



DEVELOPING EQUITY STATEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A Hanover Research (Hanover) partner is focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across the district and is developing a district DEI statement that speaks to its short-term and long-term DEI goals. Hanover has therefore prepared the following research brief that draws from secondary information to examine the process of developing DEI statements as well as best or common practices for statement content and structure. This brief also reviews processes for developing an action plan aligned to DEI statements.

KEY FINDINGS



An effective DEI statement aligns with the district's overall mission and vision, uses clear and specific language, and establishes a rationale or objective for DEI work. An institutional equity statement ensures that all stakeholders understand the institution's commitment to equity and that the equity initiatives of individual units and departments align with the institution's overall values and equity goals. An effective DEI statement communicates the importance of DEI to the organization, defines terms related to DEI, and outlines the organization's plan to support DEI.



Districts should support a DEI statement with a detailed action plan. Action plans build on equity statements by identifying a theory of change, and they explain how the organization will achieve the commitments embedded in these statements. These action plans should emphasize equity-mindedness and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement and shared ownership across all departments and stakeholders.



Districts should engage diverse stakeholders in developing the DEI statement and action plan. Engaging stakeholders in the planning process ensures that stakeholder perspectives are considered and helps organizations communicate their goals for equity to stakeholders. By using a process that reflects the values on which the statement will be developed, a district encourages buy-in and ensures that the perspectives driving DEI initiatives are truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

SECTION I: BEST PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING DEI STATEMENTS

In this section, Hanover reviews the secondary literature examining best practices for developing DEI statements and plans. Equity plans support government agencies, including school districts, in correcting longstanding inequities in outcomes for diverse stakeholders so as to fulfill their duty to their constituents.¹ An agency-wide equity statement ensures that all stakeholders understand the agency's commitment to equity and that the equity initiatives of individual units and departments align with the agency's overall values and equity goals.²

EFFECTIVE DEI STATEMENTS

An effective DEI statement communicates the importance of DEI to the organization, defines terms related to DEI, and outlines the organization's plan to support DEI.³ DEI statements should support the functions listed in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Functions of DEI Statements

Highlight the importance of diversity to the organization and its alignment with the organization's mission and vision

Communicate the benefits of diversity and inclusion for the organization

Identify specific areas of diversity, such as socioeconomic or racial diversity, valued by the organization

Source: Independent School Management⁴

Educational institutions can assess the degree to which public statements reflect a commitment to equity using the Five Guiding Principles for Equity by Design developed by the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education.⁵ These principles, listed in Figure 1.2 on the following page, reflect an equity-mindedness approach that emphasizes the assumption of responsibility for equitable outcomes by the institution and the communication of high expectations for students.⁶

¹ Curren, R. et al. "Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-To Manual." Local and Regional Government Alliance on Racial Equity. p. 4. <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GARE-Racial-Equity-Action-Plans.pdf>

² Ibid., p. 20.

³ Heaslip, E. "How to Write a Diversity and Inclusion Statement." U.S. Chamber of Commerce, August 18, 2020. <https://www.uschamber.com/co/co/start/strategy/writing-diversity-and-inclusion-statement>

⁴ Chart contents adapted from: "Creating Your School's Diversity Statement." Independent School Management, October 4, 2020. <https://isminc.com/advisory/publications/the-source/creating-your-schools-diversity-statement>

⁵ Bragg, D.D. "Assessing Your College's Commitment to Equity. Coaching for Change." Community College Research Initiatives, 2019. p. 1. <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=equity+statement&ft=on&id=ED608085>

⁶ "Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design." Center for Urban Education, Rossier School of Education University of Southern California, July 2019. p. 3. https://cue.usc.edu/files/2019/11/CUE_Equity-Design-Principles1.pdf

Figure 1.2: Center for Urban Education Guiding Principles for Equity By Design

1	Clarity in language, goals, and measures is vital to effective equitable practices.
2	'Equity-mindedness' should be the guiding paradigm for language and action.
3	Equitable practice and policies are designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of student's learning—not to treat all students the same.
4	Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness.
5	Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle.

Source: Center for Urban Education⁷

An effective DEI statement also aligns with the organization's overall mission and vision.⁸ In doing so, the statement enables decision-makers to use the values expressed in the statement to guide decisions that impact diversity and ensures that these decisions align with the organization's mission.⁹ Decision-makers should use the DEI statement to integrate equity into decisions about core district operations and explicitly address equity as a core component of all district initiatives.¹⁰

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Action plans build on equity statements by identifying a theory of change that explains how the organization will achieve the commitments embedded in these statements.¹¹ The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) recommends that organizations align their DEI plans with their overall strategy and objectives and secure buy-in from senior organizational leaders.¹² Organizations can demonstrate the need for a DEI plan and develop a plan that meets their individual needs using the process outlined in Figure 1.3

Figure 1.3: Process for Developing an Organizational DEI Initiative

Step 1: Data collection and analysis to determine the need for change	Step 2: Strategy design to match business objectives	Step 3: Implementation of the initiative	Step 4: Evaluation and continuing audit of the plan
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Source: Society for Human Resource Management¹³

During the data collection phase of the planning process, organizations engage with stakeholders to collect qualitative and quantitative data on the current state of equity. Engaging stakeholders in the planning process ensures that stakeholder perspectives are considered and helps organizations communicate their goals for equity to stakeholders. Planning teams use these data to develop an action plan that includes the key elements listed in Figure 1.4.¹⁴

⁷ Chart contents taken verbatim from: Ibid., p. 1.

