

## **Strategic Roadmap for the EDI Framework for NJ Libraries Project March 2025 Status Update**

As we move into the spring, momentum continues to build across our project goals, with important progress and new opportunities for engagement:

### **Goal 1: Building Capacity for EDI**

We are continuing outreach to organizations that completed the EDI Collective Impact Assessment, inviting them to formally join EDI-NJ, our statewide collaborative group of organizations serving New Jersey libraries dedicated to sustaining long-term EDI initiatives. While several connections remain pending, we are actively building this statewide network and welcome additional support in our efforts.

Parallel to this, we're focusing on the development of a DEIA Toolkit for Library Directors. With insights drawn from the 2024 EDI Training Needs Assessment, the foundation for the toolkit has been laid. We are now forming a committee within NJLA's Diversity & Outreach (D&O) Section to guide the development and implementation of this subproject, ensuring it reflects the diverse realities of New Jersey libraries.

### **Goal 2: Fostering Inclusive Library Environments**

We've completed a draft of the Institutional EDI Assessment and accompanying scoring guide, and it is currently under review. We are now seeking stakeholder feedback to refine the tool and ensure it is relevant, actionable, and reflective of the diverse realities of NJ libraries. Once finalized, the assessment will serve as a benchmarking tool for libraries statewide—measuring current practices, tracking progress, and identifying opportunities for growth.

An instructional module is also in development to guide users through the assessment and help interpret results, enabling libraries to translate insights into concrete actions. This module will help ensure the tool's usability and statewide adoption.

### **Goal 3: Strengthen Diverse Staff Power in Library Workspace**

As part of *Culture Connection*, a statewide initiative by EDI-NJ, MentorNJ's African American Meet-up Group hosted an African American Culture Event on March 14 at Monroe Township Library, bringing together library staff from diverse backgrounds to honor and celebrate African American history and culture in New Jersey and beyond. Co-sponsored by LibraryLinkNJ and NJLA, the event featured insightful hybrid presentations from keynote speakers Denitra Letrice Ross and Earl Givens, Jr., who spoke about building cultural competence and developing inclusive leadership.

By hosting both the API Culture Event in 2024 and this event, we have successfully fulfilled our Goal 3 objective of organizing two special events through *Culture Connection* by the end of June 2025.

### **Goal 4: Enhancing Library Services and Accessibility**

Once the Institutional EDI Assessment is finalized, we will begin its administration across New Jersey libraries. The resulting data will inform a comprehensive statewide report that will identify trends, gaps, and strategies for enhancing equity in library services. This work is especially vital in today's climate of escalating attacks on EDI values. Our goal is to equip libraries with accessible, actionable tools to sustain this work and serve diverse communities with intention and care.

#### Additional Updates:

- IMLS Grant Update: We're thrilled to share that our team was invited to submit a full proposal for a \$100,000 Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program grant. This proposal, submitted in March, aims to extend the reach and impact of the EDI-NJ Group beyond the current Strategic Roadmap. Due to the recent presidential executive order targeting IMLS, the future of this grant opportunity is uncertain. However, we were motivated to develop our proposal plan in hopes of being prepared to pursue it when the opportunity arises. Below is the statement we included in the project justification section of our proposal:

"The current corporate pushback against EDI efforts has clear parallels to the challenges libraries face when advancing EDI work. Just as corporate leaders are retreating from EDI commitments under political and financial pressures, libraries pursuing strategic EDI initiatives are encountering similar resistance—both externally from political forces and internally from institutional inertia. Just as major corporations are cutting EDI roles and initiatives, libraries are seeing attacks on EDI programming, book challenges, and funding cuts targeting work that centers marginalized communities. Laws targeting "DEI" in public institutions set a concerning precedent, threatening hiring, collection development, and outreach efforts. As resistance to EDI grows, strategic and well-coordinated EDI initiatives are more important now than ever. If libraries truly see themselves as engines of democracy, lifelong learning, and community resilience, then they must remain steadfast in EDI commitments—despite the political climate. Scaling back equity work is not a neutral act; it is a deliberate choice to exclude. Instead, libraries must take this moment to embed EDI more deeply into their strategic frameworks."

We will share any updates as they become available during this period of uncertainty.

- NJLA 2025 Conference: Our program proposal was accepted! It is scheduled as outlined below, and we will present to share our statewide progress, showcase the assessment, and discuss next steps for collective action.

***EDI-NJ: Strategic Roadmap for the 'EDI Framework for NJ Libraries' Project***

2:10 pm - 3:00 pm, Friday, May 30, 2025

#### Looking Ahead:

As we prepare to launch the statewide assessment, we are also planning the development of an Individual EDI Self-Assessment Tool and will be seeking support in shaping and piloting that effort. We remain deeply committed to creating a sustainable and equity-centered future for New Jersey libraries. For those interested in joining our monthly meetings or contributing to this work, we invite you to get involved.

**How You Can Engage:**

- Joining the monthly EDI-NJ meetings
  - Third Wednesday of the Month, 3-4pm
- Providing feedback on created project tools/assessments or participating in one of the project groups ([sign up here!](#))
- Attending upcoming training opportunities and events

If you'd like to contribute feedback, join a subcommittee, or be involved in the next phase of the project, please reach out to Mi-Sun, [lyu@librarylinknj.org](mailto:lyu@librarylinknj.org), the project manager. Your voice and leadership matter. We'd love to have you join us in shaping library systems that reflect the values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and access.