



Power of culture

COUNCIL MEETING & RETREAT BOOK

ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND MEETING

OF

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

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**ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND MEETING & COUNCIL RETREAT
OF MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024
10:00 AM-12:30 PM
IN-PERSON MEETING**

**MUSEUM OF SCIENCE
THE SKYLINE ROOM
1 SCIENCE PARK
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

**ARRIVALS & LIGHT REFRESHMENTS: 9:30 A.M.
COUNCIL MEETING & RETREAT: 10:00 to 12:30 P.M.**

**NOTE: THIS IS AN OPEN PUBLIC MEETING AT THE ADDRESS NOTED ABOVE
AND WILL NOT BE LIVESTREAMED**

MEETING MATERIALS WILL BE POSTED [ONLINE](#) PRIOR TO THE MEETING

AGENDA

VOTE

1. **Call to Order- Open Meeting Law Notice**
 - Marc Carroll, Chair
 - David Slatery, Deputy Director (Open Meeting Law Notice)
2. **In Memoriam- Council Member Kathy Castro**
 - Marc Carroll, Chair
 - Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair
3. **Welcome by Host Organization**
 - Marc Carroll, Chair
 - Tim Ritchie, Museum of Science

4. **Brief Introductions**

- *Marc Carroll, Chair*
- *Council Members*
- *Michael J. Bobbitt, Executive Director + Staff*

5. **Business Meeting**

- a) d/Deaf/Disability Equity & Access Action Plan **X**
- b) Native American & Indigenous Peoples Equity Action Plan **X**
 - *Michael Bobbitt & Staff*

Break

6. **Presentation- *Why Public Funding for the Arts Matters.***

- *Kelly Barsdate, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA)*

7. **Wrap-Up /Adjourn**

- *Marc Carroll, Chair*
- *Michael Bobbitt, Executive Director*



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**ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SECOND MEETING OF
MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024

RESOLUTIONS

RESOLVED: To endorse Mass Cultural Council's d/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan in the form provided to the Council for this Meeting.

RESOLVED: To endorse Mass Cultural Council's Native American & Indigenous Peoples Equity Plan in the form provided to the Council for this Meeting.

IN-PERSON OPEN MEETING LAW STATEMENT

Please note that this meeting is an open meeting of a public body subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A notice of this meeting together with the agenda was posted on Mass Cultural Council's website 48 or more hours ago (excluding weekends and holidays).

This meeting shall be open and accessible to all members of the public except at such times when this body has voted to go into closed executive session under the Open Meeting Law.

This meeting is an in-person open public meeting in an open public meeting place accessible to the public and is being conducted under the Open Meeting Law as currently in effect and there will be no on-line, remote or broadcast component.

Mass Cultural Council welcomes the public to attend its meetings in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, but any attempts to disrupt a meeting may result in the removal of the responsible party. This meeting is not a public hearing and public testimony will not be taken. Individuals may not address the meeting without permission of the Chair.

Any member of the public may record this meeting provided that they do not interfere with the meeting.

Draft minutes of the open session of this meeting shall be kept and shall be posted on Mass Cultural Council's website no later than 30 days after the meeting provided that such minutes shall not be considered official until they have been approved by this body in open session. Individuals asserting a violation of the Open Meeting Law may file a complaint with this body within 30 days or with the Attorney General's office thereafter.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

FY24 COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Advancement Committee Meeting – Wednesday, May 15, 10am (Zoom)
- Grants Committee Meeting – Wednesday, May 15, 1pm (Zoom)
- Executive Committee Meeting – Wednesday, June 12, 10am (Zoom)
- Grants Committee Meeting – Wednesday, June 12, 1pm (Zoom)

ANTICIPATED FY25 COUNCIL & COMMITTEE MEETINGS

This is a working idea of meetings for the Governing Council and Committees in FY25. Council Meetings typically occur in August, November, January, and March. Committee Meetings, as needed, are scheduled approximately one to two weeks prior to Council Meetings. Meetings may be held virtually via Zoom or in-person at the discretion of the Chair.

August 2024

- Executive Committee Meeting
- Grants Committee Meeting
- Advancement Committee Meeting
- 163rd Meeting of Mass Cultural Council

October 2024

- Executive Committee Meeting
- Advancement Committee Meeting
- Grants Committee Meeting

November 2024

- 164th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council

January 2025

- Executive Committee Meeting
- Advancement Committee Meeting
- Grants Committee Meeting
- 165th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council

March 2025

- Executive Committee Meeting
- Grants Committee Meeting
- 166th Meeting of Mass Cultural Council

May 2025

- Advancement Committee Meeting

June 2025

- Executive Committee Meeting
- Grants Committee Meeting

Special Meetings of the Committees or Council are occasionally necessary for unforeseen circumstances. If a Special Meetings is needed, as much notice as possible will be provided, the legally required notice at a minimum.



