



NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES: BUILDING A REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

An equitable society requires an active and ongoing commitment to examining and adjusting traditional ways of working.

As we all focus on supporting a more diverse workforce, it is critical to work together and share ideas. It is for this reason the National Health Council hosted a virtual event in October 2021 that brought together experts in **diversity**, **equity**, and **inclusion** (DEI) and human resource professionals from some of our member companies and other organizations to offer insights, share ideas, and consider best practices on how to attract, build, and retain a more inclusive workforce.

This document provides an overview of the key topics discussed; highlights the challenges, successes, and lessons learned during the multiple interactive sessions; and provides replicable and scalable ideas for organizations small and large to consider as they strive to build a more representative workplace.

Randall L. Rutta
CEO | National Health Council

OVERVIEW

Alicia Robinson | President and Chair, The Equity Lab

Since 2013, Alicia Robinson has operated EdPlus Consulting to disrupt the systems that get in the way of ensuring equity, liberation, and justice, especially for Black and communities of color. She works with social impact organizations to change the conditions that hold inequitable talent management practices in place by shifting mental patterns that negatively influence what we think, say, and do.

In her opening remarks, Keynote Speaker and Moderator Alicia Robinson, President and Chair at The Equity Lab, set the stage by defining DEI and made the business case for it.

At its heart, DEI is about change management. And it is within the strategic pieces of human resources — namely recruitment, performance, management, learning and development, and retention — that the magic of DEI lies. It is about being respected, about being integrated, and about feeling welcomed in. It is when your voice is being heard and your ideas are being solicited and you feel like you have an equal opportunity to succeed.

The business case for diversity is clear. Inclusive environments enable performance, including improved and effective outcomes and profits. There is also a moral imperative at play. When organizations take a humanistic approach to how they operate — and include not only policies and practices, but also how they collaborate and lead, they then make room for empathy and accountability; and that gives individuals not only the opportunity, but also the permission to thrive in their work.



While many organizations recognize the need for diversity and inclusiveness in theory, they are not necessarily seeing it happen in reality. Progress towards true representation and inclusivity remains slow. One key reason may be because true inclusion is not only about counting statistics; it is about cultivating the individual and collective experiences of everyone involved.

While there is no one path to an inclusive workplace, the three most important contributing factors to building one are managers, teammates, and formal mechanisms. All of these must be present for success. It is through an employee's combined experience with their boss, colleagues, and the policies, practices, and rules that their company enforces, that inclusivity is achieved.

PANEL 1 | HIRING AND RECRUITMENT | KEY TAKEAWAYS

Jessica Kennedy | Chief of Staff, Mental Health America

Gerald Johnson, M.D. | EVP, Health Equity & Chief Diversity Officer, American Heart Association

Hiring and recruitment practices set the stage in every organization. If done right, they give an organization a chance to add diversity of thought and broaden the level of talent and lived experiences of its workforce. Success requires that the approach be applied throughout the whole of the organization because if only a handful of people within the organization get to decide what happens, then its ability to grow, innovate, attract new talent, and affect positive change will be significantly compromised.

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The top performing companies are diverse and are leveraging diversity and inclusion; it's amazing how well they perform when everyone who works there feels accepted and included.”

Gerald Johnson

First, a major challenge most organizations face as they set goals for achieving a more diverse and inclusive workplace is accountability. There can be reluctance among employees to share personal information if there is a shared feeling that their circumstances won't change. So as organizations seek to establish benchmarks and set goals for hiring and recruitment, they must first help individuals understand why sharing that information is important. They need to make clear what the benefits are so employees understand how their experiences, opportunities, and ability to be heard and respected is going to change.

Next, organizations should be able to recognize and address the ways unconscious bias plays in the hiring and recruitment process. Human nature is such that, as individuals, we think a certain way and that can impact how and whom we recruit and hire. One way to address unconscious bias is to conduct bias training for all employees. Emphasize this training for hiring managers, mentor non-hiring

managers, and involve them in the hiring process. Aspects of the training can include key questions to ask at each stage of the process, such as:

- Where have we chosen to list job postings?
- Are we reaching diverse communities?
- Does the job we are recruiting for really require a bachelor's degree?
- Are we placing too much emphasis on where the candidate went to college and what their GPA was when reviewing their resume?



As recruitment and hiring managers make decisions at each stage of the process, it is important to try to approach each individual's biases with humility and vulnerability.

Finally, as organizations seek to measure results and determine if and how they are successful in achieving a more diverse and inclusive workforce through better hiring and recruitment practices, quantity and quality can tell a lot. It should not be just about analyzing numbers; organizations must also gauge employees' feelings about how well the organization is addressing their need to be heard, their need to be respected, and their ability to access the necessary resources to be successful.



