INCREASING EQUITY AT THE WORKPLACE

EMPLOYEE RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS SYSTEM TOOLKIT

EQUITY

OVERVIEW: EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS AND LEVERS FOR CHANGE

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WORK EQUITY

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Work Equity is an initiative of the Center for Social Innovation at the Boston College School of Social Work.
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Employee Resources and Supports System

Introduction to Our Approach: Employment Systems and Levers for Change

Work Equity at Boston College has prepared toolkits to help employers strengthen the equity of employment systems at the workplace.

As indicated in Figure 1, we have selected 10 employment systems for equity assessments. This Toolkit focuses on the equity of the **Employee Resources and Supports System**.

> - Employee resources and supports refer to information and programs that help diverse employees to connect to other organizational members and to fully participate in organizational life.
> - These resources and programs might include: employee resource groups/affinity groups, peer coaches, special events and "fairs" to recognize the members of groups that might be underrepresented at the workplace (for example, PRIDE week, Bring Your Children to Work Day, etc.).

We recognize that your organization has access to seven mechanisms that have the potential to address some of the root causes of inequities embedded in your organization's employment systems. We refer to these mechanisms as **Levers for Change.** (See Figure 1.)
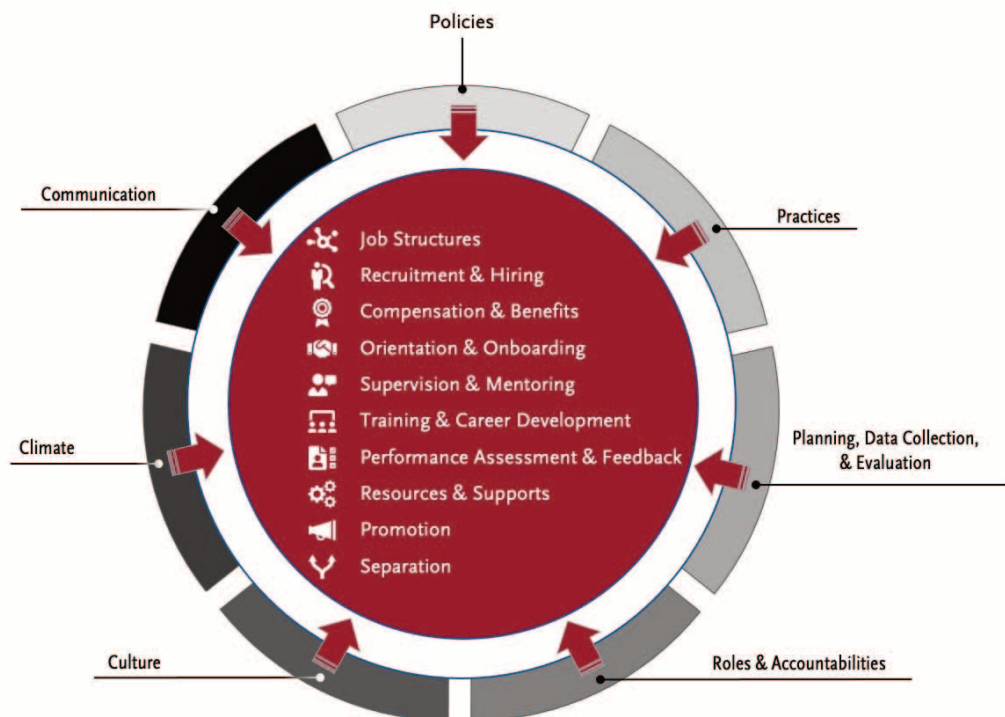

Figure 1: Employment Systems and Levers for Change

We consider Levers for Change to be different ways that your organization can strengthen the equity of your Employee Resources and Supports System.

Employee Resources and Supports System

We use the following definitions of the Levers for Change:

Policies

Formal (typically written) policies that establish expectations for various processes, including the equity of employment systems, such as policies that govern recruitment and hiring.

Practices

Written or unwritten specification of steps used to complete tasks, including activities that could affect the equity of employment systems, such as "best practices" related to the supervision of employees.

Planning and Evaluation

Planning, data collection and interpretation of information related to the equity of employment systems, such as conducting "audits" of compensation.

Assignment of Roles and Accountabilities

Designation of one (or more) person(s) who is accountable for Diversity-Equity-Inclusion (DEI) activities related to the equity of one (or more) employment system(s), such as the selection of an HR person to assess the equity of annual employee performances.

