Co-Designing for Health Equity

A SOLUTIONS BRIEF TO ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY

IFDHE
AHA Institute for Diversity and Health Equity ™

H American Hospital Association ™
Advancing Health in America

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ABOUT

WHAT THIS IS

This is a brief of co-designed solutions demonstrating a strategy for hospitals and health systems to advance health equity in this region.

Health equity requires innovation – the ability to create disruption with insight, empathy and bold collaboration.

In May 2022, the American Hospital Association (AHA) convened community, hospital and health systems leaders in Region 5 to co-design solutions for advancing health equity. Set up to maximize collaboration, the one-day gathering used a human-centered design process to ensure shared accountability among community, hospitals and health system participants.

This brief highlights the collective insights of a wide range of participants and the solutions discussed. It is designed for hospital and health systems to operationalize their Health Equity Roadmaps and begin to create the system changes needed to advance health equity.

A COMPANION TO THE HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP

The Health Equity Roadmap is a framework to guide hospitals and health systems in charting their paths toward transformation.

Through its Institute for Diversity and Health Equity (IFDHE), the AHA seeks to eliminate structural barriers compromising equitable clinical and operational outcomes of hospitals and health systems. IFDHE operationalizes AHA's mission and vision in its development and offering to member hospitals.

The Health Equity Transformation Model – the Health Equity Roadmap's theoretical underpinning – provides six "Levers of Transformation," key performance indicators and a self-assessment tool for tracking progress.

EQUITY.AHA.ORG
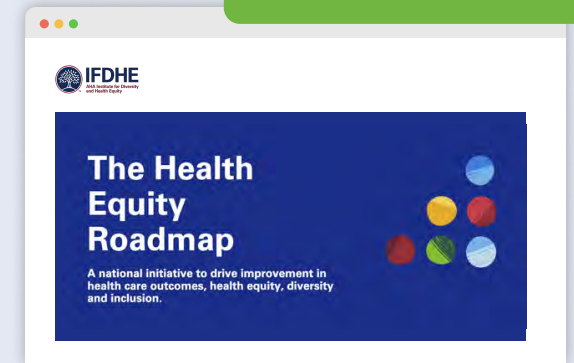
Visit **equity.aha.org** to enroll in The Equity Roadmap Initiative, complete the Transformation Assessment, and connect with peers who are on this journey to advance health equity.

THE SIX LEVERS FOR TRANSFORMATION

1. Culturally appropriate care
2. Diverse representation in leadership and governance
3. Equitable and inclusive organizational policies
4. Community collaboration for solutions
5. Collection and use of data to drive action
6. Systemic and shared responsibility

REGION 5

HOW THESE SOLUTIONS WERE DEVELOPED

Leaders from 13 hospitals and health systems attended, ranging from CEOs to SVPs, VPs and directors. Attendees represented functions including Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Quality; Population/Care Management, and HR/Organizational Development. Most importantly, community stakeholders and leaders participated alongside their local hospital and health systems for a day of co-design, using a human-centered structure and process for exploring solutions together.

REGION 5

Bethesda North Hospital

BHSH System

Blanchard Valley Health System

Carle Health

Cleveland Clinic Euclid Hospital

ProMedica

RML Specialty Hospital

Salem Regional Medical Center

Select Medical

Sparrow Health System

Spectrum Health Pennock

TriHealth

UCHealth

3

MODELING A CO-DESIGN COMMUNITY APPROACH

At the Region 5 Health Equity Innovation Summit, the AHA used a co-design approach for bringing community leaders, hospitals and health systems together to explore, listen, learn and co-create ideas as equal partners with equal voices. Empathy drove the tone. Visions and ideas were shared. Possible solutions were sketched out, built upon and evolved.

Co-design is a human-centered approach to identifying the right problems and finding meaningful solutions with diverse groups of stakeholders. It has proven to be an effective way to lead innovation and change by providing a methodology and tools to create solutions for complex challenges.

Research has shown that co-design benefits publicly traded companies and non-profits alike.

DID YOU KNOW? Research from McKinsey and Co. shows that 70% of change efforts fail in organizations. Co-design has been proven to increase success rates through its participatory approach.
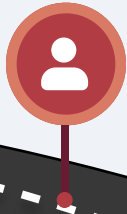
OUR PROCESS

Fireside Chat

Started the day with panel of experts in health equity.