Power of culture

March 14, 2024 Draft

d/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan

Fiscal Years 2025 – 2028

March 14, 2024 Draft

d*/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan

Fiscal Years 2025 – 2028

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* Use of upper-case D refers to the cultural communities of people who are Deaf or Disabled. Lower case d refers to environmental or diagnostic conditions.

“As I see it, Government should be there to make life easier, not harder.”

~ Maura Healey, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, during the 2024
State of the Commonwealth Address

Purpose

The Mass Cultural Council's d/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan proposes to strengthen and extend the work of the Agency's equity priorities, building on its 2022 [Racial Equity Plan](#), to provide equitable investments, support accessibility needs, and affect systems change in the creative sector of Massachusetts. This document is a living document and as it aligns with existing and anticipated equity plans, will be revised and updated as needs are met, and challenges are identified.

The drive of this plan is to meet and exceed the basic and specific adherence to federal and state disability policies and to prioritize access in the creative sector as a fundamental human practice through the investment of human and financial resources.

Our plan recognizes the variety of social/medical/historical models of Disability. We seek to grow our understanding of the nuances within communities and have begun with the inclusion of Deaf culture as a distinction within Disability culture, conditions, and definitions.

The Agency is dedicated to advancing equity and investments and support to historically underinvested communities, and will focus on two (2) primary areas:

1. **External** - to support and encourage an accessible and inclusive creative sector throughout the Commonwealth with investments and support for creative individuals within the Deaf and Disability communities and the resources and opportunities for cultural destinations to be accessible.
2. **Internal** - to strengthen Mass Cultural Council's operational, programming, and governance practices, policies, and procedures by leveraging the knowledge and experience of individuals from the Deaf and Disability communities, ensuring their perspectives and needs are integral to the Council's framework and approach.

Mission

The Mass Cultural Council advances the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector by celebrating traditions and talents, championing its collective needs, and equitably investing public resources.

From the Executive Director

In my own journey to learn about the strengths, needs, challenges, love, and accomplishments of the d/Deaf & Disability Civil Rights movement, I had the chance to deeply learn about the work of Judy Heumann, (aka the Mother of the Disability Rights Movement). I was also able to chat with a friend who was one of the lawyers on The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), who also fought to get closed captioning built into TVs. The conversations and learning grounded me and has inspired me to push the Agency to expand the work that it has already done.

As someone without a disability, I acknowledge my limited perspective. So, this plan is a result of collective voices, including those directly impacted by disabilities. This isn't just a compliance effort; it's about creating a culture where everyone feels valued and supported. I invite each of you to join in championing inclusivity and embracing the diverse strengths each person brings.

Let's not only meet the requirements but surpass them, creating a more accessible and welcoming space for all.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Executive Director

From the Council Chair & Vice Chair

As Chairs spearheading this initiative, we are thrilled to unveil our d/Deaf and Disability Equity & Access Plan crafted specifically for the vibrant creative sector of Massachusetts. We've witnessed the transformative power of creativity and recognize the urgency of ensuring equitable access for all.

This plan is a collaborative endeavor, drawing upon a spectrum of perspectives and experiences within our creative community. It's a testament to our commitment to making the arts in Massachusetts a space where every individual, regardless of ability, can fully participate and thrive.

We invite each of you, fellow creators, innovators, and advocates, to join us in championing this cause. Let's collectively pave the way for an inclusive creative landscape, one that values diversity and celebrates the unique contributions of everyone working in the creative sector.

In solidarity and creativity,

Marc Carroll, Chair

Jo-Ann Davis, Vice Chair

Disability Data for Massachusetts

1. [Disability Philanthropy](#) reports only 4% of private Foundation support focuses on disability rights and social justice, defined as actions to ensure access and legal rights for people with disabilities as a group, and to challenge ableism and other intersecting systems of oppression. Human services and health are top priorities in domestic giving for disability services and support but with only 3% going to arts, culture, and media access.

