



Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility

(IDEA)

2023 Annual Update



idea.chq.org

Dear Chautauquans,

As promised in the [Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility \(IDEA\) Strategic Plan \(2022-2024\)](#), I am providing an annual update on the progress made on the goals outlined in the plan. I am grateful for the staff, board members, community leaders and other Chautauquans who have supported these efforts in small and large ways. I always welcome your questions and feedback at ataneja@chq.org.

As you might recall, the IDEA strategic plan outlined five large objectives. Progress in each objective is provided below and as promised, I have also included a dedicated section on accessibility needs.

Objective No. 1

Enhance the organizational, staff and board culture to further embody IDEA work

The Board of Trustees received a presentation of the IDEA strategic plan and endorsed its goals and objectives. The plan was published and publicly shared on the [new IDEA website](#) in early spring. A series of webinars and in-person presentations on the IDEA plan occurred in the spring of 2022 and during the 2022 summer assembly. A recording of one of the webinars is available on the IDEA website.

Full-time employees and board members participated in required IDEA trainings in 2022. These trainings were also extended to several of our seasonal and part-time employees. These trainings are in addition to required trainings on discrimination and harassment that all employees take during their onboarding process and repeated on an annual basis.

We updated standard language in all job postings highlighting the Institution's values and commitment to IDEA, along with links to the 150 Forward and IDEA strategic plans.

New, remote-work policies & technology systems to advertise positions have enabled us to increase the diversity of applicants for staff positions and our geographical search areas.

The Institution revised its annual performance evaluation process, and included IDEA competencies as part of several other competencies that employees were evaluated on. This ensures that IDEA work and the objectives listed in this plan are part of all employees' responsibilities.

The IDEA office was created from philanthropic support from several Chautauquans, with three families serving as lead donors. Chautauquans continue to support these efforts and IDEA gifts have reached nearly \$1 million. Please reach out to advancement@chq.org or call 716-357-6404 if you would like to support these efforts via a donation.



Objective No. 2

Engage patrons and Chautauqua Institution community partners to enhance their ability to welcome diverse populations to the grounds and beyond

The Department of Religion and IDEA Office worked closely with the leadership team of [Chautauqua Dialogues](#) to increase awareness of this program and expand its offerings via structured opportunities for engaged, deeper and courageous dialogues that transcend divisions and seek greater understanding of opposing or different viewpoints

The IDEA Office offered a weekly IDEA column in *The Chautauquan Daily* to create educational opportunities for our patrons to understand and value how historically marginalized populations have historically experienced (and currently experience) the grounds. These articles are available online via the IDEA website.

The Institution launched an official [IDEA website](#) to share our goals, resources and progress on IDEA related initiatives.

Several community groups, including their board and staff members, were invited to and participated in IDEA related trainings. These trainings focused on ways in which all members of our community can work together to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for diverse patrons, staff and students.

Leaders of a few community groups engaged in strategic conversations about how their organizations can support the efforts laid out in the IDEA plan, including strategies to diversify their patron base and create their own IDEA goals. These conversations paid specific attention to accessibility for those groups that own physical properties.

The Institution worked with the *African American Heritage House (AAHH)* and the *LGBTQ+Friends* group to facilitate a joint welcome reception hosted by the two groups for students, artists and performers in the Performing and Visual Arts programs. This early season reception helped welcome new, diverse community members and laid the foundation for a more connected experience across the arts.

Objective No. 3

Build relationships, experimental pipelines and collaborations to welcome more diverse populations to our grounds and programs

In addition to "[Buffalo Day](#)", the Institution started new traditions of celebrating "[Haudenosaunee Confederacy Day](#)" and "[Chautauqua County Day](#)" to invite our regional neighbors to the grounds.

We invited some regional groups that serve diverse communities to visit the grounds during season. Work in this area needs to be based in relationships rather than transactional partnerships and will take some time to build.

We enhanced support for our artists, students, interns and performers in the Performing and Visual Arts and other departments by offering pre-arrival orientation programs, updating resources available via the Connections program (formerly known as the "adopt a student" program), and creating company-specific orientation programs and trainings.

The Institution and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra included IDEA specific strategies in their agreement by temporarily expanding the CSO Diversity Fellows program and updating the audition process using the guidelines provided by the [Sphinx Organization](#). More information is [available here](#). Additionally, both the CSO and Music School Festival Orchestra continue to participate in the Sphinx Organization Orchestral Partners Auditions to seek and support underrepresented musicians.

The Institution's Community Relations department started offering weekly Sunday community fairs to welcome new and returning Chautauquans and to give visibility to our community groups, programs and services. These were well received and especially appreciated by those who were new to Chautauqua. We will continue to offer these in 2023 and beyond.

The Institution expanded its ethnic food offerings via the continuation of *The A Truck* and the addition of "grab and go sushi" at the *Brick Walk Cafe*. The Institution plans to add more ethnic food options in its offerings for the 2023 season. More details will be made available closer to the season.

