

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND
PATIENT SAFETY HEALTH EQUITY
INNOVATION SUMMIT

APRIL 2024

Co-Designing for Health Equity

A SUMMARY DOCUMENT
TO ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY



ABOUT

HEALTH EQUITY INNOVATION SUMMIT

Earlier this year, the American Hospital Association (AHA) convened hospital and health system leaders at the 2024 Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Health Equity Innovation Summit to co-design health equity solutions leveraging the AHA's Health Equity Roadmap as the guiding framework.

This solutions brief highlights the collective insights of a wide range of participants and the solutions that surfaced during the discussions. It is designed for hospitals and health systems to take the necessary steps to create the system changes needed to eliminate health disparities and advance health equity.

Disclaimer: The specific ideas captured within this solutions brief are reflective of the perspectives of the participants who attended the Health Equity Summit and do not necessarily reflect the official viewpoints or positions of the AHA and the Institute for Diversity and Health Equity (IFDHE).

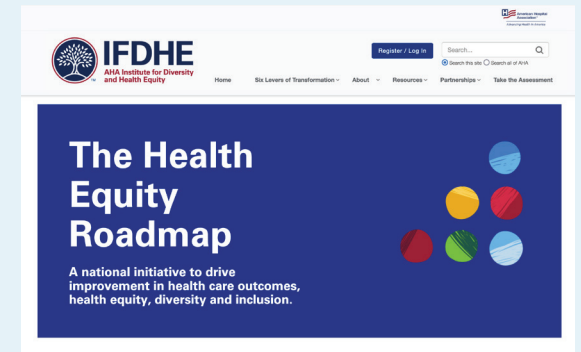
A COMPANION TO THE HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP

The Health Equity Roadmap is an innovative framework to help hospitals and health systems chart their own paths toward transformation — thus becoming more equitable and inclusive organizations. The AHA's vision is of a just society of healthy communities, where all individuals reach their highest potential for health. Through its Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, the AHA seeks to eliminate structural barriers that compromise diversity, equity and inclusion in hospitals and health care systems.

IFDHE operationalizes AHA's vision through transformative action, focusing on the production and dissemination of evidence-based interventions, provision of design-thinking opportunities, and the development of tools and resources for the field.


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](https://equity.aha.org)



Visit equity.aha.org to learn more about the Health Equity Roadmap.

THE SIX LEVERS OF TRANSFORMATION

-  Culturally Appropriate Patient Care
-  Equitable and Inclusive Organizational Policies
-  Collection and Use of Data to Drive Action
-  Diverse Representation in Leadership and Governance
-  Community Collaboration for Solutions
-  Systemic and Shared Accountability

2024 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND PATIENT SAFETY HEALTH EQUITY INNOVATION SUMMIT

Chapel Hill, N.C.

On Apr. 23, IFDHE hosted a Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Health Equity Innovation Summit in Chapel Hill. The summit was well attended by AHA members who collaborated to devise strategies for integrating health equity within their hospitals and health systems. This one-day event brought together C-suite hospital leaders and community members to identify challenges and co-develop solutions that accelerate health equity within their communities and organizations.

Around 40 members were in attendance for this convening and represented various hospitals and health systems, including UNC Health System, Duke University Health System, Atrium Health, Randolph Health, Novant Health as well as the North Carolina Healthcare Association.

Speakers included Dr. Aparna Kamath, associate professor of medicine at Duke University, Fernando Little, vice president and chief diversity officer at Atrium Health and Dr. Roxie Wells, former AHA board member and chief physician executive and strategy officer at Novant Health Coastal Region.

A fireside chat moderated by Dr. Chris DiRienzo, chief physician executive at the AHA and president of AHA's 501c(3) affiliate HRET, focused on the value of integrating innovation into quality and patient safety data initiatives, and how these initiatives lead to more equitable outcomes. A health equity policy update was provided by Akin Demehin, senior director of public policy at the AHA. This update covered the Biden Administration's focus on health equity, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Health Equity Framework and its health equity data strategy, as well as the Joint Commission Health Equity standards.



