

Achieving Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility at Austin PBS: A Pledge

The last few years have seen media companies everywhere address the lack of diversity and equity in content, staff, management and consumers. Energized by this cultural shift, Austin PBS is actively laying the groundwork for real, lasting change in *our* organization. Our vision is to be a leader in public media, distinguished by energetic engagement with the community. This vision requires us to stand in strong support of station employees, community partners and viewers who demand meaningful, intentional improvements in inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

Sincere efforts have been made at both the local and national level to improve representation within the PBS system, but these initial steps must now be expanded and codified throughout public media. Austin PBS pledges to challenge sources of systemic bias in our organization and our community. Priorities include the evaluation of management structures, hiring practices, programming content and services delivered by our organization.

From research-based learning resources to engaging narratives and long form journalism, the PBS mission to educate, inspire, entertain and express a diversity of perspectives stands out in the media landscape.

Let's not stand out now because of a failure to act.

INTRODUCTION: OUR EFFORTS

As a media organization, Austin PBS has made a concerted effort to produce, curate and showcase content which explores issues of inclusion and racial justice. As part of our mission to deepen community understanding, encourage conversation and enable meaningful change, we will continue to preempt regular programming to address vital issues as they arise. For example, during the pandemic, Austin PBS worked with the Texas Education Agency and Central Texas schools to fill the education gap by modifying our broadcast schedule.

As a community partner, we know the important role that other nonprofits and agencies play to help address the needs and aspirations of Central Texas. Austin PBS will continue efforts to collaborate with other local organizations, seeking ways to work together on constructive community initiatives.

Lastly, as a nonprofit employer, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) are top priorities with respect to Austin PBS's staff and board. We are moving quickly to ramp up training opportunities and integrate IDEA work into our daily routines. In addition, our boards (both Board of Directors and Community Advisory Board) help us bring new voices forward. The community leaders who serve on our governing and advisory boards represent a variety of experiences and industries, and racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Austin PBS is committed to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive and equitable region. We believe public media has the platform and responsibility to foster understanding, expand empathy and build connections among our Central Texas neighbors, and we are committed to championing policies and practices which reflect that mission. Our organization will continue striving to create a culture of inclusion where individuals from all racial and ethnic identities, ages, nationalities, social and economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, religious, political and ideological perspectives and physical and mental abilities are able to thrive and be engaged.

Austin PBS has been a part of Central Texas for over half a century, and we understand the role we play in addressing critical community issues - offering a safe space for civic conversations, and bringing people together to foster mutual understanding through shared experiences that inform, educate and inspire. Never has this been more important than now.

As part of our pledge, we commit to the following:

STATION SURVEY: Austin PBS will annually survey staff to better understand the demographic makeup of our station and employee attitudes about organizational culture. We will also periodically analyze both turnover rates and compensation in light of staff demographics.

STATION DIVERSITY: Austin PBS should reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We will use the most recent census data available to obtain average demographics of our viewing area and use that to establish baseline goals for staff diversity and composition of boards.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Job descriptions for supervisors must explicitly require best practices for hiring and supporting people from diverse backgrounds on their teams. Training will be provided to ensure these practices are understood and mastered. Annual reviews of management must assess their success on these fronts, with corrective actions taken if they are not fulfilling these objectives.

HIRING POOLS AND PANELS: Austin PBS will build a recruitment pipeline and community that attracts a wide pool of candidates, ensuring transparent outreach to a diverse pool of candidates and underrepresented populations. Job postings and descriptions will be written with care to eliminate implicit biases and be encouraging, not exclusionary, when listing talents and skills that would lead to success at Austin PBS, encouraging candidates from underrepresented populations and using language that does not result in unintended bias. Human Resources will make best faith efforts to ensure job postings reach a diverse group of candidates, reaching out to organizations that serve underrepresented populations, participating in job fairs that target diverse groups and enlisting the assistance of community influencers and leaders. We will annually report on recruitment and hiring activity in order to measure our efforts and results,

maintain transparency in our hiring practices, hold hiring managers accountable and ensure we are attracting a diverse pool of candidates.

EXIT INTERVIEWS: When an employee resigns, exit interviews will gather information about the employee's experience at Austin PBS, specifically including issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. Information will be used to provide an annual, aggregated summary of relevant suggestions, trends and issues to staff.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: While there are many Austin PBS staff members with long tenure, career pathways and development should be more well-defined, especially for lower- and entry-level employees.

Austin PBS will:

- Track compensation, promotions and longevity within the station to ensure equal pay for equal work and better understand retention and attrition.
- Offer mentorship and professional development opportunities and initiatives, either by cultivating a program within our station or connecting entry-level employees, interns and work study students with outside mentorships to help them advance their careers.
- Create management career pathways within Austin PBS.
- Regularly review organizational culture to ensure that the contribution of all employees is valued.
- Ensure that channels exist through which employees can safely and confidently express opinions and be heard.

PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES: Austin PBS will regularly evaluate programming content, production priorities and community services to ensure that the diverse interests and communities of Central Texas are served. In this regard, content, outreach and accessibility, across platforms, will be key considerations in station operations.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT: Austin PBS will dedicate time and resources to ensuring that IDEA initiatives are implemented, sustained and evaluated. This will be achieved by establishment of a standing Board Committee to provide oversight, an internal working group to monitor management commitment and actions, an annual IDEA audit by an independent organization or individual with specific expertise and periodic engagement of external resources to address specific concerns and needs. A dedicated budget line item will be established with funding to support these steps.