

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a bright blue sky filled with soft, white, puffy clouds. The clouds are scattered across the frame, with some appearing closer and more detailed, while others are further away and more ethereal. The overall tone is positive and uplifting.

# 2022 diversity, equity, and inclusion report

**martin.**

"The Martin Group's focus on DEI began many years ago, and it is a journey that will continue to evolve as we look to continuously improve and expand our impact on agency culture, industry talent, and the many communities we serve."

-Lisa Bellacicco,  
Chief Operating  
Officer



# DEI statement

At The Martin Group, the difference is making one. Our DEI initiatives are not guiding us to a set destination, but rather an evolution of our culture on a constantly changing journey. We believe that bringing people together who have different thoughts, backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs will make us a better, stronger, more impactful Agency. By actively seeking out diversity in employment hires and client work, ensuring equitable opportunities for all of our associates, and continuing to create and evolve our culture to be inclusive for all; allows us to make a greater difference in our communities, for our clients and for each other.



# our evolution story

In 2016, the Agency saw a need to increase diversity and to have a greater impact on underserved communities. Since that time, there have been a number of initiatives to help make a difference and evolve our culture toward larger DEI goals.



making a  
difference  
to increase



the pool of  
qualified  
candidates

Much of the agency's ongoing focus has been on positively contributing to the marketing and communications talent pools that currently exist in many of our home geographic markets, particularly in Upstate New York. This focus has included efforts such as:

- Engagement of local high schools and colleges for tours and immersion into agency life and occupation, as well as staff visits to classrooms as guest speakers (SUNY Buffalo State College, Saint Bonaventure University, Villa Maria College, and others).
- Commitment to Bison Children's Scholarship Fund to support high school scholarships for worthy students of socio-economically challenged backgrounds and encouragement for them to pursue studies in marketing and communications.
- Prioritization of diversity in hiring and candidate pursuit.
- Analyzing current DEI metrics for long-term tracking and performance evaluation.



The image features a vast, reddish-brown desert landscape under a clear sky. A person is walking across the desert, leaving a trail of footprints. The top of the image is framed by a white, torn paper-like border. The text "making a difference in our employment practices" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font.

making a  
difference  
in our  
employment  
practices



Evaluation and updating of the recruitment process to include a consistent framework and language and the implementation of phone screen questions tied to the Agency's established values, reducing the possibility of unconscious bias. The agency has also:

- Created a functional organizational chart with associated job descriptions to identify potential career growth opportunities and a consistent framework to measure and recommend promotions.
- Adoption of an Agency-wide compensation review process to ensure consistent framework and evaluation of pay and pay increases.
- Included an anti-discrimination statement to The Martin Group careers page.
- Included the acceptance of work experience in lieu of a degree for 95% of job descriptions at the Agency.



# making a difference by evolving our culture



The creation of an agency diversity committee and inclusion council has helped guide corporate decision-making and understanding on DEI issues and topics. This committee has pursued information from industry membership organizations such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and the American Advertising Federation (AAF) on DEI best practices, tips, and techniques to create a more inclusive agency.

Other such efforts have involved the creation of more agency DEI content and trend research, as well as the creation and distribution of an Inclusive Language Toolkit to educate and guide associates in using more inclusive language centered around:

- Using and sharing gender and gender-neutral pronouns.
- Education on mental health and how to combat the mental health stigma through inclusive language and avoiding harmful words and phrases.
- Acknowledgement of unconscious bias and the impact of word usage in creating an inclusive culture with regard to race and ethnicity.
- Awareness of language and phrases that perpetuate ageism and discrimination against persons with disabilities.



Several years ago, the agency encouraged the use of preferred pronouns in company e-signatures, fostering more conversation around gender and nonbinary inclusivity. And managers were empowered to spark active conversations on inclusivity to foster safe environment for transgender associates to move through their personal journey and communicate their transition on their terms.

A formal updating of the agency associate handbook helped foster more inclusive employment policies and language, as related to race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, including:

–Gender neutral language

–Updates to Agency holidays:

- Changes to Agency holiday language allowed for greater flexibility with religious observances.
- Addition of Martin Luther King Day in support and recognition of the ongoing equality issues that still exist.



