



**American Association for
Access, Equity, and Diversity
2026-2031 Strategic Plan**

American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity

Five Year Strategic Plan

Overview

The American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (AAAED) is an organization of professionals managing accessibility, equal opportunity, diversity, and other related human resources, social justice, and inclusion programs. Founded in 1974, as the American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA), AAAED is a national not-for-profit, non-partisan association of professionals working in the areas of access, equity, and diversity. Composed of individuals and organizations from the public and private sectors, business, social service, legal, government, and education, the association is dedicated to providing national and international training and educational programs to promote access and equity as instruments to fulfill the nation's promise of equal opportunity. AAAED remains steadfast in its commitment to access, equity, and diversity as vital tools for achieving equal opportunity, recognizing it as a means to a greater end: a truly equitable society for all.

History

In 1974, amidst the fervor of the civil rights revolution, the American Association for Affirmative Action (AAAA) was born. The nation was grappling with the transformative impact of landmark legislation: The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246, Title IX of the Education Amendments, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act. This era marked a profound awakening of national conscience, extending beyond racial justice to encompass equality for women, Latinos, the LGBTQ+ community, and individuals with disabilities.

Betty Newcomb founded AAAA as an organization for directors of equal opportunity affirmative action programs (EEO/AA) through which EEO/AA professionals could hone their skills as well as influence the national equal rights agenda. The founders saw affirmative action not merely as a compliance obligation but as a crucial instrument for achieving workplace equity. These pioneers, working within higher education institutions, were driven by a deep-seated commitment to social justice.

AAAA had a newsletter with articles on relative policies and practices. The newsletter played a significant role in the early articulation and implementation of the Title IX Policy in colleges and universities across the nation as well as a significant role in the implementation of sexual harassment policy in colleges and universities. Since its inception, AAAA has navigated the ebb and flow of affirmative action support, witnessing the profound influence of presidential administrations and pivotal Supreme Court decisions. In 2014, the name changed to the American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (AAAED). This change reflected the expanded mandate of its members, encompassing Title IX, Section 504 and ADA, LGBTQ+ issues, and broader diversity initiatives.

Vision

AAAED will become a “go-to” premier community of practice working to advance equal opportunity in both public and private spheres by providing training, resources, and a supportive network. By actualizing this vision, our members will be empowered to establish policies and practices that promote access, equity, and diversity. This empowerment will enable individuals to work toward eliminating bias, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and sexual misconduct.

Mission

The AAAED mission is to nurture and promote understanding of, and offer advice on, equal opportunity (e.g., compliance, mediation, employee relations) as a vehicle to enhance access, equity, and diversity in employment, economic, and educational opportunities. The association helps its members, and prospective members, to be more successful and productive in their careers. AAAED’s foci are on the below six goals:

- Foster effective equal opportunity (e.g., compliance, mediation, employee relations) programs nationwide;
- Establish and maintain ethical standards for the profession;
- Serve as a liaison with federal, state and local agencies involved with access, equity, diversity, and equal opportunity compliance in employment and education;
- Promote the professional growth and development of our members;
- Sponsor education and training programs; and
- Sponsor and conduct research.

This 2026-2031 Strategic Plan marshals an abundance of ideas, aspirations, imagination, scientific data, hard-won knowledge and hard facts, collected from stakeholders, association officers, members and community leaders. This information has been studied, carefully debated, enhanced and refined through a deliberate and inclusive process and placed into a living document that will provide direction and guidance toward our goals over the next five years.

Core Values

- Foster ethics and integrity: Exhibiting honesty, transparency, and accountability.
- Strive towards distinction: Enhancing clear and consistent standards.
- Intersect research, education, and compliance: Implementing theory and practice through communication.
- Promote well-being and build cohesive relationships: Focusing on self-care and rapport through shared goals.

Strategic Themes

- Infrastructure: Expand the framework to protect the brand from threats and build AAAED
- Membership: Enhance the membership experience
- Education: Prioritize workforce readiness of EEO professionals and prospective members

Operational Plan

Infrastructure: Expand the framework to protect and build AAAED

- Goal 1: Build a solid technological, digital, and performance tracking infrastructure.
 - Objective 1: Purchase a learning management system (LMS) to effectively manage, deliver, track, and assess the professional development of participants and their recertification.
 - Objective 2: Expand cloud storage and digitization of records.
- Goal 2: Stabilize the finances and develop strategic alliances.
 - Objective 1: Implement annual and biennial fundraising campaigns to contribute to an investment fund account for the organization.
 - Objective 2: Reestablish alliances with government agencies and like-minded organizations.
- Goal 3: Maintain compliance with Human Resources laws and policies.
 - Objective 1: Assess needed positions, create a recruitment process, And fill the positions to reduce the workload of the volunteers.

Objective 2: Implementing a consistent process for record retention and disposition.

- Goal 4: Document operational infrastructure, legal compliance, and current processes.

Objective 1: Create standard operating procedures for all staff positions.

Objective 2: Document workflow systems.

Objective 3: Review the bylaws at least every two years and update as needed.

- Goal 5: Develop a marketing and sales plan.

Objective 1: Develop the brand identity.

Objective 2: Identify target audience and create campaigns (e.g., membership, educational sessions, volunteer opportunities, etc.).

Objective 3: Expand social media presence.

Membership: Enhance the membership experience

- Goal 1: Create an exclusive supportive member community with networking opportunities to increase the membership by 60 percent.

Objective 1: Create regional member virtual bi-monthly Meet and Greets.

Objective 2: Conduct regional virtual bi-weekly check-ins with members.

- Goal 2: Develop member only events/activities/access.

Objective 1: Conduct member only webinars at least twice per year.

Objective 2: Survey members twice per year (January and July) regarding their needs/wants.

- Goal 3: Expand member resources.

Objective 1: Provide members with the opportunity to write articles/blogs as an internal resource.

Objective 2: Restore the newsletter on a quarterly basis.

Education: Prioritize workforce readiness of EEO professionals and prospective members

- Goal 1: Develop annual professional development calendars with various delivery modes of educational sessions.

Objective 1: Create individual webinar series representing the diverse professions (e.g., EEO, inclusive leadership, Title IX, Title VI, Title VII, accessibility, human resources, etc.) of the membership.

Objective 2: Plan and hold biennial regional and national symposiums.

- Goal 2: Conduct research to contribute to AAAED related fields of study.

Objective 1: Survey members and non-members regarding their workplaces for best practices.

Objective 2: Conduct field related case studies and create toolkits.

- Goal 3: Maintain a diverse group of speakers/facilitators.

Objective 1: Rebuild speaker/facilitator bureau.

Objective 2: Survey membership for potential speakers/facilitators.

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