fund future program iterations. With

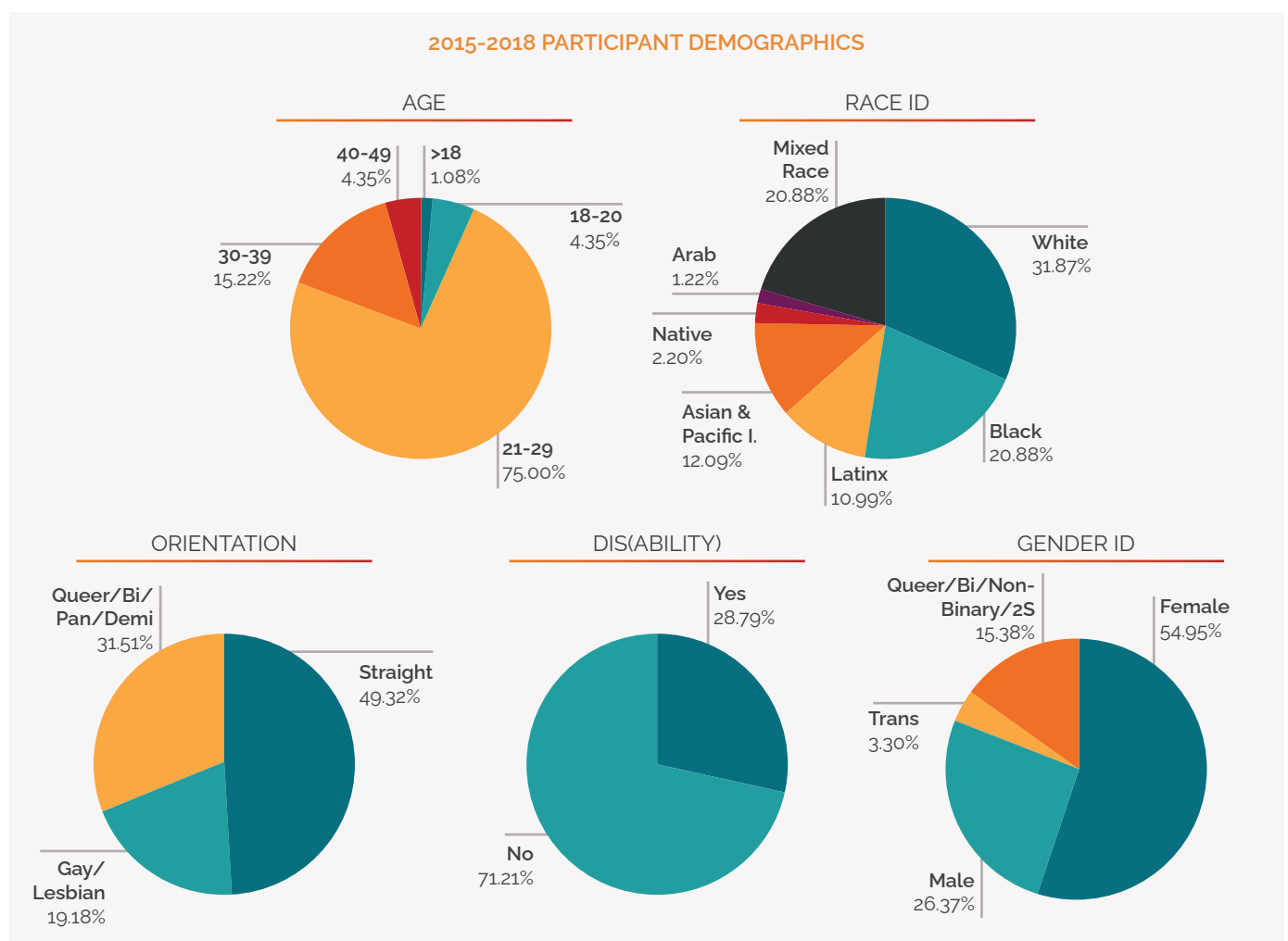


FIGURE 2. INTIMAN EMERGING ARTIST PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS BETWEEN 2015-2018

Source: Demographic information collected by author during research on Intiman's educational programs

