Building Equity Together: Tools from New Jersey's Statewide EDI Library Initiative

2026 New Jersey Academic Libraries Conference

Presented by: Ralph Bingham, Executive Director, LibraryLinkNJ
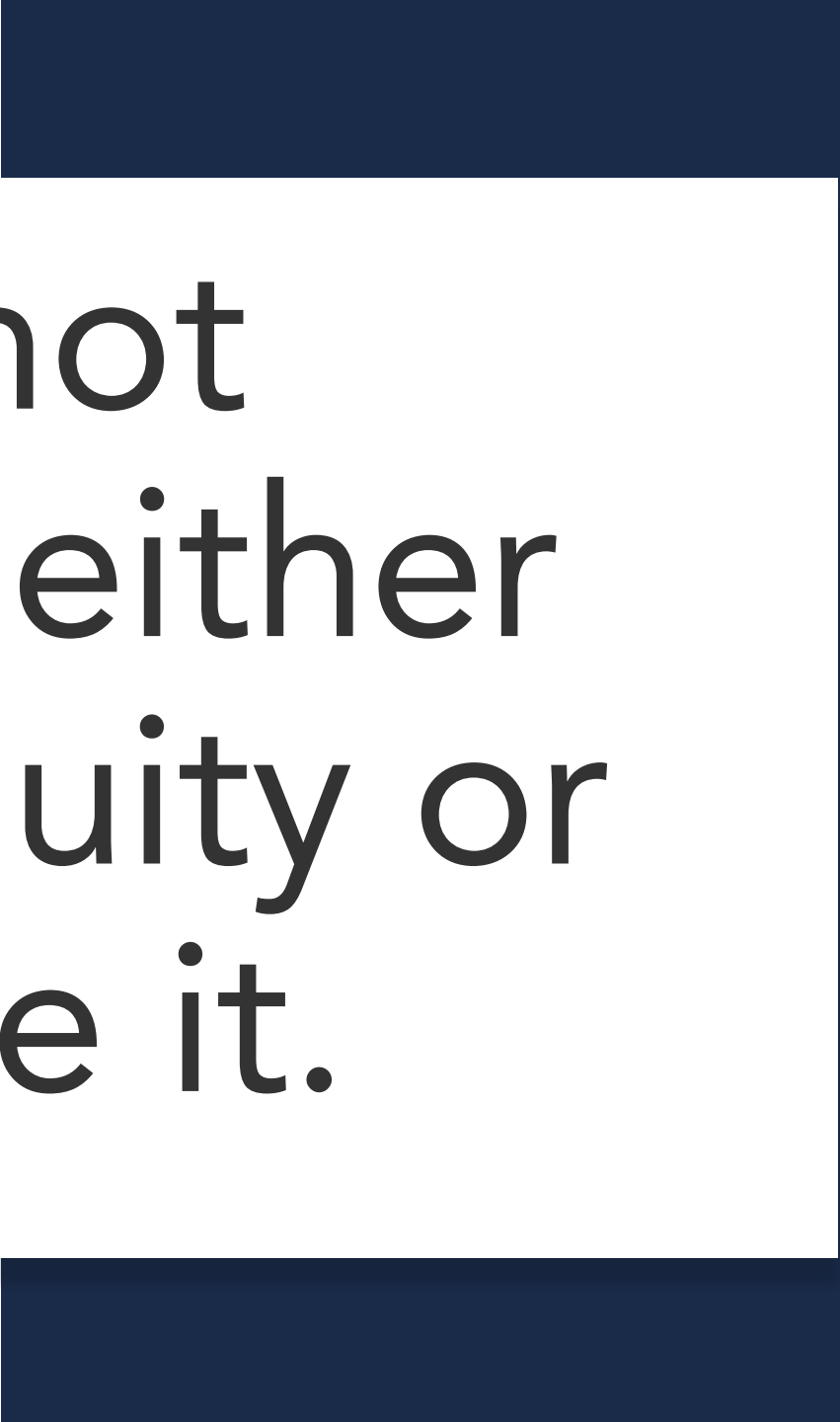
Session Goals

Understand the purpose and goals of the EDI-NJ Project

Be aware of resources available through EDI-NJ

Identify ways to engage statewide

Libraries are not neutral. They either replicate inequity or help dismantle it.

What is EDI-NJ?

- A statewide initiative aligning library orgs under a unified EDI framework
- Funded by: LibraryLinkNJ & the New Jersey Library Association
- Goals:
    - Build EDI Capacity
    - Foster Inclusive Library Environments
    - Strengthen Diverse Staff Power
    - Enhance Services & Accessibility
- Strategic Roadmap for the 'EDI Framework for NJ Libraries' https://librarylinknj.org/EDI/strategic-roadmap

Working with an EDI Expert

- Ozy Aloziem, M.S.W. (Founder, Heal Inc LLC), joined the project team as our subject matter expert in April 2024. She provides guidance to help the team carry out the project plans.

- With over 10 years of experience in social justice advocacy and educational excellence, she specializes in guiding organizations through transformative Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives.