MA total population: **7,029,917**

MA total people with disabilities: **803,600**

Disability prevalence: **11%**

Statewide Disability Type

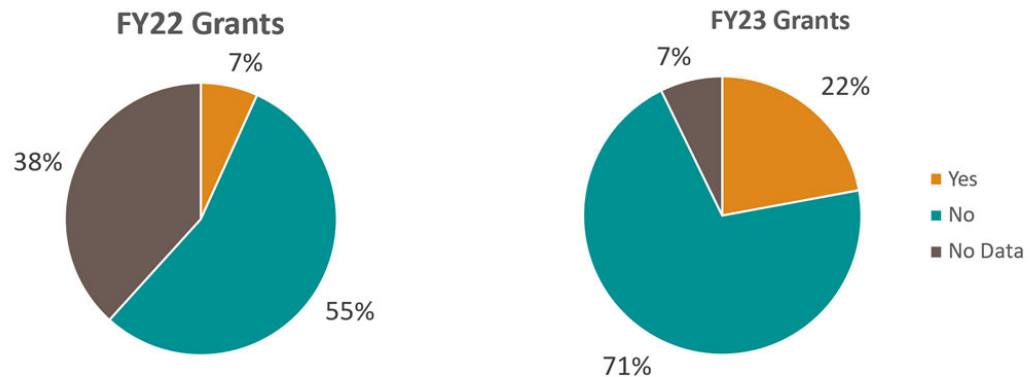
Statewide Disability Type – Percentage of population with:

- Cognitive difficulty: 5.03%
- Ambulatory difficulty: 5.63%
- Vision difficulty: 1.82%
- Hearing difficulty: 3.12%

2. 16.3% of the population over age 18 in Massachusetts experiences hearing loss, according to a 2017 study by Blackwell & Norris. More information on this can be found on the CDC's website regarding health policy on disability: [CDC - Health Policy - Disability](#).
3. A notable statistic comes from a 2011 study by Johns Hopkins, which found that one in five Americans has hearing loss. Further details are available in the article "One in Five Americans Has Hearing Loss" dated November 14, 2011, on the Hopkins Medicine website: [Hopkins Medicine - Hearing Loss Study](#).
4. [Disability Philanthropy: Foundation Giving for Disability Report January 2023](#)
5. Additionally, data collected from the 2022 report, [Towards a Culture of Access](#), recognized the need for continued education on accessible features and practices within cultural institutions across the Commonwealth.

Mass Cultural Council Recent Grant Making Data

Individuals: Identify as Deaf/Disability



Do you identify as Deaf/Having a disability?	FY22 Grants	FY23 Applications	FY23 Grants
Yes	11	1,023	895
No	89	6,135	2,863
No Data	63	496	293
	163	7,654	4,051

Following National & State Leadership Efforts

Our efforts to be an equitable Agency align with the public outcry and demand for equity. We plan to further our equity goals by developing a suite of equity plans and hope to be seen as a leader in both the creative sector and state government for these efforts.

Mass Cultural Council was further inspired by the work of other state entities:

- [Department of Public Health's Office of Health Equity](#)
- [Working Group of Gender Equity in Disability Policies](#)
- [Department of Public Health's 2023 Community Health Equity Survey](#)

The Process: Designing & Updating the Plan

Since 2015, the [Universal Participation \(UP\) Initiative](#) has aimed to activate the aspirations of the Americans with Disabilities Act to break down the barriers that

prevent full civic participation in Massachusetts' cultural sector. The UP Initiative supported organizational change through inclusive design practices, community engagement strategies, and peer learning networks through the Innovation Learning Network (ILN) and UP Designation. UP Designated organizations demonstrated a commitment to learn, take action, and embrace inclusivity as a core organizational value and possessed behaviors that reflected the aspirations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

UP Organizations and the Up Initiative centered the following practices:

- Providing training about inclusive culture
- Engaging user/experts to inform decision making and to develop policies and programs
- Coordinating and integrating a vision of inclusion throughout the entire organization
- Innovating through creative problem solving

This work has been foundational to the agency's learning and has shaped and influenced this plan.

Additionally, through the implementation of the [Racial Equity Plan](#), the Agency continues to expand its focus on equity to include work on **intersectionality** and decolonization, recognizing the complexity of disenfranchisement. The Racial Equity Plan developed a framework to address inequities across various dimensions such as disability, gender, sexuality, and rural communities. This commitment to inclusivity and equity leads us to the next crucial step in our journey: the introduction of this d/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan.

This d/Deaf & Disability Equity & Access Action Plan signifies a dedicated effort to not only continue the conversation around equity but to also drive meaningful and sustainable change within disability rights and accessibility. Through this focused action plan, we aspire to bridge gaps, dismantle barriers, and create a more inclusive and accessible cultural sector for all.