Health Equity Through Human-Centered Design

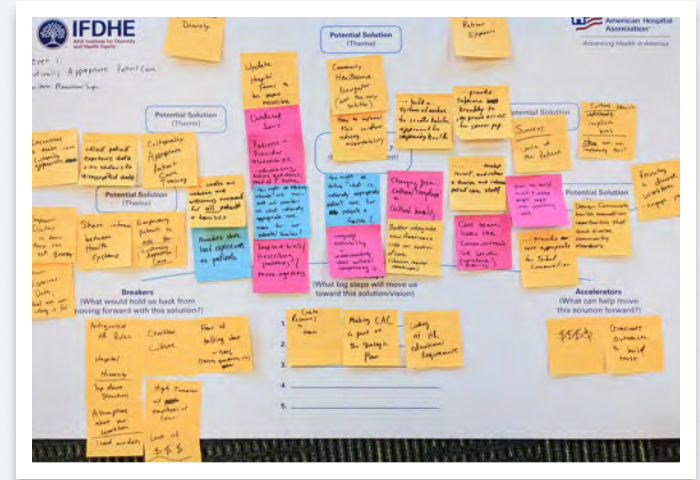Held a deep dive into methods in human-centered design, co-creation and experimentation.

Collaborated at Design Thinking Roundtables to envision and explore bold solutions together.

Design Thinking Session

Co-Designing for Community Collaboration

Discussed Implementation Strategies and Co-Designing for Community Collaboration

THREE THEMES

At the summit in Cleveland, 50+ solutions were discussed over the course of the day. Three themes emerged that represented opportunities for action.

1 Enabling Structures

Ways to structurally integrate health equity into hospital processes, operations, assets and priorities

2 Culture and Action

Ways to leverage health systems' workforces as a driver for health equity and action

3 Community Partnership

Ways to change how hospital and health systems interact and partner with the communities they serve

Enabling Structures

Enabling Structures

Model the change we seek

Consistently, hospital and health system stakeholders acknowledged that equitable solutions should start from within. It's where hospitals and health system leaders have the most control and influence.

The first major theme from the Region 5 Health Equity Innovation Summit focused on ways hospital and health systems can structurally integrate change and innovation into existing operations, processes, assets and priorities to drive progress.

SOLUTION SPACES:

How might we build diversity, equity and inclusion into how we **already operate**?

How might we build diversity, equity and inclusion into how we **support employee growth?**

How might we **leverage the assets and priorities we have** in place to advance health equity?

How might we **regularly revisit our policies** to enable equitable care and allow for creative ways to build a more inclusive organization?

SOLUTION SPACE 1

How might we build diversity, equity and inclusion into how we already operate?

Build DEI into core operating structures and processes including strategic planning, budgeting and dedicated cost centers.

LEVER 6

Establish DEI metrics, build into performance evaluation processes, tools and incentive plans.

LEVER 1

Add equity measures to hospital strategy plans.

LEVER 6

Continuously and systematically apply an equity lens across every service line to ensure diverse leadership and governance across the organization.

LEVER 2

Develop processes to align top executives to the front lines and engage them in building community solutions.

LEVER 4

SOLUTION SPACE 2

How might we build diversity, equity and inclusion into how we support employee growth?

Embed DEI competency in the employment interview cycle and performance reviews.

LEVER 1

Incentivize diverse employee growth–not just hiring.

LEVER 3

Build community collaboration into employee performance reviews.

LEVER 4

SOLUTION SPACE 3

How might we leverage the assets and priorities we have in place to advance health equity?

Align board leadership in its support of diverse representation throughout all levels of the organization.

LEVER 2

Build diversity into recruiting and hiring teams.

LEVER 2

Leverage Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and set up feedback loops between affinity groups and the organization.

LEVER 6

Allocate community benefit dollars to proactive efforts rather than funding reactively.

LEVER 3

SOLUTION SPACE 4

How might we regularly revisit our policies to enable equitable care and encourage creative ways to build a more inclusive organization?

Engage CEOs in driving policy changes.
LEVER 3

Implement creative benefit designs that can meaningfully address employees' socio-economic needs.
LEVER 3

Establish processes to reassess and redirect care policies to center family members as patient advocates.
LEVER 1

Culture and Action

Culture and Action

Amplify culture and action through people and data

A second emerging theme from the Region 5 Innovation Summit focused on leveraging hospital and health systems' workforce as a driver for health equity and using data to align internal culture and drive action.

