

**AHA RURAL HEALTH
CONFERENCE
INNOVATION SUMMIT**

FEB 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 AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference 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).

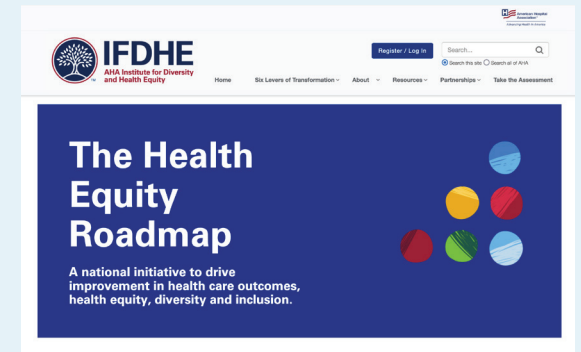
A COMPANION TO THE HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP

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 AHA RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

Orlando, Fla.

On Feb. 11, 2024, during AHA's Rural Health Conference in Orlando, Fla., members collaborated to devise strategies for integrating health equity within their hospitals and health systems. This pre-conference workshop brought together hospital and health system leaders to explore challenges and co-develop solutions to accelerate health equity within their communities and organizations. Over 60 members attended, representing rural hospitals and health systems from across the country.

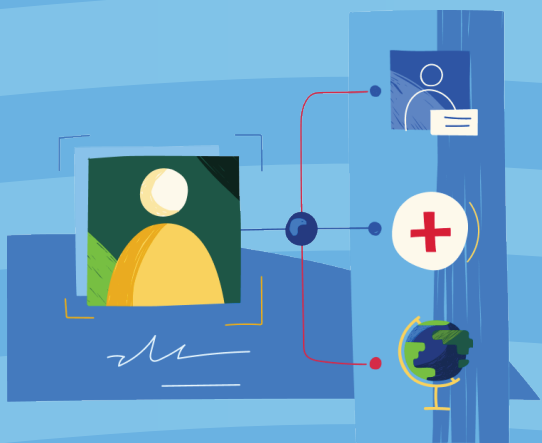
HEALTH EQUITY ROADMAP LEVER DISCUSSION THEMES

At the Rural Summit pre-conference workshop, many ideas were generated and discussed. Attendees focused on three levers of transformation from the Health Equity Roadmap.

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:

Establish a Safe and Comfortable Environment for Diverse Populations

- Provide ongoing cultural awareness training for all staff, including clinical, administrative and support personnel. Cover topics such as implicit bias training, communication skills and cultural awareness.
- Ensure that all patient materials, such as consent forms, educational brochures and signage, are available in multiple languages.
- Adapt clinical practices and health interventions to be culturally relevant and sensitive, using input from organizations with close ties to the community.

Have an Open and Honest Patient and Provider Communication

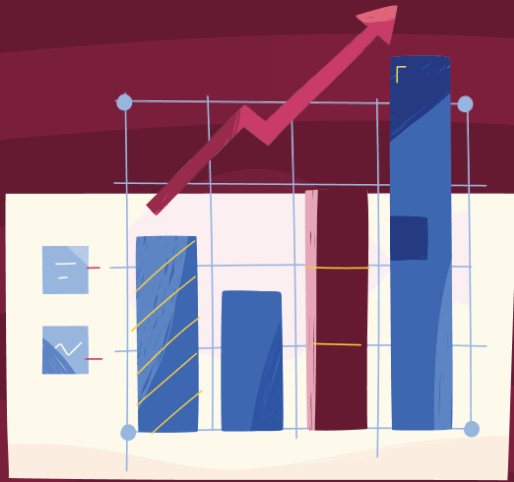
- Include patients' needs and preferences during intake and care processes.
- Providers should be trained in active listening, including how to maintain a non-judgmental tone and body language.
- Invite patients to ask questions and express concerns during the patient visit.

Collaborate with Community Partners to Improve Patient Experience

- Survey patients about their experiences when engaging with health care providers and analyze the responses.
- Partner with community organizations to understand how patients view/experience the hospital and health care providers in the community.

LEVER

Collection and Use of Data to Drive Action



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

MAJOR THEMES:

Build Upon Existing Data Collection Methods

- Train staff on standardized approaches for collecting accurate and complete data, including demographic information with questions about identity (i.e., sexual identity, gender, and cultural background).
- Optimize EHR (electronic health records) systems to capture comprehensive data on race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status and societal factors that influence health.
- Use mobile health applications that leverage SMS-based surveys to reach underserved populations and collect real-time data.