In support of this initiative, the Mass Cultural Council, in collaboration [Art-Reach](#) and [Open-Door Arts](#) has recently concluded an extensive five-month initiative of data collection and analysis. This initiative, involving close cooperation with the creative sector and the d/Deaf and Disability community, has resulted in a detailed report and a set of recommendations. These recommendations have been aligned with the Mass Cultural Council's Strategic Plan (2023) and provide the framework for the Deaf and Disability Access Action Plan. The outcomes of the plan are designed to position the Council as a leader, innovator, and trusted partner in accessibility work across the sector while leveraging the Agency's significant role, influence, and reach.

The Plan

External actions for grant applicants and grant recipients

The following action steps are designed to support those who seek and/or receive grants from Mass Cultural Council.

Programs

To build and support programmatic practices that advance access, equity, and inclusion at our cultural institutions and to invest in creative individuals from the Deaf and Disabilities cultural communities, Mass Cultural Council will:

FY25

- Establish a Disability Advisory Committee comprised of individuals who identify as Deaf and/or Disabled to meet biannually with Mass Cultural Council's leadership and staff workgroup to assess the Agency's Equity and Access plan, systems, and services. This group will work on:
 - Soliciting feedback (surveys, focus groups, etc.) from the d/Deaf & Disabilities creative community on their experience with the grant application process and using this data to inform ongoing improvements, annually.
 - Shared "accessibility in the arts" language.
 - Shared intel on generally accepted, most current, innovative practices, and evolving needs for the sector.
 - Identifying and connecting with service organizations and other state agencies supporting accessibility work.
 - Building a framework and educational resources for accessible and inclusive job postings (incl. [HireCulture.org](https://hireculture.org)).
 - Contribution of content to the Opportunities and Resources page with effective practices, technology innovations, professional development, as well as evolving needs language updates.

FY26

- Conduct a comprehensive review and revision of all steps of the grantmaking process through an accessibility lens. Actions include (but are not limited to):
 - Revising and updating the application process to integrate new accessibility technologies, reduce bias toward disability, and eradicate barriers,
 - Annually, reviewing the current American Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance attestation process in the grant application to reduce the complexity in understanding the pertinent state and federal obligations for Title II¹ organizations,

¹ The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs. The ADA is

- Revising for any Federal and State Executive Orders and legal mandates,
- Engaging a specialized vendor to provide technical support, as needed.
- Implement strategies and outreach that encourage, reduce bias toward disability, and prioritize applications from with the d/Deaf & Disabilities creative communities.

Ongoing

- Implement strategies and outreach that encourage, reduce bias toward disability, and prioritize applications from with the d/Deaf & Disabilities creative communities.
- Annually, reviewing the current American Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance attestation process in the grant application to reduce the complexity in understanding the pertinent state and federal obligations for Title II organizations,
- Encouraging representation of people from the d/Deaf & Disability community to serve on Local Cultural Councils.
- Encouraging Local Cultural Councils to connect with their municipal offices on disability/aging.

Sector Education, Services & Achievement

To provide, enhance, scale, and drive the development of accessibility services, Mass Cultural Council will:

FY25

- Collaborate with a specialized vendor, other agencies and service orgs, on the deployment, revision, scaling and launch of the Mass Cultural Council's Universal/Inclusive Design learning program, now called the [Innovation Learning Network](#) (ILN), to reach hundreds of organizations and individuals in the creative sector.
- Review existing organizational access self-assessment tools with the specialized vendor to start gathering information to inform our understanding of excellence in access.

broken up into five different sections, which are called titles. Different titles set out the requirements for different kinds of organizations.

Title I: Employment.

Title II, State and Local Government, Public Transit Systems.

Title III: Businesses and nonprofits serving the public.

Title IV: Telecommunication companies.

Title V: Requirements for how to implement the law.

FY26

- Collaborate with a specialized vendor in designing and administering an access definition/rubric that sets clear, measurable criteria and benchmarks for organizations in the creative sector. This rubric may suggest progressive levels of achievement, aiding organizations in understanding auditing and improving their accessibility work.
- Work with a specialized vendor, other State Agencies, service organizations, experts, and people from the d/Deaf and Disability community to define and launch a "Distinction in Access" recognition which exemplifies innovation, advancement, stellar achievements, practices, and strategies in accessibility in the creative sector. This distinction, completion of the ILN, and the rubric will revise Mass Cultural Council's badge of distinction: [UP Designation](#)

FY27

- Establish a periodic review (every two years) and report with Local Cultural Councils on understanding state and federal obligations for Title III² organizations.