Workplace Culture

Values and principles espoused by the organization, including values related to Diversity-Equity-Inclusion, such as statements by top managers about the importance of workforce diversity for innovation.

Workplace Climate

Employees' sense of their everyday work experiences, particularly experiences that affect perceptions of inclusion (that is, a sense of: belonging to the organization, being treated with respect, etc.), such as being invited to offer opinions about decisions that affect employees' jobs.

Communications

Access to information, including information about the equity of employment systems, such as information about possible promotion opportunities.

We will re-visit the Levers for Change for the Employee Resources and Supports System in Steps 3 and 4 of this Toolkit.

Steps of Your Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative

The Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Toolkit is organized into 5 steps. (See Figure 2.)
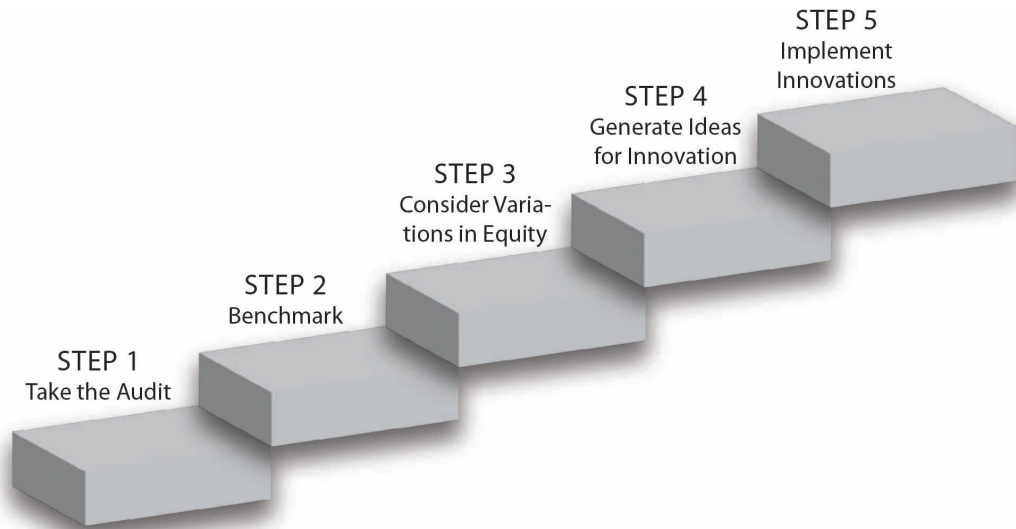
Figure 2: Steps in the Employee Resources and Supports System Toolkit

Each of the steps in the Toolkit reflects a design thinking process:
- **gathering information** about equity issues and opportunities (Step 1: Take the Audit),
- gaining insight about possible **root causes** of inequities (Step 2: Benchmark),
- getting **deeper understanding** of employees' experiences (Step 3: Consider Variations in Equity),
- **brainstorming and refining ideas** for innovation in your Employee Resources and Supports System (Step 4: Generate Ideas for Innovation), and
- **pilot testing** (Step 5: Implement Innovations).

Roles and Responsibilities for Your Equity Assessment

It is possible that one person – for example, a department manager – might decide to work on some or all the 5 steps of the Toolkit as a way to:

1. systematically think about the equity of the Employee Resources and Supports System, and
2. get ready to share ideas about the equity of Employee Resources and Supports System and garner the support of top leaders of the organization.

However, organizations that want to make (or renew) a commitment to innovations in DEI will probably find it important to engage a group of people (possibly from different areas of the organization) in each of the Toolkit activities.

Employee Resources and Supports System

Your organization should make decisions about assigning the following roles and responsibilities:

- **Leader(s) of Your Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative:** Typically, the Leader will:
(1) invite/select people to participate in the Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative,
(2) manage the project (for example, scheduling meetings and preparing materials),
(3) monitor progress with the five steps in the Toolkit, and
(4) ensure that communications related to the Equity Initiative are prepared and distributed to the appropriate audiences.

- **Members of Your Equity Initiative Committee:** The Leader(s) of the your Equity Initiative might decide to invite the members of an existing committee (such as a Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Committee) to participate in the Equity Initiative. In some situations, however, it might be necessary for the Leader(s) to expand the membership of an existing committee or to form an entirely new task force or committee. The members of the committee should have diverse perspectives and experiences that could be relevant to the work.

- **Stakeholders in Your Equity Initiative:** The Leader(s) of your Equity Initiative might want to periodically consult with and/or get feedback from employees at the organization who are not officially on the Equity Initiative Committee. For example, supervisors might have interesting perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of different aspects of the organization's Employee Resources and Supports System.