Improve Data Education Across the Organization

- Provide an overview of health equity, including definitions, key concepts and the importance of addressing health disparities for the health care workforce.
- Offer courses on data analysis techniques specific to health equity, including stratification by demographic variables.
- Focus on the importance of collecting accurate patient data during clinical encounters.

Thorough Standing Reviews and Plans of Improvement

- Incorporate Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) standards to achieve measurable results and benefits from implemented strategies.
- Form a task force with representatives from clinical, administrative and community members that focus on the importance of collecting comprehensive patient data.
- Establish mechanisms for community feedback to continuously refine and improve data collection and analysis efforts.

LEVER

Community Collaborations for Solutions



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

MAJOR THEMES:

Understand the Patient Population

- In partnership with community organizations, distribute surveys to gather information about health status, health care access and specific health concerns of the population.
- Include questions about socio-economic factors, lifestyle and cultural practices that may impact health care decisions.
- Organize focus group discussions with community members to gain deeper insights into their health care experiences and needs.

Leverage Financial Resources

- Apply for grants from government agencies, foundations and philanthropic organizations that focus on health equity.
- Cultivate relationships with donors who have an interest in health equity.
- Invest in community resources such as mobile clinics, family support, food pantries, children's care and transportation.

Strengthen Partnerships to Co-Design Solutions

- Involve community members from the start in planning and decision-making processes.
- Hold regular meetings and open forums with community members to discuss health equity issues and potential solutions.
- Include representatives from various community sectors such as local businesses, schools and faith-based groups in the open forum discussions.

Meeting Takeaways for Health Care Leaders

1

IDENTIFY WHAT RESONATES.

Personal connections drive purpose. Reflect on one personal story about yourself or someone you care about who has been affected by health inequities or DEI challenges. Consider sharing with your networks to help impact change for future care processes.

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

2

LEVERAGE NETWORKS AND EARLY ADOPTERS.

Reach out to leaders who are willing to be early adopters in the work. Identify opportunities for leaders to network in and outside the organization to gather promising practices from the field.

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

3

MIND YOUR ORGANIZATION'S ENERGY.

Determine which areas of the organization you can directly control, and which areas require indirect influence. Start by addressing issues where you can quickly generate momentum and develop long-term strategies to address more complex issues.

- **Wicked-Problem Solvers**
Harvard Business Review

4

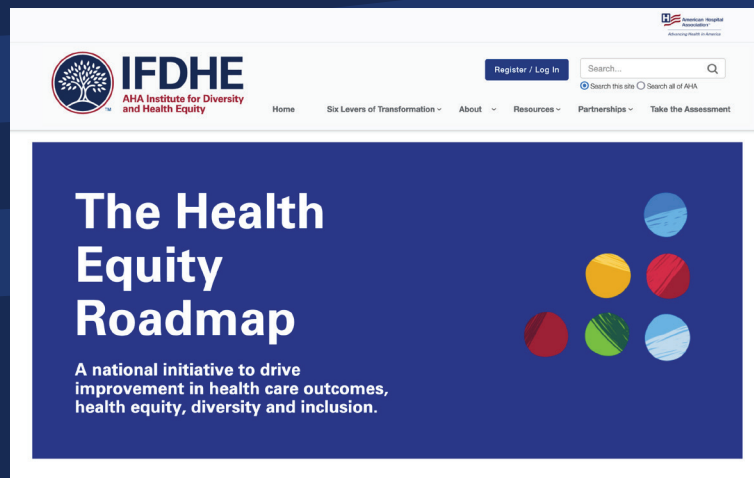
DREAM BIG, START SMALL.

Big dreams inspire people and draw them into a cause. Balance that with small steps that create momentum and show that progress is possible. 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](#)

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](#)

HEALTH EQUITY 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](#)

INFLUENCERS ROUNDTABLE

The Health Equity Influencers Roundtable (HEIR) is an open group to support hospital leaders who are charged with advancing DEI at their organization. Members of the group benefit from professional development, networking for peer learning and moral support.

→ [Sign up for the Roundtable](#)

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.

For those who attended the pre-conference workshop, we hope your experience of the innovation process was inspiring. Your colleagues thank you for your insights and ingenuity.

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

