
Inclusion 2025: A Practitioner's Guide to Inclusive Museums Glossary

Below you'll find key terms and definitions that relate to the work on equity and inclusion. This list is to provide further support as you continue to explore the wealth of resources on integrating diversity, equity and inclusion into your organizations and practices.

The terms and definitions were pulled from a variety of other glossaries including:

[The 519 Glossary of Terms](#)

[Canadian Race Relations Foundation Glossary of Terms](#)

[MASS Toolkit Key Terms](#)

These glossaries have additional terms relating to diversity and inclusion that will help you to navigate the language and verbiage used when exploring and practicing equity work.

Ableism: Prejudice and discrimination against people living with mental, emotional and physical disabilities or differences. People living with disabilities experience this discrimination, segregation and isolation because of people's prejudices and institutional barriers, not because of the disability or difference itself. Deaf, Deafened and Hard of hearing people historically have experienced systemic ableist oppression as well. ([Springtide Anti-Oppression Toolkit](#))

Accessibility: is the design of products, devices and services, technology or environments for people within the disability, Blind/low vision, d/Deaf communities. Accessibility is strongly linked to inclusive / inclusive design.

Anti-Oppression: Strategies, theories and actions that challenge social and historical inequalities and injustices that are systemic to our systems and institutions by policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate over other groups. (CRRF)

Anti-Racism: Ant active and consist process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systems racism. (CRRF)

Barrier: Any overt or covert obstacle that prevents a person from fully taking part in all aspects of society. For example, a belief, policy, practice, object or environment that prevents or limits a person's access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society (the519).

Bias: A subjective opinion, preference, prejudice or inclination that influences an individual's or group's ability to evaluate a particular situation or accurately; a preference for or against (CRRF). A subjective opinion, predisposition or generalization formed based on personal characteristics or stereotypes (the519).

Colonization: the process of focusing on and devaluing people's differences in order to dominate and control them, including various economic, political and social policies by which a powerful group maintains or extends control over other people or areas (the519)

Cultural Competence: An individual's ability to discern and take into account one's own and others' world views to be able to communicate effectively, solve problems, make decisions and resolve conflicts in ways that optimize cultural differences for better, longer-lasting and more creative solutions (CCDI). Or, a person's ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence has four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview; (b) Attitude towards cultural differences; (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to better understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures (the519).

Decolonization: The process of dismantling colonial power and at minimum, sharing governance and authority for the documentation and interpretation of cultures. Decolonizing practices are collaborative with communities who have been historically colonized, privilege their perspectives and voice, and includes the acknowledgement of histories of violence and ensures truth-telling. See [MASS Toolkit](#) for more on what decolonization in museums includes.

Disability: Under the medical model, this term refers to a limitation or loss of physiological abilities, whether apparent or not. These can be physical, cognitive, learning, and visual disabilities. Under the social model, disability is identified as a disadvantage or a restriction of activity caused by systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society. (the519)

Diversity: Is about the individual. It is the variety of unique dimensions and characteristics we all possess (CCDI). It is the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, community, or society. Dimensions of diversity are varied and include, but are not limited to, culture, ethnicity, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and disability. (CCRF).

Equity: a condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean equality, it does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. (CCRF).

Exploitation:

Heteronormativity: Refers to the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that everyone accepts this as “the norm”. The term is used to describe prejudice against people that are not heterosexual, and is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations, and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible. (the519)


Inclusion: is about the collective. It is about a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts, and values difference. (CCDI)

Institutional legacies: the larger, historical network of relationships with community groups, funders, collectors, and others that must be reckoned with in order to better understand present day challenges (MASS Toolkit)

Intersectionality: When two or more oppressions overlap in the experiences of an individual or group, creating interconnected barriers and complex forms of discrimination that can be insidious, covert and compounded. (the519). The experience of the interconnected nature of ethnicity, race, creed, etc., (cultural, institutional and social), and the way they are embedded within existing systems such that they define how one is valued. (CRRF)

Patriarchy: a system of society or government that is characterized by the current and historic unequal power relations between men and women, whereby men hold the power and women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed.

Prejudice: negative prejudgment or preconceived feelings or notions about another person or group of persons based on perceived characteristics, rather than empirical evidence.



Power: In the context of equity and inclusion, power is understood as having access to privileges such as information/knowledge, connections, experience and expertise, resources and decision making that enhance a person's chances of getting what they need to live a comfortable, safe, productive and profitable life. Each person has different levels of power in different contexts depending on a persona combination of privileges and oppression. (the519)

Privilege: a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group (CCDI). Social privilege is the experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded to some people because of their group membership or social context (CRRF).

Systemic Discrimination: Institutionalization of discrimination through policies and practices which may appear neutral on the surface but which have an exclusionary impact on particular groups, such that various minority groups are discriminated against, intentionally or unintentionally. This occurs in institutions and organizations where the policies, practices and procedures (e.g. employment practices) exclude and/or act as barriers to racialized and/or minority groups. Systemic discrimination may also result from some government laws and regulations. (CRRF)

Tokenism: Making a symbolic effort towards involving an underrepresented group of individuals under the guise of inclusivity, and is often seen within a group, committee, organization, or workplace. The action itself or the type of involvement of the underrepresented is limited, and the false appearance of inclusivity or equality can then be used to promote a false appearance that hides deeper systemic issues within the organization (the519).