- **Top Managers at Your Organization:** It will be the responsibility of top managers to communicate their support for the Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative and to articulate how equity at the workplace aligns with key business goals and strategies.

The Process

Organizations might complete the five steps over several months.

Directions:
The Equity Initiative Leader(s) can use Worksheet #1 (next page) to clarify target dates for the completion of each step. This worksheet should be reviewed by the Equity Initiative Committee and adjustments should be made, as needed.

Employee Resources and Supports System

Employee Resources and Supports System Toolkit Worksheet #1

Sample Workplan for Completing Tasks for the Employee Resources and Supports System Toolkit

Step/ Task	People Involved/Responsible	Target Date for Completion
Form the Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative Committee		
Prepare a letter/email inviting employees to join the Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative.		
Confirm the membership of the Employee Resources and Supports System Equity Initiative Committee.		
Step 1: Take the Audit		
Distribute questions to people who will take survey. (Worksheet #2)		
Aggregate the responses. (Worksheet #3)		
Step 2: Benchmark		
Copy average scores onto Worksheet. (Worksheet #4)		
Compare your organization's scores to data from the National Study of Workplace Equity. (Worksheet #5)		
Discuss the results of your benchmarking with the Equity Initiative Committee.		
Step 3: Consider Variations in Equity		
Convene a meeting of the Equity Initiative Committee to discuss Worksheet #6.		
Step 4: Generate Ideas for Innovation		
Convene a meeting(s) to generate ideas for innovation.		
Determine strengths of Levers for Change. (Worksheet #7)		
Consider innovations in Levers for Change in the Employee Resources and Supports System. (Worksheet #8)		
Consider ideas for employee resources and supports practice innovations. (Worksheet #9)		
Prioritize ideas for innovation in the Employee Resources and Supports System. (Worksheet #10)		
Step 5: Implement Innovations		
Specify metrics to measure possible change associated with the pilot of innovation. (Worksheet #11)		
Consider impact of employee resources and supports innovation on other Levers for Change. (Worksheet #12)		
Implement pilot.		
Monitor implementation process.		
Convene meeting to consider possible implications for the equity of other employment systems.		
Communicate outcomes associated with pilot. (Worksheet #13)		

Employee Resources and Supports System

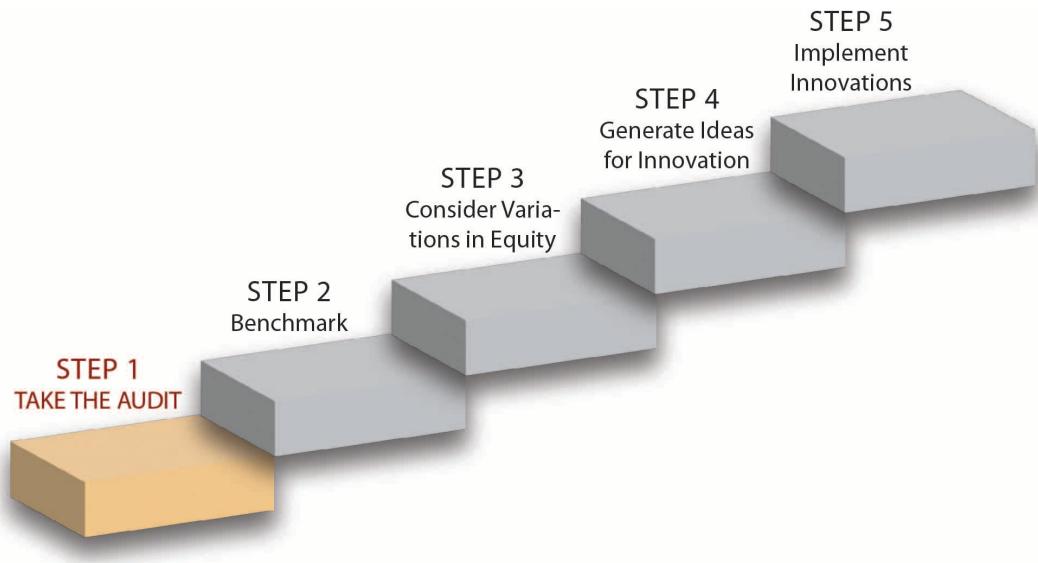☞ Go to Step 1 of the Employee Resources and Supports System Toolkit: Take the Audit.

Figure 3: Step 1 of the Employee Resources and Supports System Toolkit