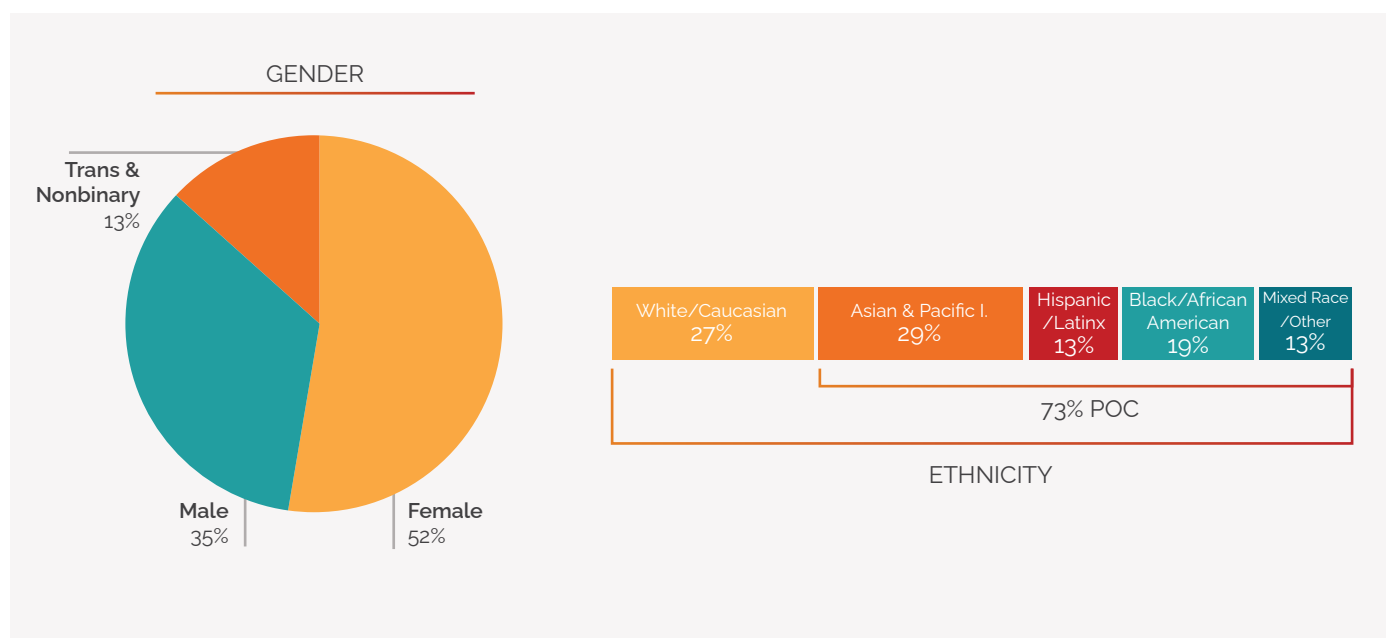
increased support, IEAP 2016 received more than 200 qualified applicants from five countries, 20 US States, and one territory. The selected cohort of 27 “emergers” was also more diverse to include race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, gender identity, religion, educational background, and socioeconomic status. That year IEAP partnered with SRT to bring the program’s culminating showcase to a professional stage for more than 450 audience members and industry leaders. IEAP 2017 and 2018 showed decreases in applicant diversity resulting in somewhat less diverse cohorts. Ultimately, between 2015-2018 IEAP trained nearly 100 artists, more than one-third have been hired or contracted by Intiman, and many more have continued on to successful careers in the arts and cultural sector. IEAP demographics are included in Figure 2. The path for IEAP over recent years has not been without hiccups which has led to program goal realignment. It is unclear when IEAP will relaunch to a new cohort, but the metrics from earlier years updated the research-based curriculum for student attainment.

In 2017 the Starfish Project launched, and it has also been quite successful. To date Starfish has trained 122 high schoolers from Seattle city schools where 97% of students are among the global majority (aka nonwhite). During a student focus group 100% of participants stated they were now considering a career in theatre, and 85% attributed this desired career path to Starfish. The demographics of Starfish Project students since 2017 is included in Figure 3. While

Starfish students are diverse, they remain less racially diverse than the student population served. After high school graduation, one student began studying lighting design at Cornish College of the Arts but left due to the costs and cultural considerations (Kiley, 2020). Students like this one are why the upcoming Intiman partnership with SCC is necessary.

