ONE DHR PLAN

Introduction

The mission of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources "is to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship of Virginia's significant historic architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources" which means our scope is rarely diverted from the diverse nature of Virginia's past and is intimately — an often uncomfortably — focused on the diverse nature of Virginia's present. As the illustrations on the cover of this report convey, DHR serves many stakeholders. It also points out that a significant portion of our efforts have had the goal, especially since the administration of Governor Douglas Wilder, to ensure better representation of the history of underrepresented communities in the inventory of significant resources that is our duty to curate.

Happily, the Agency can report much success in these efforts, especially in the past two decades. Representation of the people, places, and key events of foundational groups of fellow Virginia citizens has grown from near zero to a point of critical mass in milestone measures such as the Virginia Landmarks Register, the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Historical Highway Markers Program, and the Virginia Cultural Resources Information System. Since 2014, the number in awards from the historic preservation grant programs DHR administers on behalf of the Department of the Interior/National Park Service and the Virginia General Assembly to diversity-related preservation projects now exceeds $17 million. And, most recently in 2022, the General Assembly established a statewide grant program for the preservation of historic resources related to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Actions, of course, speak louder than words, and DHR is well aware that promoting a culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Agency means more than providing programs and services to the multiplicity of communities that comprise our Commonwealth. The process of embedding DE&I into all that we do on an internal basis has begun. However, our work is far from done. Without question one of the most significant needs of our Agency and the preservation profession of which we are a part — which relies on the expertise of authorities from archaeologists and architects to accountants and administrators to make it operate—is to attract people from diverse backgrounds to consider building a career with us. This plan is an opportunity to highlight, for the educators and students we hope will read this plan, the many ways that DHR's existing programs align the diversity of the present with the diversity of Virginia's past. The plan presented here should be considered our attempt to set objectives and strategies that will direct our energies as we continue to move toward crafting a culture where employees, stakeholders, and residents are welcomed and empowered. We are very excited to put them to work. It is our intention that this plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion fosters equitable opportunities and promotes inclusiveness both internally and externally.

Recruitment and Retention

Goal One: Recruit and Retain a Diverse Workforce.

Objective 1: Attract a diverse and skilled applicant pool using a wide range of best practices.
- Demonstrate the relevance of careers in Historic Preservation through lectures, public programming, and other outreach activities.
- Continue to hire interns from underrepresented communities.
- Engage with university and college faculty to inform them of internships and other opportunities that may interest their students.
- Develop recruitment materials to accompany public engagements.
- Offer additional part-time, seasonal, or project specific positions for new graduates and early career professionals.
- Create division-specific listings of recruitment outlets where job opportunities should be advertised to ensure a more diverse applicant pool.

Objective 2: Identify and remove barriers that discourage underrepresented job candidates.
- Tailor pathways for adult/non-traditional returning students interested in agency mission.
- Create a standardized process for drafting job descriptions with the assistance of relevant staff.
- Review and assess roles to identify positions that could be more flexible in meeting professional standards.
- Explore a policy requiring that all interns must be compensated (either through their institution, DHR, or an outside entity).
- Invite public comment on questions of "barriers that discourage underrepresented candidates from applying.

Objective 3: Retain a compositionally diverse workforce.
- Evaluate staff satisfaction.
- Prioritize flexibility in scheduling, working location, and work-life balance, understanding employees from different backgrounds face differing challenges.
- Offer equitable opportunities for professional development and leadership roles.
- Foster an open and inclusive work environment.

Agency Culture

Goal Two: Promote an Agency Culture that Respects Diversity.

Objective 1: Establish a foundation for supporting and embracing a culture that respects diversity.
- Introduce to DHR's DE&I efforts be part of the onboarding process.
- Educate employees and interns on DHRM equity policies.

Objective 2: Employ inclusive practices throughout the agency's daily operation.
- Promote awareness of the Virginia Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity (SBSD) certification programs (SWaM, DBE, and BDOS).
- Share resources and best practices for diverse employee engagement across agencies.
- Designate staff members to attend IAOC (Informal Agency Outreach Coordination) meetings.
- Include DE&I objectives in the Six-Year Comprehensive Plan and other agency planning documents.
- Continue to support the DHR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

Objective 3: Create and sustain a climate that values and integrates differing experiences through trainings and education.
- Promote a diversity of subject matter experts, technical experts, and trainers for professional development.
- Encourage and support all avenues and mediums of educational opportunities.
- Remove barriers for training and professional development.
- Offer increased DE&I programing and educational opportunities for employees and interns.

Programing:

Goal Three: Broaden Agency Programming Efforts on Underrepresented Groups and Communities.

Objective 1: Increase the number of VCRIS-documented properties associated with underrepresented groups.