Our Work So Far

- Collective Impact Assessment
- Training Needs Assessment
- Institutional Assessment Tool
- Institutional Assessment Pilot Project

Project updates and status reports are available on our website at https://librarylinknj.org/EDI/strategic-roadmap

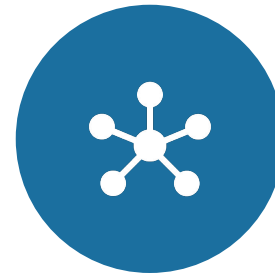# What We're Learning: Collective Assessment Findings

15 orgs assessed

Strong in: Policy revisions, outreach

Gaps in: Inclusive hiring, mentorship, alignment on EDI goals

Weak communication/collaboration infrastructure

What We're Learning: Training Needs Assessment Findings

- Training has momentum, but gaps persist

- Experience & leadership level shape needs

- Barriers are structural and cultural

- Training preferences emphasize flexibility

- Many feel training is too generic, not led by people with lived experience, or fails to lead to meaningful change.

Top skills requested
- Communication

- Community Engagement

- Self-awareness & Reflection

- Skills like data & evaluation, facilitation, and advocacy are undervalued

What This Means

Libraries are ready but need better-designed pathways that meet people where they are.

We should center community engagement and implementation support, not just awareness.

There's clear demand for training that goes beyond surface-level EDI to address power, policy, and practice.

Breaking Barriers: Challenges and Solutions

Common Barriers We've Identified:

- Lack of leadership buy-in, competing priorities

- Limited funding, time constraints, expertise gaps

- Communication silos, coordination challenges
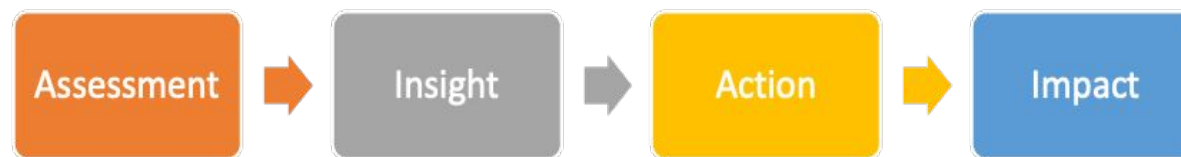
- Political pressures, community resistance

Our Solutions Framework:

- Assessment: Individual and institutional tools for benchmarking progress

- Capacity Building: Training, toolkits, expert guidance

- Community of Practice: Monthly meetings, peer support

- Resource Sharing: Centralized hub, speakers database

- Collective Action: Coordinated initiatives, shared messaging

EDI-NJ Statewide Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Assessment Tool

This statewide tool supports NJ libraries in reflecting on, benchmarking, and advancing EDI efforts across seven key operational areas:

- Collections & Resources
- Programs & Services
- Community Engagement
- Workforce Development
- Safety, Security & Facilities
- Organizational Culture
- Leadership & Strategy

https://bit.ly/EDINJInstitutionalAssessment

EDI Institutional Assessment Pilot Project

This statewide initiative supports New Jersey libraries in strengthening their equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices through structured assessment, reflection, and action.

https://librarylinknj.org/EDI/Institutional-Assessment-Project

- Burlington County Library System
- Hunterdon County Library System
- Jennings Library at Caldwell University
- John P. Faber School Library
- Moorestown Library
- New Brunswick Free Public Library
- Piscataway Public Library
- University Library at Rider University

What's Ahead for EDI-NJ: Immediate Priorities

- Implementation of EDI Institutional Assessment Pilot Project

- Grow EDI-NJ membership and engagement

- Create Individual EDI Self-Assessment Tool

- Resource hub & toolkit for libraries: **EDI Resource Solicitation Form** https://forms.gle/bHvhLzmTD5DrmPeA6

What's Ahead for EDI-NJ: Long-term Vision

Sustainable EDI practices embedded in all NJ libraries

Strong network of EDI champions and practitioners

Regular assessment and continuous improvement

Model for other state-level initiatives

How to Get Involved

- **Monthly Meetings:** Third Wednesday of each month, 2:30-3:30 PM
- **Working Groups:** EDI Leadership Training Committee; DEIA Toolkit & Resource Hub Committee
- **Culture Connection Events:** Special celebrations and learning opportunities
- **Feedback Opportunities:** Review tools, participate in pilots
- **Project website:** librarylinknj.org/EDI/strategic-roadmap

Interest Form:
https://bit.ly/EDINJfeedback

Who is interested in:

- Joining monthly EDI-NJ meetings?

- Joining a project subcommittee?

- Beta testing our assessment tools?

- Contributing resources to our hub?

- Attending culture connection events?

Bringing It All Together

✓ EDI work requires sustained, strategic effort

🤝 Equity is a shared, strategic journey

📋 Assessment tools provide clear roadmap for progress

📚 Collaboration amplifies individual library efforts

📚 Every library has a role in statewide advancement

Thank You!

Questions? **edi@librarylinknj.org**

Contact Information

- EDI Subject Matter Expert: Ozy Aloziem (ozyaloziem@gmail.com)
- Project Manager: Mi-Sun Lyu, LLNJ Director of Special Projects (lyu@librarylinknj.org)
- EDI-NJ Group Leader: Ali Cole, VALE Program Manager (alison.cole@valenj.org)
- Funding Sponsors:
    - LibraryLinkNJ Executive Director: Ralph Bingham (ralph@librarylinknj.org)
    - NJLA Executive Director: Brett Bonfield, (bbonfield@njla.org)