### Step 11: Realign Your Goals

Use what your organization has learned throughout this process to set a new or strengthened course. If the organization has met their goals, then consider expanding those goals with greater challenges. If the organization was not able to meet their goals, then consider goal realignment. This 12-step process could also completely change what the organization’s goals are, and if that is the case it is a good thing. After two years of IEAP, Intiman recognized the continued shortcomings of diversity among technical theatre artists and how IEAP was not well-suited to train individuals for these complex jobs. The result was the initiation of the Starfish Project. These two programs can work together to strengthen one another with Starfish students running the technical theatre aspects of the IEAP showcase and working with these pre-professional artists. Now students can continue to close the attainment gap to professional theatre through the AA degree emphasis working on professional productions with the Intiman as theatre-in-residence



**FIGURE 3. STARFISH PROJECT PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS BETWEEN 2017-2019**

Source: Demographic information collected by author during research on Intiman’s educational programs.

to SCC. Operations have not always been and will not always be smooth. Trying to make everything work perfectly every time is an unrealistic goal. Goal evaluation and subsequent realignment are necessary for favorable evolution.

For instance, in 2019 after the IEAP recruitment slump, the program took a year pause to research and realign their goals. Admittedly I also took a pause from Intiman during this timeframe to finish my doctorate, and because I too was unsure of Intiman's community commitment. I returned to Intiman because they were eager to conduct research and recommit to community-centric goals; and I returned with new knowledge and skills to help assess and realign programming. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups I learned that IEAP alumni needed ongoing support and continuing professional development. Intiman had to invest more in their people (Step Nine). Intiman made a commitment to earlier emerging artists and more follow-through was necessary. Due to this research Intiman began quarterly events for IEAP Alumni and pivoted to launch the IEAP 2020: Alumni Edition, an entirely alumni-based program. From there and based on ongoing feedback and research, every 4-5 years IEAP might focus on ongoing professional development for program graduates rather than bringing in an entirely new cohort. These changes are necessary, favorable, and could not have happened if the company was unwilling to evaluate and realign their goals to better suit the communities they aim to serve.

### ***Step 12: Recognize, Reward, and Renew***

The final step of this plan is also the beginning of the next. First organizations should recognize both their successes and their shortcomings, and they should do so with transparency. Keep in mind that the larger an organization is, the slower it will move. This is an important reason goals must be measurable, and organizations must track their progress against those goals. Along the way reward for favorable outcomes (Chamberlin, 2011). It is a good idea to designate these rewards as a part of the goal planning process of Step 4. An international study conducted by the Society for Human Resources Management demonstrated that companies who successfully increase diversity and inclusion do so in part by encouraging managers' efforts to contribute to this organizational goal by linking their compensation to positive diversity recruitment and

retention results (SHMR, 2009).

Finally, the organization can renew their commitment to forward progress by going back to Step 1 and reperforming all the steps. From there the organization can either recommit to the previous plan or set a new course. Intiman went back to Step 1 and reengaged. They met their measurable goals for 2015 & 2016, so they set a new course for 2017 based on what they had learned. Cycling back again and going through the 12-step process in 2019, they realigned. The resulting research, pivot, and relaunch changed the future of the programs and the theatre company for the better for 2020 and beyond. Ultimately, will Intiman be successful after several near-failures? I hope they will because at least they have been trying to open up the Possibility Spectrum through diversity and inclusion. Time will tell, but this 12-step process gives them and other arts and cultural organizations wanting to improve the best chances of long-term success.

## **Welcome to The Possibility Spectrum**

Working toward diversity and inclusion is a difficult yet rewarding process. Organizations must acknowledge that opening the Possibility Spectrum requires different voices, belief systems, and ideologies. "To challenge ideologies (belief systems) that perpetuate inequalities and injustices, we have to acknowledge that difference matters" (Allen, 2011: 183). Numerous studies show that organizational performance improves with increased diversity and inclusion. Nonetheless, this author acknowledges the myriad of challenges and issues that can arise through diversification efforts including individualized regional concerns, working with subcultures of intolerance that are antithetical to democratic processes, and the challenges of ensuring individual and community cultural preservation while embracing and honoring diverse perspectives (Mitchell & Creary, 2009). This article seeks only to provide a 12-step plan as a scaffold to help like-minded organizations activate a plan toward a spectrum of possibilities. Now that you know the steps, is your organization ready to broaden, awaken, and commit to the Possibility Spectrum? If so, the following Figures 4, 5, and 6 serve as a worksheet to guide the journey.

**12 STEPS TO DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**PHASE 1. AWAKEN**

**ADMIT YOU HAVE A PROBLEM**

You and the organization must acknowledge that you are not yet where you want to be. Not everyone will get on board at first...

Board

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Staff

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Supporters/Donors

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**IDENTIFY THE ACTUAL PROBLEM**

Determine the actual issue. HINT: It is not "diversity."