–Agency supported training including:

- Racial Equity Roundtable training.
- Cornell University's Diversity and Inclusion training certificate program.
- Manager training focused on Coaching for Career Development and the impact of unconscious bias.



making a  
difference




in the  
community

Community volunteerism and contributions to positive change have long been a hallmark of The Martin Group's identity. Such involvement has included executive level board participation and substantial philanthropic donations to the Bison Children's Scholarship Fund board of directors, Children's Hospital Foundation of Buffalo board of directors, Albany Times-Union Women@Work board of directors, Explore & More Children's Museum board of directors, and the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation board of directors, Prescription for Progress board of directors, and the board of directors of The Exchange at Beverly Gray, which is the premier Business and Entrepreneur Service Organization specifically serving the underrepresented and BIPOC entrepreneurial community in Western New York. In addition, the agency has made:

**–Major financial and service commitments to The ECMC Foundation, the Kaleida Health Foundation, New Era Cap Charitable Foundation, and the Children's Hospital of Buffalo Foundation.**






–Juneteenth Buffalo – To support Juneteenth festivities in the Buffalo area. Rochester’s Black Community Focus Fund – To support diversity educational efforts in the Rochester area. Chautauqua Institution to support visual arts gallery field trips for high school students in underserved communities, promoting the education and exploration of the visual arts. Select LGBTQIA causes, support organizations, and initiatives.

- Service donation on key projects focused on DEI audiences, including the City of Buffalo Commission on Police Reform Report compilation and creation, Zeneta & Zaire's Book Club, work with NFTA, RGRTA, and CDTA on statewide public transportation issues, FeedMoreWNY, and work with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and New Era Cap Foundation on engaging DEI audiences around sport, health, and wellness access.
- Partnering with various MWBE sub-contractors to fulfill certain portions of integrated communications assignments, as well as women- and minority-owned businesses in the videography, photography, production, post production, editing, and digital design spaces.





# current demo- graphics

In July of 2022, the Agency once again took a snapshot of employee demographics to hold ourselves accountable to our diversity initiatives.

Out of 89 associates:

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15%

were age  
50 or older

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23%

were age  
40-49

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35%

were age  
30-39

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27%

were age  
20-29

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90% of associates completed a voluntary diversity survey to identify our gender and race/ethnicity makeup.

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Gender:

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69%

identified  
as Female

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30%

identified  
as Male

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1

associate identified  
as Non-binary

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Race/Ethnicity:

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10%

identified as Black or African  
American, Hispanic or Latino,  
Asian, or two or more races