Objective No. 4

Review current policies, programs and procedures to identify barriers to IDEA and create short- and long-term plans to address them

The IDEA office continually partners with Human Resources and other Institution offices to engage in a broad review of our existing policies, programs and procedures with an eye toward equity and inclusion and making changes as needed. An update and review of the employee handbook has been initiated by Human Resources.

Several enhancements were made to the physical, programmatic and technological accessibility of our grounds and programs. Please see more details in the “Accessibility Enhancements” section of this report.

Institution employees were trained around IDEA principles and mechanisms on how to report and respond to instances of bias, exclusion or harassment. Our policies and procedures were further clarified and internal mechanisms were established to improve upon our existing procedures. Students, artists, community group leaders and several part-time employees in key positions also received training on these topics.



Objective No. 5

Enhance the Institution's year-round presence and expertise in IDEA convening authority via greater presence in the local/regional community, and via collaborations with businesses, professional organizations and non-profits

The Institution partnered with the leadership of the African American Heritage House (AAHH) to offer monthly programming in the fall and spring via the [Mirror Project](#).

The Institution is a founding member of the [Chautauqua County IDEA Coalition](#), and is working with the 30+ members of the coalition to make the county more inclusive and welcoming to diverse communities. Amit Taneja serves as the co-chair of the coalition's steering committee and Jordan Steves, Interim Emily and Richard Smucker Chair for Education, serves on the coalition's implementation team.

The Institution hosted 60+ members of the *Chautauqua County Homeless Coalition* and the *Chautauqua County Healthy Housing Coalition* on the grounds to participate in [Prof. Matthew Desmond's Aug. 9 lecture](#). Prof. Desmond wrote the award-winning book *Evicted*, detailing the housing crisis in the U.S. Our invited guests then gathered for a lunch and Prof. Desmond participated in the conversation to discuss these issues and how they play out locally. The Institution used its convening authority in this manner to help create change in our local community. We need to scale up efforts like these to convene local and regional leaders.



Accessibility Enhancements

Improving the physical, programmatic and technological accessibility of the grounds is a key commitment of the Institution as articulated in the IDEA plan. Special thanks are due to the Campus Planning & Operations department, including the Buildings and Grounds staff, for ensuring and enhancing our overall accessibility.

- The Institution engaged an external firm to conduct a comprehensive physical accessibility audit of our major Institution owned and operated buildings. This assessment will help us develop short- and long-term plans to enhance the accessibility of our buildings.
- The Institution re-paved large sections of the Main Parking Lot and added new accessible parking spots.
- Youth & Family Programs offered training to enhance the skill sets of employees around accessibility with a specific focus on the needs of neurodiverse children and youth. The department also implemented a camper success meeting process to work in partnership with families whose children may benefit from accommodations or additional support.
- We removed some pavers and/or added curb-cuts in each of the four sections of the Bestor Plaza green to allow wheeled devices to access the grassy areas. This improved physical accessibility of events like the Food Festival.
- We worked with vendors for the Tuesday Bestor Fresh Market and made adjustments so that vendors are now setting up tables right to the edge of the road to permit easier access for those using wheeled devices.
- We added a new flat space at Children's Beach to allow a resting space for wheeled devices.
- We added a Braille embosser to our technology so that we can make Braille available for any patrons who request it. Select staff were trained on how to create and format Braille documents. Additionally, Braille menus were made available at all Institution-owned and -operated food facilities.
- The Institution completed repairs and refinishing for the Girl's Club porch to make it more accessible.
- The Institution started making daily announcements during the morning lecture to let new and returning patrons know about our [accessibility offerings](#).
- As part of the accessibility education, Amit Taneja participated in a mobility scooter "ride along" with Chautauquan Terrie Vaile Hauck. Read about this more in [Amit's IDEA weekly column in *The Chautauquan Daily* here](#).

Planned Accessibility Improvements for 2023

- The Institution has allocated more than \$300,000 in 2023 expenditures to improve accessibility features of our grounds and programs. Select highlights include the following:
- The Institution will purchase its own modern and updated fleet of mobility scooters, and include a limited number of tandem (two-person) scooters for those who are unable to operate a mobility scooter on their own. The number of scooters available will also be expanded from 30 to 39 to eliminate waitlists. Scooters and a new fleet of 10 manual wheelchairs, a “walker” and a “knee scooter” will be made available for rentals via the Athenaeum Hotel and/or the Main Gate Welcome Center.
- A programmatic accessibility consultant will come to the grounds during the 2023 season to give us additional ideas on where we can improve our offerings and services. This is part of our ongoing work to conduct an accessibility audit.
- Addition of accessible doors to the main lobby of the Colonnade building
- Addition of a portable Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) system for tours and events that happen outside of buildings with fixed ALDs (currently – Amp, Hall of Philosophy, Hall of Christ, Norton and Bratton only offer ALDs). This portable ALD system will be available for community groups to rent for a nominal fee for their programs as well.
- Elevator modernization for the Bookstore/Post Office Building.
- Accessible connection to the northwest entry of the Arts Quad complex to improve access for wheeled devices.
- Accessible connection to the eastern entry ramp to the Carnahan-Jackson Dance Studio complex.
- Completion of the yearly Clark Brick Walk leveling projects to connect the Hall of Philosophy to Odland Plaza and the rest of campus.
- Other walkway projects around campus, including Pratt and Vincent brick walkways