HERE IS WHAT WAS DISCUSSED THROUGHOUT THE DAY:

- Proper collection, analysis and utilization of data can help identify and remove structural barriers that compromise health outcomes. These collection processes can aid health care leaders in co-designing organizational practices that advance health equity and build just health ecosystems.
- Through standards and regulations, health care providers are being encouraged to collect much more equity-focused data. While this is directionally correct, it is important to make sure that this data are being standardized and that data transparency with different stakeholders is the expectation.
- Three focus areas for continued policy development include expanded data gathering and sharing, supporting flexible funding for social needs, and supporting organizations that aid in the collection and utilization of health data and metrics.



HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP LEVER DISCUSSION THEMES

At the Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Health Equity Innovation Summit, attendees were guided through an interactive session to accelerate health equity, using five levers from the Health Equity Roadmap framework.

Key takeaways from the discussions are summarized in the pages that follow.

LEVER

Culturally Appropriate Patient Care



Practicing cultural humility and activities that improve culturally appropriate care, such as language access and health literacy.

MAJOR THEMES:

Collaborate with the community to encourage feedback and enhance organizational processes around culturally appropriate patient care.

- Develop and engage patient family advisory councils (PFACs) to highlight patient and community stories.
- Create formal networks of community advocates and leaders to ensure health systems are addressing patients' concerns around culturally appropriate care.
- Establish review processes (with community partner input) that assess organizational policies that impact equitable practices.

Investigate barriers to advancing culturally appropriate patient care through assessments and root cause analyses of clinical processes.

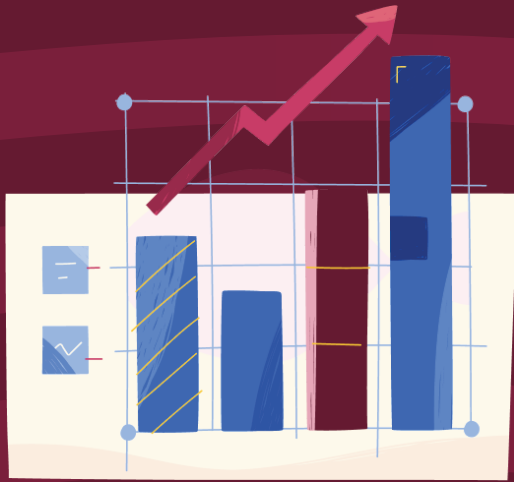
- Prioritize patient voices through routine feedback assessments and operationalizing elements of identified care needs (i.e., hiring enough ASL interpreters to accommodate the deaf patient community).
- Implement routine education for providers around health equity and DEI to help identify gaps among caregivers' understanding of culturally appropriate care.
- Evaluate organizational policies and procedures that may hinder culturally appropriate care delivery.

Establish and enforce an organizational culture that emphasizes the importance of health equity and DEI within care delivery operations.

- Standardize guidelines for providing culturally appropriate care across departments.
- Invest in health equity/DEI training resources including continuing education opportunities and mandatory DEI trainings.
- Develop continuous data collection and improvement processes for health equity and DEI initiatives.

LEVER

Collection and Use of Data to Drive Action



Using quantitative and qualitative data to inform, design and evaluate improvement strategies.

MAJOR THEMES:

Precise data collection and transparent dissemination of information can enhance health equity within hospitals and health systems.

- Show the impact of proper data collection through patient narratives that help highlight disparities in care.
- Standardize data collection practices and metrics for accurate analyses and comparisons of patient demographics and experiences.
- Work with senior leadership to incorporate health equity data collection efforts into annual operating plans.

Utilize community-driven data collection strategies for enhanced health care insights.

- Promote ongoing partnerships with community members to support long-term data collection initiatives.
- Create shared data repositories with community partners to increase data transparency.

Collaborate with the community leaders on innovative strategies to increase quantitative and qualitative data collection.

- Develop a standardized data collection framework with key health equity metrics that can be utilized across various hospitals and health systems in a given region.
- Develop human-centered data collection strategies in partnership with community leaders to gain insights into the lived experiences of diverse and underrepresented patient communities.

LEVER

Diverse Representation in Executive Leadership and Governance



Creating pathways that lead to diversifying leadership ranks to better reflect the populations and communities served.