Ongoing

- Expand and deepen relationships and collaborations with at least five (5) expert individuals, organizations, and agencies supporting in the d/Deaf & Disability community, annually, including those from disability advocacy organizations, to stay updated on most current practices, new innovations and developments, outreach, and potential partnerships.
- Continue to provide monthly Access Office Hours and resources for organizations to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), supporting applicants for grants, navigating the ADA as grant review criteria, and maintaining established peer networks and connections.
- Expand and deepen relationships and collaborations with at least five (5) expert individuals, organizations, and agencies supporting in the d/Deaf & Disability community, annually, including those from disability advocacy organizations, to stay updated on most current practices, new innovations and developments, outreach, and potential partnerships.

² The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs. The ADA is broken up into five different sections, which are called titles. Different titles set out the requirements for different kinds of organizations.

Title I: Employment.

Title II, State and Local Government, Public Transit Systems.

Title III: Businesses and nonprofits serving the public.

Title IV: Telecommunication companies.

Title V: Requirements for how to implement the law.

- Biannually 1) utilize social media posts, ArtSake, Power of Culture blogs, and media alerts, etc., to amplify, showcase the exemplary accessibility accomplishments of individuals and organizations within the creative sector and 2) highlighting professional development opportunities, grants, and resources specifically designed for the d/Deaf and Disability community.
- Work with specialized vendor to update internal and external communication and engagement techniques and technologies (instructional videos, Deaf Vlogs, AI technology, infographics, illustrated guides, etc.) to ensure accessibility for individuals with various access needs and abilities.

Internal Actions for Agency Processes

The following action steps are designed to support the internal work at Mass Cultural Council.

- **Agency Operations:** The internal operations of Mass Cultural Council are a critical part of creating the culture of equity needed to support the field.
- **Governing Council:** Mass Cultural Council is governed by a board of private citizens appointed by the Governor for staggered three-year terms. Council members represent various regions of the state and have demonstrated distinguished service, creativity, and/or scholarship in the arts, humanities, or sciences.

Compliance & Education

To ensure a culture of anti-ableism, diminish the potential for harm, increase accessibility in our operational practices, and support the growth and empowerment of employees with disabilities and those they work with, Mass Cultural Council will:

FY25

- Work with Auditors from the New England ADA Center (every three years) to prepare an ADA compliance audit on operations and governance and implement required adjustments based on its findings and develop annual workplan for FY26 and FY27 implementation as necessary.
- Develop an acknowledgement receipt of the Agency's d/Deaf & Disability Access & Equity Action Plan for external contractors and, to the extent we can for vendors.

FY26

- Revise People Operations processes from postings, to expanded recruitment, to interviews, to onboarding, to requesting accommodations, and evaluations with a disability equity lens and to ensure accountability.

FY27

- Provide resources for the creation and sustainability of an Employee Resource Group or affinity group for employees with disabilities.

- Work with the Disability Advisory Committee, evaluate and update the d/Deaf and Disability Equity and Access Action Plan.

Ongoing

- As positions become available recruit and continuously work towards greater representation from the d/Deaf & Disability community in all levels of employment, the Governing Council, and taskforces.
- Continuously review and update policies to ensure they reflect current best practices in accessibility and inclusion.
- Continuously monitor, review, and update internal communication practices for accessibility.
- Provide expert bi-annual professional development for staff and council on creating inclusive work environments, effective strategies on accessible communications, events, equitable grantmaking, and understanding legal obligations related to accommodations for people with disabilities.
- Enhance employee support through the adoption and utilization of advanced technology solutions.
- Build and share a quarterly progress report to the cultural sector, and the Council.

Legal Requirements

This plan addresses the Agency's desire to be an equitable and inclusive state agency and to embody principles of racial equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in its operations, programming, and grant making. Notwithstanding any interpretation to the contrary of the language of the plan, nothing contained herein is meant or intended in any way to direct, mandate, suggest, or advise the Agency, its Council members, employees, or constituents to act in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of federal or state non-discrimination laws or other applicable laws or with the Agency's status as an equal opportunity employer. The aim of this plan is to create and support the inclusion of d/Deaf & Disabled individuals and those who engage them and desire to engage them into all aspects of the Council's activities but not to, in any way, promote the exclusion of any person or any exclusionary practice.

Glossaries

[National Center for Disability and Journalism:](#)

[National Association of the Deaf; Community and Culture FAQs](#)

[Autistic Hoya, Glossary of Ableist Phrases. Lydia X. Z. Brown](#)

Special Thanks & Acknowledgements

Consultants

John Orr, Art-Reach

Dani Rose, Art-Reach

Nicole Agois, Open Door Arts

Portia Brown, Open Door Arts

Partners

[Mass Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing](#)

Mass Cultural Council's Disability Task Force

Cathy Cheng-Anderson

Charles G. Baldwin

Cheyenne Cohn-Postell

Dan Blask

Hanako Brais

Dawn Heinen

Erik Holmgren

Lillian Lee

MARCH 14, 2024 DRAFT

**NATIVE AMERICAN & INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES EQUITY PLAN
FY2025 - 2027**

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PURPOSE

With this three-year plan, Mass Cultural Council commits to doing the ongoing and long-term work to support Native and Indigenous artists and culture bearers.