Our issues include...

**QUESTION IF YOU HAVE THE ANSWERS**

Recognize that you do not have all the answers to solve that problem. No one person has all the answers.

What we don't know:

**SET MEASURABLE GOALS**

Define your desired outcome and how you know if you're achieving it. HINT: It should not be to "increase diversity."

Start with End Goal:

Objectives			
Impact Indicators			
Measurable Goals			

**FIGURE 4. 12-STEPS WORKSHEET PAGE 1, PHASE I AWAKEN, STEPS 1-4**

Source: Developed from research and analysis of diverse and inclusive arts and cultural organizations.

**12 STEPS TO DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**PHASE 2. BROADEN**

**FROM A COLLECTIVE OF PEOPLE WITH ANSWERS**

Others have some of the answers you are missing. Create this inner circle. Work with them to restructure your goals (from Phase 1, Step 4).

Where I will look:

Who I will ask:

**CONDUCT CULTURAL RESEARCH**  
Do your homework! Do this after you have a Collective to work with for guidance & assistance.

**EDUCATE THOSE WITHIN YOUR ORG**  
There are lots of free resources. And, you now have a Collective to help.

**RECRUIT STAKEHOLDERS**  
Job postings and casting calls aren't enough. You need real and true invitations. Create this outer circle.

**INVEST IN PEOPLE**  
Train them in the skills they will need to meet your requirements and become your inner circle.

I need to research...

Training I need includes:

I can train others on:

Our real invitation is...

Trainable skills we/they need:

**FIGURE 5. 12-STEPS WORKSHEET PAGE 2, PHASE II BROADEN, STEPS 5-9**

Source: Developed from research and analysis of diverse and inclusive arts and cultural organizations.

**12 STEPS TO DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

**PHASE 3. COMMIT**

**EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS**  
Check in on those measurable goals. Ask your Collective and your Community for feedback.

Measurable Goals (Step 4)			
Outcomes			

**REALIGN YOUR GOALS**  
Use what you've learned to set a new or strengthened course, or to reroute.

Strengthened Course:

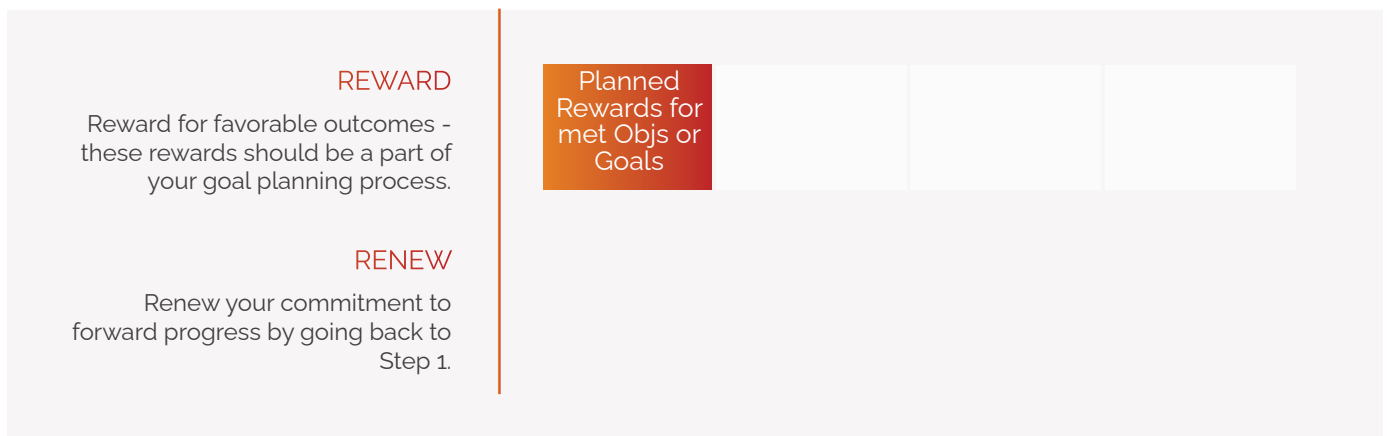
Objectives			
Impact Indicators			
Realigned Measurable Goals			

**RECOGNIZE**  
Recognize your successes and your shortcomings.

We did these things well:

We need to improve:





**FIGURE 6. 12-STEPS WORKSHEET PAGE 3, PHASE III COMMIT, STEPS 10-12**

Source: Developed from research and analysis of diverse and inclusive arts and cultural organizations.

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