



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) PLAN

HOB's DEI Journey  
DEI Plan Executive Summary  
Goals for Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024

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# Heart of Biddeford's DEI Journey

Since its inception, Heart of Biddeford (HOB) has striven to celebrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through our programs, hiring, and outreach activities. In June 2020, HOB formalized its commitment to DEI by establishing a DEI Committee, mobilizing board support, and dedicating the necessary financial resources to achieve specific goals. Our DEI Committee alongside our board created the following commitment and determined the best approach to move forward.

## Heart of Biddeford's Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

As a Main Street organization, Heart of Biddeford believes Main Street is for everyone. At the core of our approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement. While we are proud of efforts to weave diversity, equity and inclusion into our work over the years, we begin from the assumption that, in a culture with a history of structural racism and inequity, our systems, practices and policies may be exclusive, racist, or otherwise inequitable. Our board and staff are committed to actively address racism directed at people who are Black and Indigenous and People of Color, and all other forms of oppression based on ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, ability, and religion in our organization, programs, processes, and communications.

## In 2020, we began a Four-Phased to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):

- 1) Board readiness and training (2020-21, and ongoing)
- 2) Community outreach and assessment (2021)
- 3) Draft community plan and gather feedback (2021-22), and
- 4) Launch and implement plan, with ongoing training and assessment (2022 and ongoing).

## HOB's Major DEI Milestones

### 2020

- HOB formed our DEI Committee and built on our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion by creating and publishing a Statement of Commitment. The DEI Committee also conducted extensive research on DEI best practices.
- In conjunction with MacArthur Library and Maine Humanities Council, HOB formed and hosted an Anti-Racism book club.
- During the pandemic HOB fundraised clothing, food, and monetary donations to support Biddeford's residents that were disproportionately affected.

### 2021

- HOB invested in two equity training workshops for HOB's board and community partners with the Luna Jiménez Institute for Social Transformation.
- Secured funding to support Black-owned businesses.
- Organized Biddeford's first Pride flag raising in honor of LBGTQIA+ Pride Month.
- In partnership with the Maine Development Foundation, HOB hired an AmeriCorps Fellow to focus on shepherding HOB's Four-Phased DEI Approach.
- Worked with the New Mainers Group to welcome refugees placed in Biddeford.

### 2022

- HOB conducted its first DEI Assessment with the DEI Committee. Further, drafted and implemented organization's first DEI Checklist.
- Hosted third equity training.
- Secured a Maine Community Foundation grant to support New Mainer culinary entrepreneurs.
- Facilitated focus groups with local high school students, women entrepreneurs, LBGTQIA+ residents, and neighbors who are differently abled to better understand how our organization can be more welcoming and inclusive.
- Presented DEI Main Street practices at the state and national levels.

# DEI Plan Executive Summary

Our vision at Heart of Biddeford is to make Biddeford's Main Street for everyone. We have to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into all that we do in order to make that happen. Here is how we define those values:

**Diversity**

Embrace and value a variety of identities and lived experiences.

**Equity**

Increase access to opportunities and resources that measurably improve the conditions of peoples' lives.

**Inclusion**

Ensure that each individual feels heard, supported, and respected.

## DEI Plan INPUT Activities

<b>6</b>	<b>past 3 Yrs</b>	<b>5</b>
Focus Groups	Budget Analysis	Strategic Partner Interviews
<b>created</b>	<b>monthly</b>	<b>completed</b>
+ conducted the 4-Point Main Street DEI Assessment	Committees + Board Consultations to Ensure Alignment with Transformation Strategies + FY23 Budget	Asset Mapping of Our Geography

### GOALS OVERVIEW

Five themes emerged from our input activities that became our five primary goals. The following pages provide a high-level overview. Please reach out to us for a more detailed work plan.

- #1: Position HOB as an Equity Builder
- #2: Advance Inclusive Entrepreneurship
- #3: Design Events to Better Serve Community Members and Partners
- #4: Make Our Communications, Data Collection, and Storytelling More Inclusive + Accessible
- #5: Support Equitable Development

# Goal #1: Position HOB as an Equity Builder

Heart of Biddeford will build equity with community members and partners by embedding DEI principles in our operational processes, practices, and strategies.

## **Objective #1: Build Equity by Making HOB Decision-making Processes More Accessible**

All community members should have the opportunity to positively impact their downtown. However, participation in our current decision-making processes is inaccessible for too many community members. For example, the average HOB Board Member can volunteer an average of four hours per month to meet their position's requirements. These initiatives explore how we can minimize barriers to participation to make our decision-making process more inclusive and enable our decisions to better reflect all community members.

- a. Conduct DEI trainings for HOB staff, board, committed volunteers, and community partners to continue internalizing these values throughout our network and to better identify biases and barriers for participation.
- b. Determine HOB practices for honorariums and stipends.
- c. Recruit members to HOB's board that better reflect the city's diversity.
- d. Continue our partnerships with Biddeford High School and ELL classes to better engage with these populations.
- e. Explore low-barrier methods to receive more community input.
- f. Implement equity pauses at all of HOB's meetings to ensure that we are dedicating the necessary time to discuss DEI at every level.

