



# IDEA Initiative Strategic Plan

## **ACTION:22**

Last revised on May 31, 2022

Arvada Center core value: Inclusion

*Knowing the arts and humanities are for everyone, we embrace the big IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and access). At the Arvada Center, everyone is welcomed. Whether you come to laugh, cry, think or escape, there's something for everyone. Every time.*

## Executive Summary

This IDEA Initiative strategic plan reflects a shared vision of creating an innovative and inclusive organization that promotes diversity through its programming, attracts and leverages diversity in its staff and volunteers at all levels, and creates a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible space for everyone.

Organizations that continually diversify programming and personnel are in a strategic position to identify and dismantle systemic barriers embedded within policies, practices, and programs that inadvertently exclude individuals or whole communities.

The following strategic plan sets forth a framework to make progress toward this vision.

## “Elevator Pitch”

The below elevator pitch summarizes the importance of the IDEA initiative and the tasks to be undertaken to create progress in this area.

*The IDEA initiative stands for inclusion, diversity, equity, and access. As an organization, the Arvada Center strives to embody a welcoming environment and produce programming where all people are seen and celebrated.*

## Initiative Mission Statement / Policy

*(For more information, see the IDEA Policy passed by the Arvada Center Board of Directors in 2018 in Appendix)*

“All persons should be treated fairly and equally regardless of their individual traits or circumstances. In particular, no person should be disadvantaged because of his or her culture, race, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ status, religion, or age or disability. The Arvada Center is committed to a policy of diversity, equality of opportunity, access, and inclusion so that its

governing board, programs, employment practices and operations reflect and include the community it serves as that community may be constituted over time.”

## Initiative Goals

(For more information, see the IDEA Policy passed by the Arvada Center Board of Directors-passed in 2018 in Appendix)

- Implement programs across all divisions that broadly reflect of our values
- Authentically engage with and build a fully diverse community
- Attract and retain a talented administrative and artistic workforce skilled at working in an inclusive and respectful manner
- Identify and dismantle inequitable barriers within organizational systems

## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the organization allows us to identify areas of growth within the established goals of the IDEA initiative. The following analysis was conducted by members of the Employee IDEA Task Force in collaboration with third party consultants and includes only key points.

### Strengths

- *Audience loyalty:* data shows that patrons of the Arvada Center are loyal; across all divisions patrons return repeatedly to experience programming.
- *Multidisciplinary programming:* a key differentiating factor of our organization, the wide variety of programming offered throughout our history sets us apart from our peers.
- *Leadership / Board of Directors buy-in:* with an IDEA policy established by the Board of Directors in 2018 and an engaged leadership team, there is no need to convince any decision-making authority of IDEA's importance.
- *Community partnerships / reputation:* brand research from peer organizations in the community show that the Arvada Center is considered an asset to the arts ecosystem in our region and seen as a valuable resource.

### Weaknesses

- *Audience development:* The Arvada Center faces similar challenges to many other arts organizations in the need to develop audiences beyond only focusing on the same patrons that return year after year.
- *Talent Pipeline:* The Arvada Center enjoys a wonderful track record of employee longevity which can, inadvertently, create a stymied pipeline for new and diverse talent in administration and creative positions.
- *Suburban location:* While a suburban location has many benefits (infrastructure, parking, space), it can create a perceived distance of audiences from marginalized communities as suburbs may have traditionally been seen as elite or exclusionary.

## Opportunities

- *Increasing diversity across Denver metro:* New residents and population growth among young and diverse populations across our region offer us an opportunity to increase outreach and grow audiences.
- *Innovation across arts sector:* Following the COVID-19 pandemic, nationwide calls for racial justice, and other equity movements such as #MeToo, the Arvada Center can learn from peers in our sector and place innovation as a priority in program development.
- *Relationship building:* Building on the strength of community partnership, the Arvada Center has resources to leverage in building meaningful relationships with individuals and organizations to amplify unheard voices and increase reach.
- *Engagement on policies:* With engagement from the Board of Directors and leadership, existing policies can now be re-examined through the lens of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.

## Threats

- *Fear of change:* Implementing new policies or programs can lead to resistance from patrons and staff who are used to familiar ways of operating.
- *Loss of loyalty:* By re-examining policies from a lens of inclusion, we face the threat of losing funding from donors or foundations that may not support our values.
- *Economics:* The factors of economic recession and customer spending habits are a constant threat to organizations across the arts sector.