Conversations centered around activating health system workforces as a DEI asset, integrating inclusion and equitable care into the day-to-day culture at hospitals, and elevating data practices and capacity to drive more meaningful action in hospital and health systems.

SOLUTION SPACES:

→ How might we **leverage hospital staff** as a powerful force for change?

→ How might we align data practices to **drive community action** outside our four walls?

→ How might we **build internal data sophistication and capacity**?

SOLUTION SPACE 1

How might we leverage hospital staff as a force for change?

Hire people who can build trust within the community to collect necessary data.
LEVER 5

Establish pathways for growth for historically marginalized employee groups–not just pathways for hiring.
LEVER 3

Foster organization-wide collaboration with the Office of Diversity.
LEVER 2

Create opportunities for the workforce to be entrenched in community (real experiences vs. "classroom trainings").
LEVER 1

Establish equity champions consisting of multidisciplinary teams.
LEVER 4

Create and empower affinity groups to incubate new approaches to how hospitals engage the community.
LEVER 6

Deliver education and empathy training for engaging with the community.
LEVER 4

SOLUTION SPACE 2

How might we align our data practices to drive community action outside our four walls?

Realign data so it leads with community needs.

LEVERS 4, 5

Create clarity in assessment tools available to understand the community.

LEVER 3

Introduce open data sharing practices (e.g., create shared language in data collection, coordinate data sharing with other health systems, leverage relationships to share data openly and regularly with community ambassadors and leaders).

LEVER 5

SOLUTION SPACE 3

How might we build internal data sophistication and capacity?

Use qualitative data to enrich quantitative data to better understand community needs.

LEVER 4

Build community data leadership (e.g., support/training for new leaders, data responsibility, accountability as it relates to program delivery).

LEVER 5

Provide data education to help health systems own their experiences and tailor them to their organizations.

LEVER 5

Stratify data to identify gaps in health disparities.

LEVERS 2, 5

Community Partnership

Community Partnership

Find the courage to forge equal partnerships

Lastly, but most saliently, hospital and health system stakeholders at the Region 5 Health Equity Innovation Summit emphasized the need for health systems to partner differently with their own communities.

This solution space is about hospital and health systems showing up in new ways and proactively working with communities as equal partners in health.

SOLUTION SPACES:

How might we **build bridges** between hospital and community leadership?

How might we **develop community collaboration** capacity and skills?

How might we **elevate community voices** and engagement?

SOLUTION SPACE 1

How might we build bridges between hospital and community leadership?

Bring community voices into board-level and other hospital leadership meetings.
LEVER 2

Develop task forces comprising internal stakeholders and external community leaders to work on projects together.
LEVER 4

Strengthen partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and social service providers in the community.
LEVERS 2, 4, 5

Engage hospital leaders and employees in community service work and events.
LEVER 1

Develop processes to identify community leaders, build relationships and define governance roles.
LEVER 2

Actively engage with community members in health and sickness for a whole-person perspective of the population.
LEVER 1

Conduct trainings for governing board and leadership to explore their commitment to health equity.
LEVER 2

Collaborate and engage in more inclusive brainstorming sessions.
LEVER 2

SOLUTION SPACE 2

How might we develop community collaboration capacity and skills?

Support community-based organizations (CBOs) with data and analytics.

Create pipelines for providers (e.g., develop programs with community organizations to foster health careers for historically marginalized groups of people).

SOLUTION SPACE 3

How might we elevate community voices and engagement?

Bring community voices upstream into the decision-making process.
LEVER 2

Include language access in data collection.
LEVER 5

Ensure policies support patient advocacy so patients are never alone in their care.
LEVER 1

Ensure use of culturally tailored assessment tools.
LEVER 5

Establish processes to engage and partner with the community throughout the entire project— planning through implementation.
LEVER 4

Take Action

NEXT STEPS

1

Identify what resonates

Personal connections drive purpose. Recommend that everyone who reads the brief reflect on one personal story about themselves or someone they care about who has been affected by health inequities or DEI challenges. Consider sharing with one another.