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90%

identified  
as White or  
Caucasian

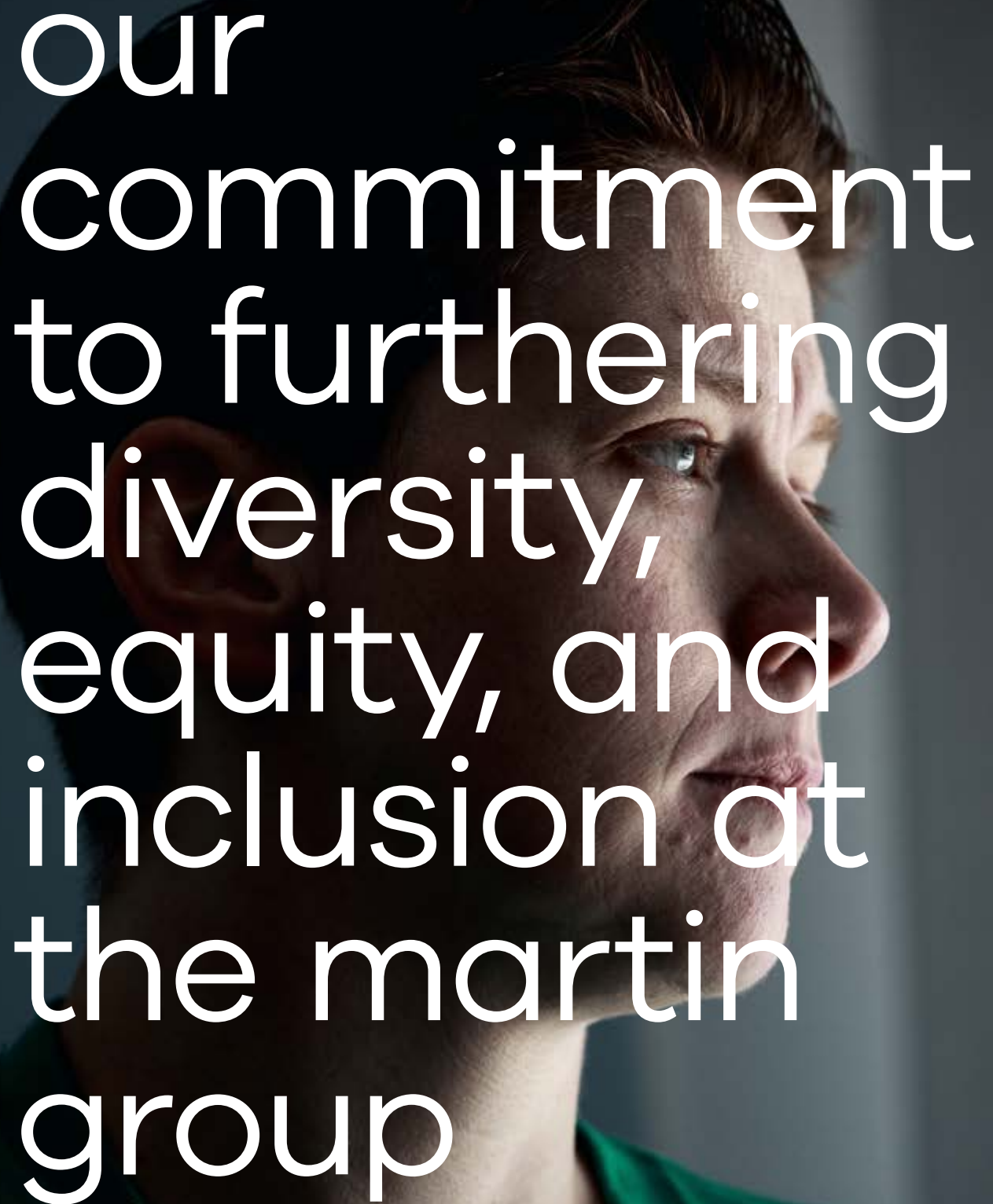
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1

person  
did not wish  
to disclose

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75% of the respondents were interested in being involved in moving our DEI goals forward.



our  
commitment  
to furthering  
diversity,  
equity, and  
inclusion at  
the martin  
group



One of The Martin Group's agency wide goals is to "continue nurturing our company culture to attract, retain and grow top talent, quality clients, and strategic partnerships." We've created an inclusive culture where different beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences can flourish. Agency board of directors membership offers two females, including an African-American outside director, while ownership includes a female equity partner (COO), and there are multiple females and LGBTQIA leaders at the supervisor level or higher, including several senior vice presidents and vice presidents. The agency has growing religious diversity and is making strides in racial diversity, though the company continues to view this an area of improvement.

We also understand that an overemphasis on specific attributes can subjugate the unique talents, accomplishments, and strengths of individuals. We will continue to focus on attracting, retaining, and growing top talent, but our goal is to increase diversity to become a better company.

## We need to do more. More for our Agency and more for our industry.

According to a Statista report on U.S. employment data, in 2021 78.7% of the U.S. advertising and promotions industry was white, with only 12.1% Black or African American, 6.2% Hispanic or Latino, and 5.2% Asian.

The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) 2019 member study reported only 6% Black or African American members, 8% Hispanic or Latino, 9% Asian, and 75% White.



A Black woman with curly hair and glasses is shown in profile, smiling and looking out a window. She is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus view of a city or outdoor area.

With over 75% of the advertising industry identified as white, we cannot become a more diverse agency without efforts to drive more diversity in the industry itself. We believe that by increasing exposure to the marketing and advertising industry and increasing the opportunities to build skills in the creative field we can make a difference for our community, building the candidate pool for underrepresented groups.

