

Creating a Smithsonian Gardens IDEA Committee



Smithsonian Gardens

COHORT PROJECT TOOLKIT

Cohort participants:

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Smithsonian Gardens is an AAM accredited museum but we are also a smaller unit under the umbrella of the Smithsonian Institution.



We are a cross-organizational unit that interacts with all the various museum and museum support communities.



We have about 55 staff members spread out across our institution.

BACKGROUND

HOW WE GOT HERE

APGA
Sustainability
Index Audit

2021

Participation in
the APGA cohort
training from
IDEA Center

2022-2023

Project Development:

- ✓ Committee creation with charter.
- ✓ Rollout of pronouns in email signature.
- ✓ Initiation of Land Acknowledgement.

2023

THE PUBLIC GARDENS SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

- Staff presented on each of the suite of 12 Environmental, Social, and Economic **Attributes**. The index is intended to inspire gardens to advance their own sustainability programs and operations to further the mission of their institution while connecting to local, national, and global sustainability efforts.





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS SUSTAINABILITY INDEX AUDIT

Smithsonian Gardens staff voted on 4 attributes to further investigate in 2021 for self-evaluation:

- Biodiversity & Conservation
- **Employee Development, Diversity, & Inclusion**
- Engagement, Outreach, & Education
- Materials Management

HOW WE USED THE AUDIT

To develop goals and key performance indicators identified as standards for gardens to address in policy and practice

To prioritize the goals and attributes as related to our mission.

To influence and impact future strategic planning

Audit Results: Reflections and Assessment

- Our unit did not have an internal group specifically organized around social and workplace IDEA issues and concerns.
- Gardens ideas/initiatives, both internally and externally focused, did not have a place to “live” and be discussed formally.
- These ideas and initiatives lived on the periphery of our day-to-day programming and management.
- Most employee issues are handled on a larger SI level, not particularly SG specific which means that programs or offerings were not designed by SG and did not directly relate to our mission or vision.
- IDEA relevant topics were not articulated as a priority as well as they could be. IDEA was sometimes “retrofitted” into programming/decisions instead of having an active role.
- Social “awakening” during summer of 2020. How did SG respond? (in coordination with SI)
- General bend of Smithsonian to be more socially aware of current social trends and playing a more active/concentrated role with IDEA in the workplace, especially when it comes to inclusion of historically underrepresented groups.
- New leadership and renewed commitment to IDEA principles.



APGA's Sustainability Index Attribute Goals:



EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

Goal 1: Identify and adopt a culture and value system that understands, respects, and promotes diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the institution.

KPI 1: Garden promotes its efforts to support IDEA principles.

Goal 2: Recruit, retain, and recognize a diverse workforce within your institution.

KPI 2a: Garden develops effective practices for recruiting and hiring boards, employees, and volunteers that ensure IDEA principles are core components of the process.

KPI 2b: Garden recognizes accomplishments (salary, benefits, award) of board, employees, and volunteers.

KPI 2c: Garden develops effective practices for retaining employees and volunteers that ensure IDEA principles are core components of the process.



















Goal 3: Establish IDEA best practices that shape and impact the workforce, the workplace, and the community.

KPI 3a: Garden develops effective practices for tracking and reporting diversity of staff, volunteers, and board (if applicable).

KPI 3b: Garden provides public programming opportunities that are inclusive, equitable, and accessible to diverse demographics.

KPI 3c: Garden determines metrics to hold leadership staff accountable for implementing IDEA strategies and benchmarking success.

We created a color-coded scoring system of the assessment questions to evaluate our own progress.

E.D.D.I At-a-glance Color Chart		
	Green Dot means Definitely, Yes	11 (26.8%)
	Yellow Dot means Somewhat, Room for Growth	16 (39.1%)
	Red Dot means Not at All	6 (14.6%)
	Blue Dot means Part of Greater Smithsonian Efforts	-
	 Still finding out from HR	8 (19.5%)
Assessment Questions		SG Status
GOAL 1: Identify and adopt a culture and value system that understands, respects, and promotes diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the institution.		
KPI 1a: Garden promotes its efforts to support inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) principles.		
Garden has written values and goals available internally and publicly (ex. on job applications) that state its desire to strive for an inclusive and diverse work environment.		 
Garden advocates internally and publicly for diversity, equity, and inclusion topics.		 
Garden has a policy or plan (policy statement) that guides how it addresses IDEA principles.		 
Garden leadership staff (at least one) has a professional training certificate in IDEA best practices.		
Garden formulates a diversity and inclusion focus group, committee, or task force to elicit feedback and ensure diversity and inclusion goals are being met.		
Garden policies are accepting of diversity in language, dress, physical appearance, or non-traditional holidays that hold cultural significance to certain staff.		 
Garden policies and culture support the hiring and retention of those with physical, linguistic, and mental differences (Americans with Disabilities Act compliant).		 



After evaluating the goals of the **Employee Development, Diversity, & Inclusion** attribute, and scoring the assessment questions, we developed a list of goals.

