



Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Framework

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Why IDEA?

Orlando Science Center makes science relevant to everyday life through meaningful and engaging experiences that ignite curiosity and spark innovation. The work of Orlando Science Center has the capability to change lives and create prosperity in our community. We help people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities understand how science impacts the world and benefits us all. Through science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, we inspire passion for lifelong learning and equip people with 21st Century and technical skills to solve complex challenges while revealing to them pathways to education and meaningful careers that change the world.

Systemic and cultural barriers supported by policies, practices, and programs developed without the benefit of a range of perspectives have historically limited who engages with museums and STEM. Historically, museums of all types serve a predominately white, affluent audience. We want our organization to be a place where all people feel safe, welcome, and empowered to learn and develop educational and career aspirations in STEM. It is imperative that we serve all parts of our diverse community, providing access to life-changing learning experiences, including hands-on programming and immersive exhibits, for those who may not otherwise have the opportunity. We understand that inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) are vital for our community and our future STEM workforce.

When diverse teams work together with innovative ideas and distinct perspectives, they outperform homogenous teams. Scientists and STEM professionals from diverse backgrounds and life experiences bring different perspectives, creativity, and individual enterprise to address complex scientific and societal problems.

We are committed to understanding and overcoming systemic barriers experienced by underserved areas of our community. Our organization is actively working to create policies, implement practices, and take actions that ensure every individual, especially those who are underrepresented in STEM fields, have access to high-quality STEM education and careers so they can fully participate in building community prosperity and a better tomorrow for future generations. Our IDEA framework will serve as our guide as we work towards building access to pathways in STEM for all members of our community. As a community focused educational institution, Orlando Science Center has the resources, staff, and experience to provide impactful STEM learning experiences that introduce people to real-world settings to spark authentic interests in STEM.

Individual, Group, and Community Focus Points

At an individual level, children may lack access to early positive experiences that provide hands-on exposure to STEM, may not know a STEM professional like them who can serve as a role model, or may be confused by the myriad of STEM fields. Some individuals may experience socioeconomic realities of daily life, like poverty, which keep them from participating in STEM learning, leading to underperformance in STEM subjects. Together, these disparities decrease an individual's ability to build a personal connection to STEM. Studies have shown developing a personal identity within STEM is a vital component to an individual's choice to continue lifelong STEM education and pursue STEM careers.

Inequality is also experienced at larger group levels. We believe that those who have historically been relegated to the margins of society due to legacies of racism, ableism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ageism, xenophobia, and all other forms of injustice must be fully included in museum workplaces, informal education programs, and STEM fields.

Communities which lack representation in museums and science centers may not identify with STEM as a way to solve problems they experience in their own cultural daily context.

To overcome inequality and injustice, we must identify people we serve who lack exposure to STEM at an individual level, explore the barriers to accessible STEM education at a group level, and learn alongside the communities which are not represented in STEM. Our focus must encompass the various needs of the individual, group, and community levels.

Orlando Science Center's IDEA Goal

Engage our diverse community by serving, reflecting, and embracing all.

IDEA Definitions

Inclusion is the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community. While a truly “inclusive” group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be “inclusive.”

Diversity is all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

Equity is the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specific goals.

Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.

Factors for Success and Sustainability

We are committed to addressing inequality and injustice faced by individuals, groups, and communities throughout Central Florida.

These six factors are crucial for the development, evaluation, success, sustainability, and evolution of Orlando Science Center's IDEA Plan. Each of the factors interrelate and inform each other. These factors encompass our external impact with the community and our internal impact with our staff, volunteers, board members, and leadership.

Staff Commitment

IDEA was developed with Orlando Science Center's senior leadership, board of trustees, and staff. Full support and accountability from senior leadership and staff is required to successfully implement the plan.

Strategic Alignment

IDEA is integrated and aligned with Orlando Science Center's strategic plan. As the Science Center and our community evolve and change, the mission, strategies, and goals of this plan will be revisited annually.