None of this matters if your culture doesn't support the people once they join your organization."

Jessica Kennedy

PANEL 2 RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT | KEY TAKEAWAYS

Megan Pinegar | Chief Operating Officer, EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases

Janet Mills | Vice President, Human Resources, MS Society

An organization that builds, retains, and grows a workforce that reflects America — age, sex, gender, creed, background, geographies, etc. — and resembles who the organization represents makes that organization better. That said, it is clear that people continue to want more opportunities for career advancement beyond what may be a traditional path through management roles. There is more desire for more flexibility in work and attention to wellness and balance. The workplace needs to be more responsive to the more holistic needs that people have today.



This is not a one-person effort. You need to have buy-in and commitment from everyone. You couple that with some flexibility and a little bit of extra grace to know that we're not going to get it all right the first time."

Megan Pinegar

Retention of good people and making everyone within an organization feel appreciated and included is really a team effort, which is why it is important for an organization to evaluate and re-evaluate constantly the needs of the people in it. Additionally, thinking about how the organization can help its people grow and staying tuned into how it can support staff in their current role and the goals they may have for their life and career (within the current organization or not) is important.

Organizations should strive for retention through the employee experience. They should consider the entire employee life cycle starting with recruitment. Get specific about what success looks like in a given role and define the transferable and real skills that people need to be successful. Strengths building is what leads ultimately to success, so organizations should consider and build employees' strengths (e.g., with the CliftonStrengths assessment), and celebrate what makes each person

great at their job. They should let teams lean into those strengths and coach and support staff in reaching their highest potential based on what employees are best at.

From a career development standpoint, organizations should challenge assumptions about who has access to opportunities. In addition to who has access, consider how those opportunities contribute to their growth and



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You have to leverage the diversity of thought that exists within your organization. It's not going to be solved with one programmatic fix; it's about the entire employee experience.”

Janet Mills

development, and what that could suggest for development programs to ensure they are looking at the right measures.

Finally, most organizations continue to be challenged to move beyond measuring activity to measuring outcomes. While there is no silver bullet to measuring success when it comes to retention and growth, one obvious sign of success is the number of employees who stay and who are engaged, particularly in today's workforce environment. When people leave, they should ask for candid feedback; truly understanding the departing employees' lived experiences is the only way for an organization to improve going forward.

CONCLUSION

Ericka Hines | Principal, Every Level Leadership

Ericka Hines is an advisor and strategist who works with organizations to align their commitment to inclusion and equity with their everyday actions and operations. She has worked with government agencies, nonprofits, and foundations across the country to help their staff and stakeholders learn how to create inclusive culture. To date, Ericka has trained over 3,500 individuals in skills that will help them be more equitable leaders for their teams and organizations.

In her closing remarks, Erika Hines, Principal, Every Level Leadership summarized the key characteristics of a representative workforce and why building one is beneficial for organizational growth and success.

What does a truly inclusive workplace look like? It is a place where all people from all different backgrounds, lived experiences, and dimensions of diversity can succeed in very different, self-determined, and authentic ways, and where everyone is welcomed, respected, valued, and supported in the ways that promote them to do their best work. It is a place where people from other dimensions of diversity are going to show up more fully and contribute more, and where their lived experience will be helpful, beneficial, and welcome to the conversations and solutions. It is a place where cultural norms will shift and move away from dominant culture (i.e., white, heteronormative, male-centered) to a more multi-cultural way of operating. Conflict-prone discussions that are crucial will be possible, and people won't feel afraid of the fear of retaliation or fear of undue emotional labor.

It is possible to be an inclusive workplace. The point of creating inclusive workplaces, even when fatigue and resistance are felt, and when there are stumbles and challenges, is not to stop. Organizations and the people within them who are committed to doing this important work around DEI need to know it is OK to take a step back, to rest, to regroup, and to allow themselves space and grace. Even that, in and of itself, is progress forward.

For more information about how the National Health Council engages members in topics and content of importance, such as DEI, please email: membership@nhcouncil.org.



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HIGHLIGHTS OF PRESENTATIONS AND INTERACTIVE BREAKOUT SESSIONS WITH CORPORATE MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

Identifying and Recruiting Diverse Talent for Specialized Roles

Patrick Zueger | Director, Health Economics and Outcomes Research, AbbVie

abbvie

Disseminating job postings for open HR positions to more diverse groups and organizations than in the past and setting up a process to do this in a systematic fashion for every single one of our job openings.