→ **Great Storytelling Connects Employees to Their Work**
Harvard Business Review

2

Leverage networks and early adopters

Reach people who want to to be early adopters. Inspire action and help break down barriers where you can. Identify the formal and informal networks both inside and outside of your organization that would want to be a part of this change and unleash the energy.

→ **How to Start a Cultural Transformation**
Simon Sinek

3

Mind your organization's energy

Identify which areas are within your control and which require influence. Begin your problem solving where you can create momentum. The more complex problems can come later as you build bridges with your community and co-design together.

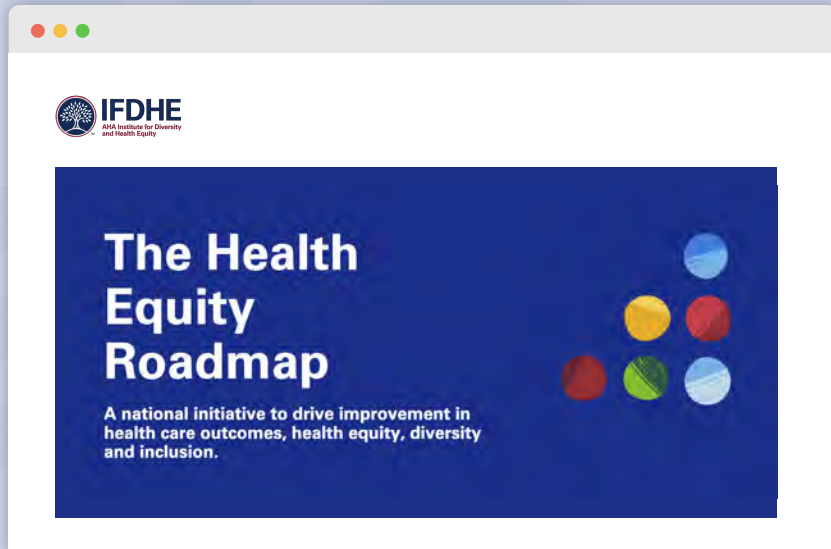→ **Wicked Problems**
Harvard Business Review

4

Dream big, start small

Big dreams inspire people and draw them into a cause. Balance that with small steps that create momentum and show that progress is possible. Celebrate progress!

→ **The Power of Small Wins**
Harvard Business Review

RESOURCES

Visit equity.aha.org to access our many health equity resources.

ROADMAP

The Health Equity Roadmap is a framework to help hospitals and health systems chart their own paths toward transformation to become more equitable and inclusive organizations.

→ **Visit the Roadmap**

ACTION LIBRARY

The Health Equity Action Library (HEAL) is a dynamic collection of tools and resources focusing on practical, how-to solutions to help hospitals and health systems of all sizes build more equitable and inclusive communities.

→ **Visit the Health Equity Action Library**

RESOURCE SERIES

The Health Equity Resource Series consists of toolkits designed to share evidence-based practices across four foundational pillars: data practices, cultural humility, DEI in leadership and governance, and sustainable community partnerships.

→ **Visit the Resource Series**

ROUND-TABLE

This collective space is for those who influence and implement their organizational equity agenda. Join for professional development webinars, in-person events, moral support and self-care strategies from health equity pioneers.

→ **Sign up for the Roundtable**

THANK YOU

On behalf of the American Hospital Association, we thank you for your contribution toward advancing health equity. We are all on the journey to position hospitals and health systems as contributors to a just society.

The Health Equity Innovation Summits, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, are designed as a collaborative space to develop solutions to implement the Health Equity Roadmap. For those who attended the Region 6 gathering, we hope your experience of the innovation process was inspiring. Your colleagues thank you for your insights and ingenuity.

The Institute for Diversity and Health Equity is committed to providing tools and resources to advance health equity and dismantling structural barriers that create disparities. This Regional Solution Brief is a tool for leading discussions, developing strategies and implementing ideas. The goal of the Health Equity Roadmap is to improve safety, diversify leadership, amplify inclusion and design workplace cultures that recruit and retain diverse talent to co-design solutions for health equity.

We look forward to seeing you in your journey as Virtual Community Participants in the Health Equity Roadmap. Visit **equity.aha.org**. Thank you for your commitment to health equity.

American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity and Health Equity (IFDHE)

This solution brief was developed and designed by Aspen Labs as a contributing consulting partner.