The Agency is dedicated to equitable investments and support to historically underinvested communities, and will focus on two (2) primary areas:

- 1.) **External** - to support and encourage an equitable and inclusive creative sector in the Commonwealth by increasing investments and supports to the Native and Indigenous creative communities and those who engage them and desire to engage them.
- 2.) **Internal** - to strengthen Mass Cultural Council's operational, programming, and governance practices, policies, and procedures by leveraging the knowledge

and experience of individuals from our Native and Indigenous communities, ensuring their perspectives and needs are integral to the Council's framework and approach.

MISSION

The Mass Cultural Council advances the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector by celebrating traditions and talents, championing its collective needs, and equitably investing public resources.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A short while ago, I had the opportunity to travel across the Commonwealth with my colleague Erin Genia, a notable scholar, artist, community organizer, and Native American. Erin had arranged for us to meet with leaders of Native American and Indigenous communities in Massachusetts. I found our car conversations and the chance to meet, deeply listen, and learn from each of these new contacts beyond rewarding. This inspired a semester's worth of personal learning, which continues, about the history of Native Americans, especially those in Massachusetts. My life has been enriched and a new "call to action" has been added to my list. I wish for everyone to have this experience.

As a Black, gay individual leading the Mass Cultural Council as Executive Director I carry the understanding of what it means to navigate a world where your identity may not always be fully seen, understood, or embraced. I find inspiration in the shared struggles and triumphs across marginalized communities. Their rich cultural heritage deserves not only recognition but a prominent place in our shared narrative.

Mass Cultural Council's Native American & Indigenous People's Equity Plan emerges from partnership with and collective recognition of the richness and diversity of Native and Indigenous communities. As we embark on this journey, we invite you to join us in embracing the transformative potential. This plan is a testament to our collective responsibility to create an inclusive and equitable environment. This initiative is not just about policy for me; it's a commitment to dismantling the barriers that have historically marginalized Native American and Indigenous communities.

I am grateful to be a part of an organization that embraces these values and commits to meaningful action. Thank you for your collaboration.

Michael J. Bobbitt
Executive Director

FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

We are excited to share a momentous step forward in our ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion within the Mass Cultural Council with the formation of the Native American & Indigenous People's Equity Plan. This initiative holds personal significance for both of us, as it represents not just a policy decision for the Agency to engage meaningfully with this population, but a deep acknowledgment of the historical injustices faced by Native and Indigenous communities. As stewards of the cultural landscape in Massachusetts, we bear a responsibility to address systemic disparities and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable future. In our roles as Chair and Vice Chair of the governing Council we are humbled to witness the formation of this plan, which will play a pivotal role in reshaping the narrative of cultural representation in our state. The personal stories, traditions, and artistic expressions of Native and Indigenous peoples will now be given the platform and recognition they deserve within the Commonwealth's creative and cultural sector.

Your support and engagement are crucial in ensuring the success of this initiative. We look forward to working collaboratively, learning from the insights of Native and Indigenous communities, and collectively shaping a cultural landscape that reflects the true diversity of Massachusetts. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to our shared mission.

Warm regards,

Marc Carroll
Chair

Jo-Ann Davis
Vice Chair

NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS DATA FOR MASSACHUSETTS

In Massachusetts, diverse Native American and Indigenous communities exist, each with unique cultures, languages, and histories. Accessing accurate and comprehensive data on Native American and Indigenous populations can be challenging due to historical underrepresentation, erasure of these communities, and inadequate data collection methods. [Census data](#), has often undercounted Indigenous peoples, leading to inaccurate representations of their population size and distribution. Additionally, many Indigenous communities have reservations, tribal lands, or urban areas where they reside, making traditional data collection methods less effective.

Population according to the Census data for Massachusetts:

- Native Hawaiian, Samoan, or Other Pacific Islanders make up 0.1% of the State's population (approximately 7,000)
- Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, or Alaska Natives make up 0.5% of the State's population (approximately 35,000)

While Native Hawaiian, Samoan, and Pacific Islanders are often included in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) considerations, we have included the data in this plan as well because Congress has consistently acknowledged or recognized Native Hawaiians as the indigenous peoples of Hawai'i through the enactment of over 150 Federal statutes. The US Department of the Interior includes Native Hawaiians in guidance, regulations, and acts related to [Tribal Sovereignty and Co-Stewardship](#). The [Office of Native Hawaiian Relations \(ONHR\)](#) has been created to "fulfill the U.S. Government's responsibilities to effectuate and implement the special political and legal relationship between the United States and the Native Hawaiian Community, and continue the process of reconciliation with the Native Hawaiian people".

MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL RECENT GRANT MAKING DATA

Support for Native American and Indigenous Organizations

Mass Cultural Council has not tracked funding to Native American and Indigenous organizations over time. A review of the grantmaking data from FY04 to FY23 found that the agency had funded between 15 and 20 organizations that may be considered Native American or Indigenous. Those organizations received between 40 and 75 grants totaling between \$70,000 and \$235,000 over that 19-year period.

FY23 Grant Making Data: Individuals

Self-Identify As	Number of Grants	% of Grants	% of State Population
Native Hawaiian, Samoan, or Other Pacific Islander	8	0.2%	0.1%
Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, or Alaska Native	62	1.5%	0.5%

FOLLOWING NATIONAL AND STATE LEADERSHIP EFFORTS

Our efforts to be an equitable Agency align with the public outcry and demand for equity. We plan to further our equity goals by developing a suite of

equity plans and hope to be seen as a leader in both the creative sector and state government for these efforts.

Mass Cultural Council was further inspired by the work of other state and national entities:

[Massachusetts' Commission on Indian Affairs \(MCIA\)](#) was created by the legislature in 1974. The Commission is governed by [M.G.L. Chapter 6A: Section 8A](#) and assists tribal councils, Indian organizations and individuals in their relationship with agencies of state and local government.

The implementation of a [Native American Tuition Credit](#) program for Native American students at public state universities, which represents a significant step towards educational equity.

The [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#) announced by Secretary Haaland, as detailed on the Department of the Interior's website. This initiative aims to address the historical injustices faced by Indigenous peoples in boarding schools.

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), which sets a global standard for the treatment and rights of Indigenous peoples, further influences our commitment to equity and inclusivity.

THE PROCESS: DESIGNING & UPDATING THE PLAN

The Native American & Indigenous People's Equity Plan was created as a result of the ongoing work stemming from [Mass Cultural Council's Racial Equity Plan](#), adopted for fiscal years 2022-2024.

Through our work with [Erin Genia](#), we focused on Native American and Indigenous communities, we engaged, connected, met, and welcomed members and representatives from Native American and Indigenous communities and leaders, realizing the unique historical and present-day issues facing these communities. This plan was created to meet that need.

As a state agency, Mass Cultural Council can and must provide leadership in addressing disparities across the sector, setting a standard that helps to support Native artists and organizations, educate, and provide support for non-native organizations about these issues, and place emphasis on developing reciprocal relationships rather than extractive ones.

THE PLAN

EXTERNAL ACTIONS FOR GRANT RECIPIENTS & APPLICANTS

Goal: To center decolonization, build trust, and sustain investment in the Native American and Indigenous creative communities of Massachusetts, Mass Cultural Council will:

FISCAL YEAR 2025

- Work with Native and Indigenous partners to develop an Agency Land Acknowledgement.
 - Revise grant making processes to improve distribution of resources and funds to Native American and Indigenous organizations, artists, culture-bearers and tribes through outreach, prioritization, and engagement in program guidelines.
 - Consider, as appropriate, seeking amendments to legislatively mandated programs administered by the Agency to ensure inclusion of tribal governments.
 - Design and launch a Tribal Cultural Council program that would be run as an expansion of the Local Cultural Council Program, to offer tribal governments the same opportunity to receive an allocation for regranting that Massachusetts municipalities receive.
 - In partnership with the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, review and update the BIPOC or Native American and Indigenous Centered self-identification process to ensure it is equitably serving Native American/Indigenous led organizations doing work as part of the creative sector.
 - Establish a Native American/Indigenous People's Advisory Committee comprised of Native American and Indigenous individuals to meet biannually with Mass Cultural Council's leadership and staff workgroup to assess the Native American & Indigenous People's Equity Plan progress, systems, and services.
 - Build recruitment plan and increase the number of Native American and Indigenous applicant pool and grant reviewers to align with or exceed the state demographics on Native American and Indigenous populations.
- **Ongoing**
- Encourage municipalities to increase representation of people from the Native American and Indigenous communities to serve on Local Cultural Councils.
 - Inform and engage Native American and Indigenous communities about the opportunity to serve on Local Cultural Councils.