# Demographic Considerations

In November 2021, the Arvada Center set out to determine a demographic profile of patrons attending programs across all divisions. Approximately 8,000 emails were sent to patrons that met the following criteria:

1. Patron had opted in to receive emails from the Arvada Center
2. Patron had engaged (purchased ticket, registered for class, visited galleries) in the last five years

It should be noted that in this case, the typical patron described is the individual who makes the transaction with the Arvada Center, i.e., the one who completes the purchase.

## Demographic Breakdown

- 538 respondents
  - Gender
    - 74% of respondents identify as female
    - 23% of respondents identify as male
  - Race
    - Asian 1.3%

- Black 1.1%
- Latinx 3.7%
- Native American 0.7%
- Mixed Race/Other 1.5%
- White 87.2%
- Age
  - Under 18 .37%
  - 18-24 .93%
  - 25-34 5.2%
  - 35-44 11.2%
  - 45-54 9.7%
  - 55-64 15.1%
  - 65+ 57.6%

## Action Plan

Using the IDEA policy and collected data as a starting point, we can begin to establish milestones and steps that the organization may take to further work in the area of IDEA. The IDEA Employee Task Force has identified four focus areas that will inform the creation of an action plan and help determine timelines for implementation.

### Focus Areas

- **Human Resources** - creating an inclusive recruiting, hiring and onboarding process while also increasing the diversity of candidate pools across all open positions.
- **Cultural Competency** - creating an inclusive vocabulary to be used across the organization and increasing awareness of IDEA-related topics among Arvada Center stakeholders
- **Programming** - examining all programming areas and injecting IDEA-based thinking into decision-making processes.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Spaces** - creating physical and digital spaces that are open and accessible to all people regardless of ability.

By narrowing the scope of this action plan with these four focus areas in mind, we are able to prioritize action steps on a timeline of implementation.

### Immediate Term - 6 months to 1 year

- Human Resources
  - Review all job descriptions and create an inclusive template for hiring managers to use when posting open positions.
  - Develop resources and relationships in marginalized communities in order to reach a more diverse pool of potential candidates.
  - Provide training to hiring managers on inclusive interview procedures.
  - Audit existing human resources policy and remove exclusionary language

- Ensure the values of inclusion and IDEA initiative goals are included in the board, staff, and volunteer onboarding processes.
- Cultural Competency
  - Create a training plan for staff, volunteers, and other Arvada Center stakeholders focused on specific topics such as bystander training, implicit bias, and anti-oppression.
  - Meaningfully communicate with communities that do not consistently engage with Arvada Center programs, e.g. strategically distributing bilingual collateral
  - Institute anti-racism statements that must be included in initial communications with all stakeholders to establish expectations.
  - Implement internal communication strategies that proactively inform Arvada Center staff and volunteers about the IDEA initiative.
- Programming
  - Hire a dedicated IDEA coordinator for all programming areas.
  - Implement measures to effectively evaluate programming decision-makers on IDEA-related initiatives.
  - Provide audiences opportunities to learn context around programming choices to deepen understanding and enrich their experience.
  - Implement hiring of credible cultural consultants for culturally specific programming.
- Accessible and Inclusive Spaces
  - Implement additional measures for people with disabilities to experience programs across all divisions, e.g. closed captions for theatre patrons.
  - Create multilingual web pages on the Arvada Center website.
  - Review interior signage for inclusion and diversity; ensure that signage is readable and accessible by all patrons.
  - Examine and implement an affordable ticket-pricing program to improve socio-economic accessibility.

#### Short Term - 1-5 years

- Human Resources
  - Actively recruit candidates through participation in job fairs and open houses for interested candidates across technical and administrative roles.
  - Create a new position with a focus on IDEA and measuring progress in this area.
  - Implement a leadership succession plan that includes diversity as a primary factor in candidate selection.
- Cultural Competency
  - Provide ongoing consistent training to volunteers and staff related to IDEA; promote positive cultural conversations around diversity and inclusion.
  - Explore technological solutions for inclusion and learning.
  - Institute mechanisms designed to foster and maintain authentic relationships with new audiences as demographics expand.
- Programming

- Re-examine the programming calendar to ensure equitable access for all programming divisions.
- Ensure hiring of artists, actors, and designers from communities that experience discrimination; set measures for hiring and provide resources to programming staff to allow for greater hiring opportunities.
- Analyze relevancy of programming across all divisions to ensure that choices made reflect current audience engagement and interest.
- Accessible and Inclusive Spaces
  - Create family restroom at Arvada Center allowing for people with disabilities and non-binary visitors to have a comfortable and humanizing experience.