- *Broaden awareness of agency networks for public reporting historic properties.*
- *Expand public understanding of VCRIS as a management tool supporting historic preservation.*
- *Create a designation for unconfirmed property locations in VCRIS.*
- *Flag and continue to enhance VCRIS records needing cultural affiliation data.*
- *Encourage staff to document resources during field visits and create/update VCRIS records when they return to the office.*
- *Promote and encourage the use of DHR's "record-a-cemetery" tool and consider creating similar tools for other resource types.*
- *Provide technical assistance to community members conducting surveys and developing historic context for underrepresented communities, neighborhoods, and properties.*

Objective 2: Increase the number of properties associated with underrepresented groups that are nominated and listed in the Virginia Landmark Register.

- *Broaden public understanding of what it means to have their property listed in the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places.*
- *Educate the public on the extent of the agency's jurisdiction in municipal zoning and development decisions, and federal undertakings.*
- *Identify and engage with community-based organizations and property owners that may benefit from state and federally supported preservation incentives such as grants and historic tax credits.*

Objective 3: Educate the public on available grant programs and other preservation incentives.

- *Identify and engage with community-driven historic preservation initiatives to expand networks for disseminating information about grant opportunities.*
- *Promote grant opportunities for community-driven historic preservation initiatives offered by agency partners (NEH, NTHP, VOF, NPS, etc.).*
- *Advertise grant opportunities through event sponsorship (e.g., an announcement in the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society conference program).*
- *Promote and encourage application for DHR's BIPOC and African American Cemetery and Graves grant fund programs.*

Objective 4: Expand DHR's Internship Programs

- *Obtain authorization from the Department of Education for DHR to serve as a Federal Work Study Off-Campus Agency.*
- *Partner with learning institutions to identify existing internship course offerings for which agency staff may serve as internship supervisors.*
- *Broaden awareness of DHR internship opportunities among students pursing degrees and careers in preservation-adjacent field (e.g., Urban and Regional Planning, Public Administration, Media and Communications, Tourism and Hospitality Management, Education).*
- *Develop agency summer internship programs for secondary education (high school) students.*

Community Engagement:

Goal Four: Engage and Collaborate with Virginia's Diverse Communities.

Objective 1: Increase engagement with diverse communities.
- Partner with civic organizations, historically minority and gender-based colleges, minority fraternity/sorority organizations, disability advocacy groups, professional organizations, descendant communities, and other historic preservation partners.
- Host public educational events focused on the rich history of Virginia's diverse communities.
- Proactively reach out to underrepresented communities when considering projects and other actions that might affect those communities.

Objective 2: Communicate how agency services benefit Virginia's diverse communities.
- Produce and distribute materials highlighting agency programs and services that may be of interest or benefit to diverse communities.
- Highlight agency programming efforts focused on underrepresented groups and communities on the DHR website, social media and other medium.
- Provide public outreach and informational programming for underrepresented communities, with a focus on the agency services available to them and how these services might benefit their community or specific property owners within that community.

Definitions:

BIPOC *Black, Indigenous, and People of Color*

DEI / DE&I *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

DIVERSITY *Building diversity in our state agencies is only a starting point. Diversity is defined broadly as all of the characteristics that make individuals unique. It is used to describe the various combinations of group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability, as well as cultural, political, religious, and other affiliations) and human differences (e.g., personality, learning style, and life experiences). DHR's working definition of diversity is to foster a collaborative work environment that is inclusive of every employee by recognizing and effectively utilizing their talents, skills, and perspectives to create a unified and high-performance workforce.*

EQUITY *The most important construct among DE&I, equity refers to the creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access and equitable opportunity. Equity is also the process of maximizing the potential of all by identifying and eliminating barriers such as historical discrimination and existing imbalances that prevent opportunities and success. Therefore, equity requires an institutional commitment that all will be provided equitable access to opportunities, resources, and the ability to fully contribute to the institution's mission and goals.*

INCLUSION *The term inclusion is used to describe the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diverse people, practices, and communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) in ways that increase one's cultural affirmation and respect, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathetic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact with and within systems, organizations, and institutions. More importantly, genuine and full inclusion fosters a sense of belonging and respect for the differences and uniqueness that all individuals bring to the learning environment, without the impact of inequities.*

UNDERREPRESENTED *This term refers to populations that are disproportionately lower in number relative to their number in the national/state population.*

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE *Establishing a welcoming and productive community that engages all of its diversity in the service to an organization, for both internal and external stakeholders. It requires affirmation and respect for cultural, social, racial, religious, gender, and ability differences among the organization's stakeholders. It includes organizational improvements in access/success, climate/culture, education/training, infrastructure/accountability, and community engagement. The Inclusive Excellence Framework is intended to be flexible enough to be "localized" within every state-supported institution, yet robust enough to retain the basic principles to foster collective impact.*