- The Martin Group will be continuing our commitment to the Bison Children’s Scholarship Fund to support high school scholarships for students in socio-economically challenged situations.
- We will be creating engagement plans with multiple local colleges and universities centered around developing the skillset and exposure of underrepresented groups.
- We will hold participant spots for underrepresented groups in our internship symposiums.
- We will explore targeted support of the career growth and development of Black creatives in our local markets such as One School, an organization that provides free access to creative talent to help them create world-class portfolios that open doors for career opportunities.



According to the U.S. Census, Erie County consists of 79.3% white residents, 14% Black or African American, 5.8% Hispanic or Latino, 3.8% Asian, and 2.1% two or more races. Monroe County and Albany Counties other geographies where the Agency has physical offices show similar demographics with 76.7% and 75.3% White, 16.1% and 14.2% Black or African American, 9.6% and 6.6% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.9 and 3.1% two or more races, respectively. Albany County showed slightly higher population identifying as Asian with 7% (Monroe County was 3.7%). While we've made strides to create consistency in the hiring process to reduce unconscious and conscious bias, we can still do more in our recruiting and interview process to attract a more diverse candidate pool.

–The majority of our hires come from personal connections or direct applications on our website. Our connections tend to be like us and can promote homogeneity. In order to continue our journey, we need to look beyond our internal connections, increasing recruiting outlets targeting candidates from underrepresented groups.

–We will re-train hiring managers on the recruiting process and importance of consistency in reducing unconscious bias.

- According to the World Population Review, 24.91% of the bachelor's degree attainment in New York State were by Black or African Americans, 20.53% by Hispanics, and 18.56% by Native Americans. While we have reduced degree requirements in job descriptions, we need to redefine what qualified means for our positions, evaluating existing degree requirements with the goal of increasing equity in the hiring process.
- We will need to leverage relationships with engaged universities to identify top talent from newly graduated students or alumni with a focus on priority hiring for underrepresented candidates.
- We will build relationships with organizations that reach diverse communities in our markets in order to get our job openings in front of new audiences.





we aren't  
there yet,  
but we are  
committed  
to pursuit  
on this  
journey



Carolyn Choi

an.  
an.

DIFFERENCE

integrated communication  
and beyond, our work brings  
attention to the same qualities  
March Group, Women@Work,  
the difference is making one

Jennifer Harold  
Account Supervisor, The March Group  
Barbara Manlove, Women@Work

muni  
communi  
communi



We will need to keep diversity, equity, and inclusion top of mind and evolve our policies, practices, and culture throughout that journey. Some of the immediate priorities to promote a culture where individuals can be their authentic selves are:

- Utilize this transition from a DEI Committee to more full agency involvement with volunteer participation and leadership for key DEI initiatives.
- Provide agency wide training on DEI awareness, actions, and impacts.
- Implement annual listening sessions centered around gathering feedback and ideas to continue our DEI journey.
- Creation of Working Parents @ TMG committee to explore hardships of work/life balance in the agency setting.




–Adjust the “Good Friday holiday” to be a floating holiday that associates can use to celebrate their religious or cultural beliefs.

–Celebrate our differences and show support for DEI through what we do best. Drive a best effort creative content campaign celebrating diversity such as:

- Martin Luther King Day
- Black History Month
- Asian Heritage Month
- Pride month
- Juneteenth
- Mother’s Day
- Father’s Day
- Religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Passover, Easter, and others

–Continuing our diversification in vendor usage with priority placed on MWBE sub-contractors.



As we move forward,  
The Martin Group will also  
continue to advance three  
strategic DEI engagement  
pillars that fit who we are as  
an agency, and who we want  
to become. These include:

- A commitment to  
diverse hiring and MWBE  
vendor expansion and  
diversification,
- TLLD (training, listening,  
learning, and development)
- Further support for key  
community causes



"Our DEI strategy is not an action plan with an end goal of completion. It is an identification and commitment to what we believe will make a greater difference in the Agency, with our clients, and in the community. It is our compass to rally around, hold ourselves accountable, and continue our journey to be a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Agency where our differences are not just tolerated, but are celebrated."

-Matt Davison,  
Chief Business  
Officer