MAJOR THEMES:

Implement mentorship programs to develop a more diverse workforce pipeline.

- Prioritize years of experience and professional skill sets (i.e., mentoring, coaching) over degree requirements when hiring and promoting individuals in an organization.
- Develop fellowship and additional job opportunities for those who have 'non-traditional' education/job experience.
- Establish transparent hiring pathways for internal personnel that map out necessary achievements, skills, and years of experience for promotional opportunities within an organization.

Create diverse employee-led resource groups and educational programs in the workplace.

- Allocate funds within budget for employee DEI trainings, continuing education credits and external certifications that aid in job progression.
- Encourage employee resource groups (ERGs) to engage directly with community members.
- Recognize the impact of cultural factors on shaping employee behaviors, expectations and advancement in the organization.

Implement transparency in the board criteria selection process to ensure fairness.

- Build trust and credibility among internal and external stakeholders by prioritizing transparency in board selection offers.
- Integrate health equity and DEI measures when assessing new candidates.
- Be intentional in creating a board that is representative of the communities served.

LEVER

Community Collaborations for Solutions



Advancing health equity and fostering healthy communities by investing in strong hospital-community partnerships.

MAJOR THEMES:

Identify and support opportunities for outside organizations and community members to engage with hospitals and health systems.

- Engage payers when developing solutions to improve access to care.
- Garner executive support and employee buy-in for community engagement projects.

Create a collaborative for providers and community members to share learnings and promising practices that can advance health equity, diversity and inclusion for the communities served.

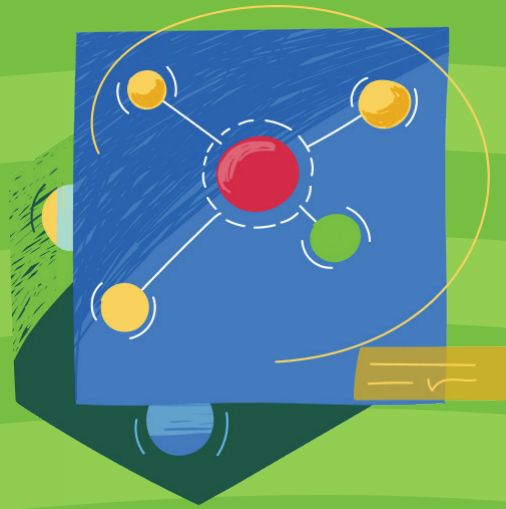
- Utilize a culturally appropriate care framework when developing new clinical standards that address unique patient needs.
- Create community outreach programs that develop trust between patients and service providers.
- Identify opportunities in addressing the societal factors that influence health within the community using data collected through Z-codes.

Work with higher education institutions to develop programs for future leaders in their local communities.

- Incorporate DEI and unconscious bias trainings, and culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) standards into school curriculums.
- Promote grant programs that aid students from diverse backgrounds entering the health care workforce.
- Partner with schools and community health workers to provide health education programming.

LEVER

Systemic and Shared Accountability



Creating infrastructure to maintain accountability to sustain DEI work across departments and service lines.

MAJOR THEMES:

Collaborate across departments to set system goals around health equity.

- Embed health equity measures within continuous patient quality initiatives.
- Mandate reporting requirements for health equity and DEI measures.
- Tie executive leadership incentives to equity and DEI outcomes identified by the community.

Leverage health equity champions to enforce accountability.

- Create a core team composed of physicians and other clinicians to address community concerns.
- Implement incentives for compliance, recognizing health care providers and staff who demonstrate advanced cultural awareness.
- Establish an employee resource group focused on specific health equity objectives.

Embrace conflicting perspectives to challenge existing organizational norms.

- Create a clear organizational vision and mission to guide the development of fair organizational policies.
- Encourage dialogue with external stakeholders to foster innovative and collaborative solutions.
- Prioritize a culture of continuous learning and development by embracing diverse perspectives in cross-organizational workgroups.

MEMBER TESTIMONIALS

Members provided commentary after the event through anonymous feedback forms:

“I enjoyed the fireside chat and the group work on the canvas. It was valuable to hear from leaders across our state and to brainstorm with like-minded teammates.”