⁸ Heaslip, Op. cit.

⁹ "Creating Your School's Diversity Statement," Op. cit.

¹⁰ "Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design," Op. cit., p. 6.

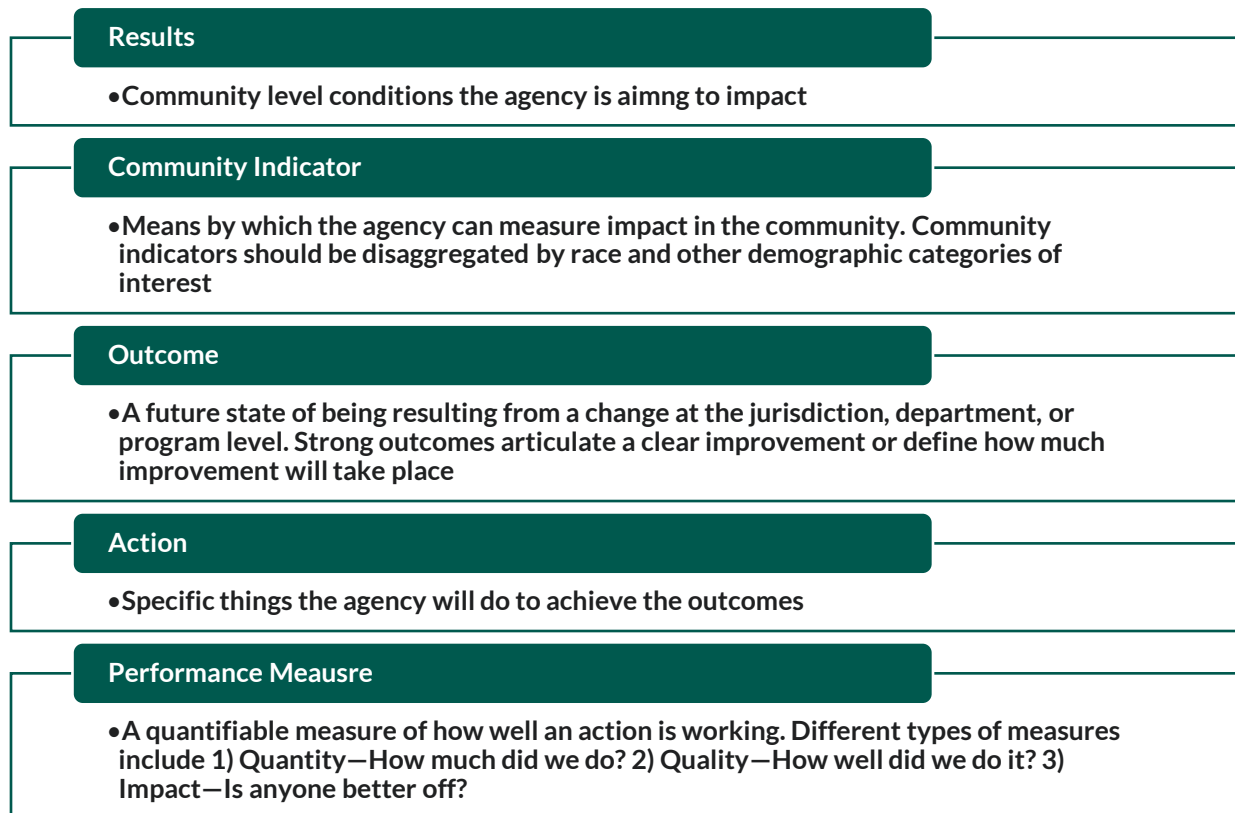
¹¹ Curren et al., Op. cit., p. 6.

¹² "Guide to Developing a Strategic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan." Society for Human Resource Management. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-forms/pages/guide-to-developing-a-strategic-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-plan.aspx>

¹³ Chart contents taken verbatim from: "How to Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative." Society for Human Resource Management, July 31, 2020. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/how-to-develop-a-diversity-and-inclusion-initiative.aspx>

¹⁴ Curren et al., Op. cit., pp. 4–5.

Figure 1.4: Essential Components of Equity Action Plans



Source: Local and Regional Government Alliance on Racial Equity¹⁵

¹⁵ Chart contents taken verbatim from: Ibid., p. 5.

ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

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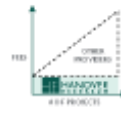
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