Community Partnerships

Orlando Science Center relies on fostering authentic relationships and trust by developing strong partnerships at the local, regional, and national levels with an emphasis on collaboration and co-creation.

IDEA Council

The IDEA Council seeks to foster and model a workplace that is welcome, safe, and inclusive. This cross-departmental group holds consistent meetings to focus on the internal team's experience while positively impacting our community.

Resource Consideration

Orlando Science Center will raise funds and allocate resources to support activities that optimize the organizational outcomes of the IDEA plan.

Measurement and Reporting

To effectively evaluate the ongoing success of Orlando Science Center's IDEA work, benchmarks will be established to measure and monitor key impacts against Orlando Science Center's goals and influence the journey going forward.

IDEA Strategies

IDEA strategies add directional focus and clarity to the work being accomplished by Orlando Science Center teams and individuals. Each strategy and its sub-tasks represent measurable objectives that will be evaluated on a consistent basis to reinforce commitment, engagement, and course correction where needed. We recognize that this is an evolving journey. Our strategies will be revisited and adjusted as we listen to feedback.

Reinforce and promote an operating culture that embodies IDEA principles

- The IDEA Council will create recommendations for inclusive programming, discuss relevant topics, and share resources with leadership and staff. This council consists of cross-departmental internal staff to include perspectives from multiple levels of the institution.
- Increase staff diversity by refining recruitment and hiring processes for all vacant positions. A diverse applicant base includes candidates with varying backgrounds, views, and lived experiences.
- Provide cultural competency and management training for all staff across all levels and departments focused on deepening and extending staff's understanding of terminology and topics within diversity, equity, access, inclusion, and professional development through guest speakers and general management training.
- Focus on creating a more diverse and representative board of trustees by setting goals for diversifying board composition.
- Expand and promote volunteer and internship opportunities to communities, colleges, universities, and other institutions within populations that are predominantly underserved and underrepresented.

Determine the educational influences and economic barriers impacting STEM learning in OSC's service area

- We will form a community IDEA Advisory group to gather insights and information regarding important issues to diverse populations.
- Form an external Task Force to explore and make recommendations for how OSC can increase IDEA principles in STEM learning.
- Review our current educational content for gaps in programming.
- Evaluate programs to insure cultural relevance.
- OSC will conduct biannual internal and external surveys to gather feedback and monitor progress.

Identify resources and implement practices that strengthen OSC's ability to drive IDEA principles.

- Seek contracts with diverse vendors across a broad range of services.
- Monitor audience satisfaction data to identify and address IDEA-related issues.
- Use inclusive language in communications to minimize the impact of bias, prejudice, or exclusion of groups of people.
- Present STEM education programs and exhibits and increase access to opportunities that feature diverse voices in STEM and connect to current events and issues in STEM that impact people's lives.
- Increase participation in STEM learning through accessibility programs along the continuum of human ability and experience.
- Integrate universal design principles throughout the Science Center to make each visitor feel more welcome.

Implement initiatives and raise awareness to drive increased participation of underrepresented audiences through STEM education.

- Create internal and public platforms to invite scientists, researchers and other presenters, from underrepresented ethnicities, racial backgrounds, gender identities, and differing abilities to present their work and engage with OSC's audience, staff, and volunteers.
- Increase representation of scientists, researchers and other presenters, from underrepresented ethnicities, racial backgrounds, gender identities, and differing abilities throughout the Science Center's programs, exhibits, presentations, and virtual content
- Create a year-round portfolio of public programs that features and represents diverse voices and leaders in STEM and provides the opportunity for dialogue.

Establish place-based partnerships to engage STEM learners in addressing the needs of their respective communities.

- Identify collaborative opportunities with key stakeholders and affinity groups and cultivate partnerships to deepen engagement and build authentic relationships that intersect IDEA priorities while meeting STEM learning needs and raising the visibility of diverse perspective in STEM fields.