Smithsonian Gardens Goals

- Being a leader within Smithsonian and assisting with new initiatives organizationally revolving around IDEA
- Serve as a clearing house for staff ideas and initiatives around IDEA.
- Aligning SG with larger SI priorities and strategic goals
- Understanding that Public Gardens do not exist in a void and cannot escape the social/political topics, even when based in science and conservation.
- Establish training/educational opportunities for staff.



From these goals, we prioritized a simple plan of action. We did not want to take on too much of an obligation to start.



EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

SHORT LIST OF ACTION



1: Officially establish a diversity and inclusion committee/focus group for SG.

4 people: Meet 1hr/mo + research time ~2hr/mo = 12 staff hrs/mo total

Group can start work on the following:

- * Investigating existing SI resources on IDEA and making sure all staff knows more about SI's Office of Equal Employment, Ombudsman, counselors, Employee Assistance Program.
- * A system of internal reciprocal communication to:
 - Create awareness among staff about IDEA principles and language to better advocate for them.
 - Find a way to anonymously survey our staff to measure and understand better if everyone feels included and what they expect from the workplace.
 - Become a resource for employees with questions or concerns.

2: Offer training on IDEA principles and best practices for leadership and staff.

- * Look for internal SI training first, but with potential for bringing outside training too.

A range of \$3,000-5,000 of budget set aside for outside professional training

APGA IDEA CENTER COHORT

As we were performing the internal audit, the APGA IDEA center was announced alongside an initial cohort program.

The cohort provided a community where ideas could be exchanged and experiences shared.

We decided to postpone the official start of a new organizational committee until after the cohort.

Our cohort project would be the formation and beginning of IDEA at Smithsonian Gardens

Monday, April 18/2022

Greetings All,

I am absolutely thrilled to **welcome you** all to this first cohort program! I look forward to going on this journey with you and I thank you deeply for taking this leap with me.

Mae Lin Plummer

Director, The IDEA Center for Public Gardens

A program of Denver Botanic Gardens and the American Public Gardens Association

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VISIT [York Street](#) [Chatfield Farms](#) [Mount Goliath](#) [Plains Conservation Center](#)

DENVER BOTANIC
GARDENS    



IDEA CENTER: Inaugural Cohort Program Participants Announced

[The IDEA \(Inclusion Diversity Equity Accessibility\) Center for Public Gardens](#) is thrilled to announce the **Inaugural Cohort Program participants**. This group represents board members, executive garden leadership, and staff at public gardens, arboreta, and parks from across North America.



COHORT FINAL PROJECT

Description:

Smithsonian Gardens does not have a person or group specifically tasked with communicating and championing topics surrounding IDEA. We would like to establish a group focused on these issues that can be a resource to our staff, stakeholders, and our policy makers/leadership. This committee would also support the larger Smithsonian Institution effort to establish "SI Civil" as a resource for the Institution. This committee will explain and define IDEA and its relevancy to our jobs/lives, serve as a conduit with the larger Smithsonian "family", serve as a resource to staff who need assistance for themselves or their gardens, and provide inspiration and motivation around IDEA work.

COHORT FINAL PROJECT

Goals:

- Establish a committee that represents all elements of the organization and maybe even external to the organization.
- Establish a charter or explanation of why this committee is necessary and how it will serve staff.
- Establish a program that introduces and defines IDEA work to staff.
- Connect with other SI groups working with IDEA.

COHORT FINAL PROJECT:

- **Project Team:**
 - Initially this program's cohort participants with expansion to other staff members.
- **Stakeholders:**
 - All staff at SG, Smithsonian Facilities (which houses Smithsonian Gardens), volunteers, donors, other public gardens in the National Mall core.
- **Potential Risks to Success and Completion:**
 - Staff time for committee work
 - Budget
 - Federal system
 - Not enough inclusion

APGA IDEA CENTER COHORT

We developed a structure through a committee charter to help clarify goals and direction

We used tools learned during the cohort to develop our email signature pronoun initiative

We began development and creation of a land acknowledgement



SG IDEA COMMITTEE CHARTER

Statement of Purpose

- The members of the IDEA Committee shall serve (1) as guides, to foster continuous learning and sharing of knowledge, next practices, experiences, tools and resources related to IDEA principles to Association members; (2) as facilitators, to identify, collaborate, promote and elevate IDEA relevant topics and (3) as advisors, to bring forth recommendations and advocate for policy change.



SG IDEA
COMMITTEE
CHARTER

ORGANIZATION (cont.):

- **Agenda, Minutes, and Reports** A designated minute taker shall be established at the start of each term. The notes will include an attendance record, a copy of the agenda and a full report of the committee discussions, with documented recommendations and decisions.
- **Evaluation** The Committee will conduct an annual performance evaluation to measure the performance of the Committee in relation to the requirements of this Charter and such other matters, as the Committee may deem appropriate.