Planned Accessibility Improvements for 2023 cont'd

- Installation of a new accessibility ramp at the CLSC Octagon. Our immense gratitude to the CLSC Class of 2022 for selecting this project as their shared gift to the Institution.
- Revised ADA parking lot striping at the Main Lot.
- Restriping and revised layout of the Hall of Christ parking lot with additional ADA compliant parking spaces.
- Improved lighting for front of Bratton Theater.
- Addition of an ADA-compliant access ramp to the front door entrance of Lincoln residence hall.
- Replacement of Assistive Listening Devices with more modern technology for Norton Hall.
- Addition of curb-cut at Miller Park (Corner of Simpson and Miller Park Ave) to make the park accessible from more entry points.
- Expansion of accessible seating and scooter parking at Smith Wilkes Hall
- Limited testing of "[Live Audio Description](#)" of select theater productions to offer this accessibility feature for patrons who are blind or low vision.
- Installation of ADA accessible mats around Miller Bell Tower to improve access to The A Truck and Three Taps.
- Campus Planning & Operations team continuously evaluates our facilities, roadways, walkways and grounds for accessibility improvements whether they are required by code, or not. We will continue this work.
- Develop designs for ADA improvements to the Sherwood-Marsh Piano Studios' patio and rear entrance.



Focus Areas for 2023

The IDEA office, in conjunction with other Institution leaders and offices will work on the following goals during 2023. Please note that the majority of these goals and strategies were outlined in the original IDEA strategic plan, although some dates or goals might have been slightly updated as we lean into this work.

Objective 1:

- Create additional IDEA trainings focused on accessibility required of all full-time employees.
- In collaboration with HR, create uniform IDEA language and procedures for hiring processes.
- Institute IDEA best practices and training for all exempt staff hiring committees.
- Create mechanisms for IDEA-related onboarding and training for all new employees.

Objective 2:

- Create an "IDEA Ambassadors" program to train patrons on how to have engaged dialogues with their peers about the importance of IDEA and how we can all support these efforts.
- Train and invite more community leaders (e.g., denominational houses, community groups) to have IDEA-related conversations in their spaces and programs.
- Design and deliver a "Diverse Communities at Chautauqua" series during the 2024 Summer Assembly to highlight the history and presence of diverse communities on the grounds in conjunction with the Institution's sesquicentennial celebrations; archive and make this series available via CHQ Assembly.

Objective 3:

- Identify and reach out to regional community organizations and professional organizations that serve diverse communities, including racial and religious diversity, and investigate possibilities to invite them to the grounds or participate in year-round and online activities.
- Build multimedia marketing strategies aimed at recruiting diverse populations to the grounds and beyond — "Why Chautauqua?"
- Work with community groups to increase physical gathering spaces and programmatic spaces engaged in IDEA discussions.
- Engage in a Land Acknowledgement process with the leadership of the local indigenous communities, including ways in which we can create greater presence and access to our programs and grounds.



Focus Areas for 2023 cont'd

Objective 4:

- Create mechanisms to establish metrics (e.g., patron demographics, analysis of patron experience, etc.) in coordination with technology upgrades so that we can better understand baseline measures and record growth over time (e.g., diversification of patron base over time, Patron satisfaction scores, etc.)
- Complete the accessibility audit and accessibility upgrades scheduled for 2023 (listed above in the accessibility section).

Objective 5:

- Continue to enhance partnerships with the local and regional community groups engaged in IDEA efforts — both on- and off-grounds, during and outside the Summer Assembly
- Build coalitions and partnerships with professional organizations with the goal of providing mutually beneficial IDEA strategies and support (i.e., be a national leader by convening these conversations)
- Create more opportunities for local and regional leaders to come to the grounds and discuss strategies to address issues within our local and regional communities, especially when we invite national experts on specific topics.
- Work with the Institution's departments/companies to identify key professional organizations (e.g., arts, theater, youth programs) and create (or enhance) opportunities for Chautauqua to serve as a convenor of IDEA conversations within these organizations

Thank-you for reading through this update. If you are interested in learning more, or would like to support the goals listed above, please don't hesitate to be in touch by emailing ataneja@chq.org

Warmly,




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