FISCAL YEAR 2026

- As needed, provide office hours for Native American and Indigenous artistic communities to support applications for grants and maintaining established peer networks and connections.
- Expand and deepen relationships and collaborations with at least Three (3) expert individuals, organizations, or agencies supporting the Native American and Indigenous communities, annually.

FISCAL YEAR 2027

- Partner with the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs [and other](#) Native American and Indigenous organizations to develop a toolkit of useful links and learning opportunities for non-Native American or Indigenous organizations seeking to work with tribes, tribal people and related governments and organizations.

Ongoing

- Request feedback, annually, through task force/focus groups, partnership with the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, and/or surveys of grantees on our grant making processes and programs.

INTERNAL ACTIONS FOR AGENCY CULTURE & PRACTICES

The following action steps are designed to support the internal work at Mass Cultural Council.

- **Agency Operations:** The internal operations of Mass Cultural Council are a critical part of creating the culture of equity needed to support the field.
- **Governing Council:** Mass Cultural Council is governed by a board of private citizens appointed by the Governor for staggered three-year terms. Council members represent various regions of the state and have demonstrated distinguished service, creativity, and/or scholarship in the arts, humanities, or sciences.

Goal: To advance decolonization, diminish the potential for harm, and sustain this culture throughout our operational practices, Mass Cultural Council will:

FISCAL YEAR 2025

- Curate bi-annual, internal education sessions presented by Native American and Indigenous leaders, scholars, historians, and others whom our Native American and Indigenous community members prioritize, to inform staff on topics like the history of cultural Native and Indigenous genocide, settler colonialism, agents of assimilation, cultural contributions, relevant international and federal legal frameworks, and other significant and important to Native American and Indigenous Communities.
- Revise the Agency's use of communication materials, policies, practices to ensure cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, with a focus on the relationship

between Native American and Indigenous peoples and the term BIPOC as represented and understood.

Ongoing

- Highlight, biannually, the achievements of Native American and Indigenous people and organizations in the creative sector in social media posts, Artsake, and Power of Culture blogs, media alerts, etc.
- Report to the Council and sector updates on the progress of this plan, in alignment with our Governing Council meetings.
- Continuously work towards greater representation from the Native American and Indigenous communities in all levels of employment, the [Governing Council](#), task forces, and working groups.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

This plan addresses the Agency's desire to be an equitable and inclusive state agency and to embody principles of racial equity, inclusiveness, and diversity in its operations, programming, and grantmaking without diminishing the rights or opportunities of any individual or group. Notwithstanding any interpretation to the contrary of the language of the plan, nothing contained herein is meant or intended in any way to direct, mandate, suggest, or advise the Agency, its Council members, employees, or constituents to act in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of federal or state non-discrimination laws or other applicable laws or with the Agency's status as an equal opportunity employer. The aim of this plan is to create and support the inclusion of Native American and Indigenous Peoples and tribal governments and related organizations serving Native American and Indigenous Peoples into all aspects of the Council's activities but not to, in any way, promote the exclusion of any person or any exclusionary practice.

GLOSSARY

The NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: This [glossary](#) is valuable resource for understanding specific terminologies and their contexts within Indigenous cultures.

RESOURCES

Department of the Interior
<https://www.doi.gov/iacb> .

National Congress of American Indians:

<https://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/community-and-culture/cultural-protection-and-nagpra>

<https://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/community-and-culture>

<https://www.ncai.org/about-tribes>

[Centennial Accord](#)

[Millennium Agreement](#)

[United Southern and Eastern Tribes](#)

SPECIAL THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tribal Task Force

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Iñupiaq - Athabascan from Alaska. Native enrollment village, Kaktovik Member, Mass Cultural Council Governing Council, Western Massachusetts Commissioner on Indian Affairs, Member of the Advisory Council for the New England Foundation for the Arts, Founder and Co-Director of the Ohketeau Cultural Center and the Native Youth Empowerment Foundation

Darlene Flores

*Traditional Medicine Keeper, Taino Higuayagua Caribbean Tribe
Organizer, Indigenous Peoples' Day Newton*

Erin Genia

Task Force Organizer

Enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate

Multidisciplinary artist, educator and community organizer specializing in Native American and Indigenous arts and culture.

Cheryll Holley

Sonksq of the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band

Professional researcher, writer, and speaker specializing in African American and Indigenous peoples of New England.

Jim Peters

Executive Director, Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs

Member, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

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David Weeden

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Tribal Councilman, *Mashpee*
Wampanoag Tribe

Town of Mashpee Selectboard – Chairman

Cape Cod Commission - Native American Representative member

Berta Welch

Board President, Aquinnah Cultural Center

Member of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Aquinnah Health Committee
and Membership committee, Town of Aquinnah Arts District member