## **Objective #2 Analyze HOB's financial statements from the past three years to determine where we can invest more in our community**

HOB pays a variety of contractors, vendors, and businesses. This set of initiatives creates a baseline of how we spend our money and explores where there are opportunities to better invest our money with local businesses (especially local BIPOC- and women-owned businesses) for both FY23 and FY24.

## **Objective #3 Complete DEI Evaluation and Planning**

The DEI Committee will meet with the Executive Director, committee chairs, and other relevant stakeholders in the middle of HOB's fiscal year. This group will (1) review progress on FY23 DEI goals and (2) conduct the DEI Main Street assessment to create the foundation for FY24 DEI Plan and Budget. Then in Spring 2023, this group will meet again to create FY24 DEI plan and make sure that the FY24 organizational budget has the necessary funds to carry out the DEI Plan.

# Goal #2: Advance Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Business ownership has many net benefits, including greater opportunities for upward mobility and generational wealth. However, the barriers to entry for entrepreneurs are more prevalent for some population segments. HOB will strive to make entrepreneurship accessible to all community members through targeted programming.

## Objective #1: Targeted Events and Programs to Specifically Support Women\* Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs often face more hurdles than their male counterparts in starting and owning a business. They often have less access to capital (thus more personal debt), more domestic responsibilities, and more likely to operate without a support network.

- a. Host Annual Women Entrepreneur Breakfast Panel
- b. Reinstate HOB's Women Entrepreneur Monthly Meetup

\*HOB has a gender expansive view, so our "women" focused programming is open to all trans, non-binary, and cis-women who seek a community dedicated to empowering all women entrepreneurs.



## Objective #2: Diversifying and Building Out the Downtown's Entrepreneurship Pipeline

One of the most effective ways to minimize the displacement caused by gentrification is to develop homegrown talent. Urban revival strategist, Majora Carter, finds that a proven strategy for "greater economic and cultural vibrancy" is "if we designed communities to encourage the talent already there to remain, similar to the way companies try to retain their talent."

- a. Research feasibility and gain funding for Maine's First Lemonade Day to teach local youth business skills and financial literacy
- b. Continue Teen Micro-Influencer Program-hire high schoolers to run our social media to better connect with the city's younger population.
- c. Support New Mainer culinary entrepreneurs by creating programming and content to help them start or scale their businesses.
- d. Develop and publish a Business Resource Directory for aspiring and established business owners that include local, state, and federal resources.



## Goal #3: Design Events to Better Serve Community Members and Partners

Heart of Biddeford has over 17 years of experience creating successful events that consistently have hundreds to thousands of attendees. The following objectives build on HOB's proven event track record to make our events a better experience and resource for community members and partners.

### **Objective #1: Implement DEI Checklist Before Every Major Event**

The DEI Checklist is an accountability tool used before, during, and after an event to ensure that our organization's event is as accessible and inclusive as possible.

### **Objective #2: Leverage our audience, resources, and relationships to support other social causes affecting our community**

This initiative allows our organization to share our platform and resources to help our community partners spotlight and promote their respective causes. In Summer 2022, we hosted two Music in the Park concerts at which we shared our stage with the City of Biddeford's Climate Action Taskforce and the Homelessness Coalition. These events gave our community partners unique opportunities to speak and connect with audiences of over 200 community members to promote their social causes.





## Goal #4: Make Our Communications, Data Collection, and Storytelling More Inclusive + Accessible

HOB will communicate in an inclusive and accessible manner with our internal and external stakeholders to positively impact as many community members as possible.

- a. Review + Update Internal Documents to reflect our DEI commitment
- b. Create HOB Communication Plan through a DEI Lens
- c. Help preserve + celebrate Biddeford's underrepresented history

## Goal #5: Support Equitable Development

HOB will help encourage sustainable development in Biddeford by amplifying the work of our partners and mitigating displacement.

### Objective #1 Convene Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

HOB will convene the governing bodies, local partners, and anchor institutions in Biddeford's economic ecosystem. Participating parties can determine how to comprehensively support our city's local businesses and workforce by aligning resources and creating shared goals. \*Case Study: [Skowhegan Main Street](#)

### Objective #2 Support Social Causes of our Partners

HOB works primarily through coalition-building and collaboration with community partners to achieve meaningful community and economic development. Partnerships include but are not limited to ACES Summit, Homeless Taskforce, City's Affordable Housing Taskforce, City's Climate Action Taskforce, and New Mainer Resource Group.

### Objective #3 Mitigate Construction Impact

Historically in the United States, construction projects have been detrimental to businesses, especially BIPOC-owned businesses. HOB will continue liaising with the state's Department of Transportation to lessen the detriment by advocating on behalf of the businesses in our downtown.