“It was a worthwhile investment of my time and worthwhile to hear the innovative ideas along with updates on the CMS expectations and references around equity.”



Meeting Takeaways for Health Care Leaders

1 ALIGN YOUR ORGANIZATION'S HEALTH EQUITY WORK WITH FEDERAL AND REGULATORY POLICIES.

The AHA's Health Equity Roadmap aligns with the requirements and standards laid out by CMS and the Joint Commission. As a result, engaging with the AHA Health Equity Roadmap would be synergistic for many hospitals as they seek to both meet these requirements and accelerate their health equity work.

- [Crosswalk of AHA Health Equity Roadmap with Selected National Health Equity Quality Measures and Standards for Hospitals and Health Systems](#)

2 LEVERAGE NETWORKS AND EARLY ADOPTERS: JOIN THE AHA'S PATIENT SAFETY INITIATIVE.

Inspire action and help break down barriers where you can. The AHA invites member hospitals and health systems to join us in elevating our long-held commitment to patient safety to its next level through innovation, transformation and a foundational emphasis on culture of safety, health equity and health care workforce safety.

- [Patient Safety Initiative Member Registration](#)

3 GIVE YOUR HEALTH EQUITY JOURNEY A BOOST: CONNECT WITH AN EQUITY TRANSFORMATION PARTNER.

As your organization charts its own path toward equity transformation, you may wish to take advantage of the valuable insight, knowledge and resources available through Equity Transformation Partners. These highly reputable, qualified service practitioners in the diversity, inclusion and health equity space must demonstrate alignment with the Health Equity Roadmap framework.

- [AHA Equity Transformation Partners \(ETP\)](#)

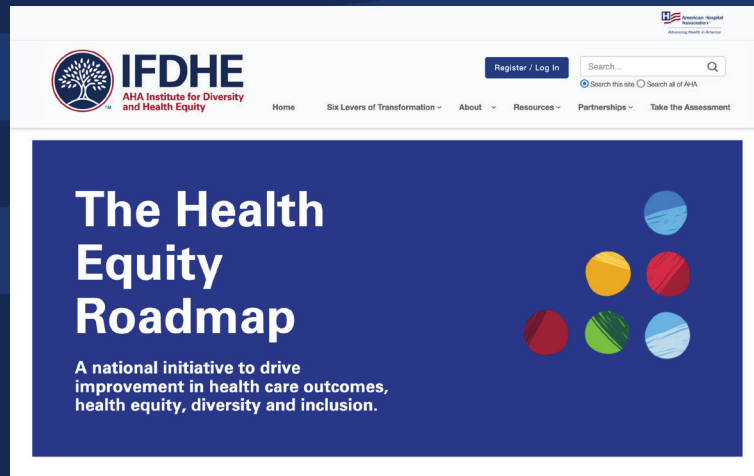
4 DREAM BIG, START SMALL.

Big dreams inspire people and draw them into a cause. Balance that with small steps that create momentum and show that progress is possible. And of course, don't forget to celebrate your progress along the way!

- [The Power of Small Wins](#)
Harvard Business Review

HEALTH EQUITY RESOURCES

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



HEALTH EQUITY 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](#)

IMPROVING QUALITY AND PATIENT SAFETY CASE STUDIES

As part of the AHA's Members in Action series, read more on how hospitals and health systems are utilizing various quality improvement and patient safety interventions to improve patient outcomes and address disparities.

→ [Visit the Case Studies](#)

ISSUE BRIEF: BUILDING A SAFE WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY — VIOLENCE MITIGATION IN A CULTURE OF SAFETY

This issue brief examines how hospitals' violence mitigation efforts can fit effectively into an organization's culture of safety strategy. The brief includes thought-provoking questions to facilitate discussion of how violence mitigation can be integrated seamlessly into the larger framework of patient and worker safety initiatives, supporting an overall culture of safety.

→ [View the Detailed Report](#)

HEALTH EQUITY 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](#)

THANK YOU

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.

On behalf of the American Hospital Association, we thank you for your contribution toward advancing health equity. 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.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing health equity in your communities!