### Long Term - 5-10 years

- Human Resources
  - Create a pipeline of talent through fellowships and internships allowing diverse candidates to gain experience in a variety of arts related fields.
- Cultural Competency
  - Create enrichment programs that reward employees and volunteers for cultural competence and create opportunities for recognition of cultural competency across the organization.
- Programming
  - Expand programming staff to include senior level positions such as Director of Humanities; focus on filling these positions with individuals from communities that experience discrimination.
- Accessible and Inclusive Spaces
  - Actively renovate spaces in Arvada Center with a focus on accessibility; create more opportunities for people with disabilities to appear on stage and in audiences.

## Accountability and Evaluation

How do we evaluate this plan to ensure positive progress is made? Using a combination of qualitative measurement and milestone establishment, the Arvada Center will determine successes and areas of improvement within the IDEA initiative.

### Accountability

Any work in the area of inclusion, diversity, equity and access relies upon accountability mechanisms to ensure that the outlined action plan is followed. Through ongoing meetings of the Arvada Center Employee IDEA Task Force, staff members that are engaged in this initiative are given the opportunity to hold one another accountable on forward progress or areas in which momentum is not gained.

Within these internal accountability checks, the organization must also recognize staff bandwidth and energy, maintaining cognizance around burnout. The outlined action steps will

be assigned to subcommittees of the Employee IDEA Task Force and corresponding staff members in the organization working in the given focus area (i.e., human resources, programming, etc.). These action steps will be held to the forecasted timelines and progress updates will be made on a monthly basis to both the Employee IDEA task force and the IDEA committee of the Arvada Center Board of Directors.

Accountability must include the acknowledgement that change is difficult. Positive progress within this initiative will only be maintained by marking achievements with celebration and providing encouragement to those that are apprehensive to incorporate new actions into their daily work. By developing an engaged task force dedicated to advocating for IDEA, accountability will become a natural part of implementing this initiative.

### Quantitative Analysis

A secondary mechanism of evaluating success within the IDEA initiative is to assess the demographics of audiences, staff, volunteers, and board members. With action steps surrounding the process of expanding demographics, it is important to capture a snapshot of the communities that the organization is serving. By using the demographic overlay present in this strategic plan as the starting point, we can measure how the effectiveness of outreach tactics, new programs, and hiring initiatives. For example, by consistently assessing the demographics of age, race, and gender of the organizations' patrons, staff, volunteers, and board, we can gain a clearer picture of the people engaging with us in a variety of capacities.

### Milestone Establishment and Annual Evaluation

The action plan is broken down into three distinct timeframes: immediate term, short term, and long term. With the immediate term steps falling into a window of six months to one year, the organization is offered the opportunity to evaluate progress on an annual basis. Steps within the immediate term timeframe that have not been completed must be evaluated for unforeseen barriers and reassessed.

This annual evaluation process is paramount to the success of this strategic plan. The entire Employee IDEA Task Force must be engaged not only in the process of implementing action steps but also in evaluating what progress has been made. This initial IDEA strategic plan will be launched on July 1, 2022 with an initial evaluation date of June 30, 2023.

## Appendix

To read the entire IDEA Policy passed by the Arvada Center Board of Directors, please visit this link: [Arvada Center IDEA Policy](#).

### IDEA Task Force Roster (July 2022)

Teresa Cirrincione, Assistant Education Director

Kayley Hill, Development Assistant

Elizabeth Jamison, Audio Engineer

Emily King, Exhibition Manager and Associate Curator

Sarah Kolb, Digital Communications Manager  
Keisha Makonese, Director of ACES  
Jarrod Markman, Annual Giving Manager  
Michelle Peterson, Volunteer and Accessibility Services Manager  
Collin Sanders, Video Specialist  
Leslie Simon, Content and Grant Writer  
Philip Sneed, President and CEO  
Marcus Turner, Director of Communications and Audience Services  
Teresa YoKell, Vice President of Advancement  
Libby Zambrano, HR Manager