SG IDEA
COMMITTEE
CHARTER

ORGANIZATION:

- **This Charter** shall be reviewed and reassessed by the committee each year for three (3) years, and every three years thereafter.
- **Membership** The Committee will be made up of members of staff throughout Smithsonian Gardens. Representation should include staff from multiple areas of the unit including leadership. A chair and/or co-chairs shall be appointed by the Director and will serve two years.
- **Meetings** The Committee will meet monthly or as deemed necessary by committee chair/cochairs. Meetings will be held in-person, and/or by video/teleconference.



SG IDEA
COMMITTEE
CHARTER

Role and Responsibilities (What we do):

- **Guides:**
 - We foster continuous learning and sharing of knowledge, next practices, experiences, tools and resources related to IDEA principles to Association members
- **Facilitators:**
 - We identify, promote, and elevate IDEA relevant topics.
- **Advisors:**
 - We bring forth recommendations and advocate for policy change, programs and actions to leadership, as staff representatives.



SG IDEA COMMITTEE CHARTER

Goals: (How we do it)

- **Guides:**
 - Become a resource for staff who need more information on IDEA.
- **Facilitators:**
 - Increase opportunities for topical dialogue and link the SG community to other SI IDEA communities
 - Lead by example
- **Advisors:**
 - Create space for discussions annually within the committee, based on literature and/or videos, to stay informed and up to date on relevant topics and actively share them with the
 - Bring more topics to community discussion boards.

PRONOUNS & EMAIL SIGNATURES

February 2023 all-staff presentation

"As an extension of the sustainability index exercise and in alignment with American Public Gardens Association we are participating in a monthly cohort with other public garden professionals across the country to better understand and communicate issues diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. "



"Before we get into the "why" of including pronouns in an email signature we should take a step back and look at the "what" of pronouns."

- **What is a Pronoun?**

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (like *I* or *you*) or someone or something that is being talked about (like *she*, *I*, *them*, and *this*).

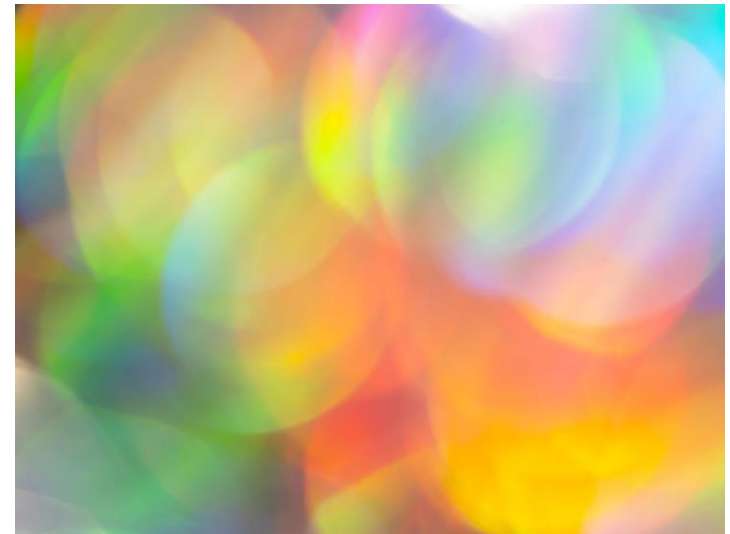
- **What is a "Gender Pronoun"?**

A "gender pronoun" is the pronoun that a person chooses to use for themselves. Gender Pronouns are the pronouns that we use to refer to people in sentences and conversation.

- **What are some examples of Gender Pronouns?**

Gender pronouns can look like and are not limited to

- he/him/his (masculine pronouns)
- she/her/hers (feminine pronouns)
- they/them/theirs (non-gendered pronouns)



Why?



"We are encouraging the voluntary use of pronouns in our new email signature because we want to confirm and encourage a workplace that is inclusive of all gender identities. Adding these words to your email signature has the practical benefit of making clear how you would like to be referred to, while also indicating to the recipient that you will respect their gender identity and choice of pronouns. It is an effective way of normalizing discussions about gender and creating an inclusive work environment for transgender and non-binary people.

"We've decided to do this because nothing may be more personal than the way in which we refer to ourselves through our name and pronouns. Much like our individual names, pronouns are tied to our deepest sense of identity. They articulate who we are and how the outside world should recognize and address us. Consider for a moment, the feeling you encounter when someone calls you by the wrong name despite having introduced yourself. Using a person's chosen name and desired pronouns is a form of showing mutual respect and basic courtesy. "



Why?

Eric Calhoun

Supervisory Horticulturist: NMAAHC, NMAH, NMAI, DWRC

(he/him)



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- To confirm and encourage an inclusive workplace
- Completely voluntary
- To align SG with current trends in public gardens as embodied by the new **IDEA Center for Public Gardens** (www.ideacenterforpublicgardens.org) and efforts internally at the Smithsonian, led by the Diversity and Inclusion department in the office of Human Resources.
- Questions/Comments?



DRAFTING OF A LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In creating an acknowledgement, we will:

Build partnerships with local tribes and indigenous groups

Consult with other SI units and museum counterparts.

Research the appropriate, respectful message.



More Initiatives to come!



Smithsonian Gardens

COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED 2023