

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Statement*

Common Stage Theatre Lab is committed to creating a sense of belonging and empowerment for all people, in our approach to and the outcomes of our collective work in the arts in Meridian, Mississippi. Everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant, creative, arts enriched life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society. Arts education is a civil right. We will ensure that the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion are authentically and vigorously sought and reflected in all we do.

Diversity: We appreciate and leverage our differences, we prioritize and include those with lived experiences in our community, and we seek partnership to make change happen. We expect thoughtful discussion and respectful engagement.

Equity: We continuously examine and refine our policies, practices, and resources so that all members of our greater community - geographically, racially, and socioeconomically - will have genuine opportunities to thrive.

Inclusion: We create an environment of belonging in which everyone is valued and respected.

We acknowledge that in the United States and within Meridian, MS, there are systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally such that inequity and injustice result, and that must be continuously addressed and changed. In Meridian, MS, there are inequities that exist geographically, racially, and socioeconomically across the city.

We are incrementally and continuously reviewing our progress to support equity, not assuming that we've arrived. It is a continuous improvement practice. We recognize the substantial work ahead as we come to terms with various forms of privilege and expand our awareness of the many ways in which biases and structural barriers function. In all we do, we seek to be conscious of and address the deeply entrenched practices, cultural norms, and decision-making structures that perpetuate inequities in our city.

We approach our work on diversity, equity, and inclusion with courage and optimism — knowing it requires a sustained commitment. We understand that successfully integrating DEI into our work and our collective impact requires an ongoing and evolving process of intentionality, investment, humility, and openness for and with all stakeholders of the arts. As we confront our own shortcomings related to DEI, we process feedback, grow our awareness and skills, and adjust our culture and work approaches. We are guided by mutual trust and respect, accountability to one another, and a shared sense of mission and purpose.

*Adapted from the DC Collaborative