Focus on enriching and sustaining an early talent pipeline

- Establishing ongoing relationships with universities and academic programs that have diverse talent pools helps to create that continuous renewable pipeline of diverse talent

Leverage intra-organization and infrastructure

- Look for opportunities to plug into other efforts within your organization if they're available and leverage existing experience as it relates to diverse talent recruitment. It's really critical to seek out those individuals and leverage their experience

Identify and inspire individuals to be allies and champions

- To make this kind of systemic change you really can't do it alone

How to Construct Interview Panels to Promote Diversity in Hiring

Tessa Baker | RTP Human Resources Leader, Biogen

 Biogen.

Focus on setting hiring managers up for success.

PHASE I: Intake

- Identify team composition: homogeneity of no more than 70%
- Look for culture add: skills, identities, positions that are over — or under — represented

PHASE II: Pre-interview

- Review unconscious bias examples
- Identify diverse interview panel

PHASE III: Interview

- Use an interview toolkit designed to be consistent across candidates and includes scoring for comparison among interviewers

PHASE IV: Post-interview

- Reflection questionnaire: did we hire a diverse candidate? If not, why not?



Bending the Curve on Representation

Debra Simmers | Executive Director, Talent Acquisition Business Partners & Delivery, Human Resources, Bristol Myers Squibb



Accelerating progress for executive women globally and for underrepresented groups in the U.S. where opportunity is greatest.

Creating a good and inclusive job description

- Less jargon, provide more “a day in the life” descriptions, and include more inclusive words

Enhancing the social media campaign

- Targets candidates who are members of diverse affinity groups

Identifying diverse search agencies/programs

- E.g., HBCU’s and their S.T.E.M. programs

Professional Apprentices Program

Liberty Wilken | Professional Apprentices Program Manager, Eli Lilly



Expanding individual potential and future career options through professional development.

Background

- Large group of talented people who may not have completed a 4-year degree

Intent

- Provide opportunities to impact the community, level the playing field, and remove barriers for under-represented talent

Elements

- 35–40 hours a week; working across various areas of the business; financial support for college tuition provided; after successful completion participants have professional level competence

Candidate profile and source

- Desire to complete 4-year degree; relevant work/life experience; basic computer skills; sourced from career development programs at community partner organizations (e.g., National Urban League)

Representation Matters in Improving Health Equity

Perika Sampson | Global Head of Inclusion & Diversity, Gilead



Barriers to building trust fall when health care advocates and professional scientists and practitioners understand the cultural nuances of diverse communities.

Investing in talent is important; diverse representation metrics improve or decline, based on the ability to recruit from competitors

- Accelerated engagement in the community, including high-impact organizations like HBCUs, HSIs, and professional organizations, to address the representation gap
- Launched a fund focused on racial inequities across the U.S., committed to recruiting candidates through early talent programs to bring exceptional diverse talent into the workforce, and offering new opportunities to underrepresented students

Cultural awareness and diverse professionals are critical at every level

- Launched a combination program of experiential learning and senior leadership engagement for high potential black professionals

The Critical Role of Collaborative Partnerships

Luther Clark | Deputy Chief Patient Officer, Merck



Expansion of the pool of minority principal investigators in clinical trials helps build trust, improve the diversity of clinical trial participants, and better demonstrates the safety and efficacy of new medicines in all populations. Furthermore, a diverse workforce is better able to relate to, empathize with, and communicate effectively with patients.

Community partnerships and collaborations are both powerful and critical to achieve and increase diversity in clinical research including in participants, site teams and, in particular, investigators

- Collaboration and partnerships for training and support are designed to increase the pool of investigators from underrepresented groups

Seek to increase the number of underrepresented minorities who are able to serve as Principal Investigators which, in turn, will increase the number of underrepresented minority patient engagement and participation in clinical research

- The objective is to ensure treatments and preventative regimens are thoroughly investigated across all intended target populations
- Work with the National Medical Fellowships Diversity in Clinical Trials Research Program (NMF Dctr)

Build trust and trustworthiness across the continuum of clinical research and patient care



Education on Implicit Bias and Inclusive Leadership Training

Angie Bricco | Head, US Public Affairs and Patient Advocacy, Primary Care, Sanofi



Helping to transform the practice of medicine to truly be equitable.

Teaching leaders and employees about the science of bias

- Internal training conducted by Harvard's Nasreen Banaji with her book "Blind Spot" provided as a follow up

Corporate Training on "change your bias"

- "Above the Line" DEI behaviors and coaching for all leaders

Sharing knowledge with providers and patient groups

- Focus on organ transplant area where we know bias is high and replicated our training there

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