

Embedding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) into your organisation: the HCA's framework to advancing your DE&I journey

Authentically navigating together for better

DE&I - an essential enabler of recovery, resilience and re-imagination.¹

Over the past 20+ months, we have witnessed the best of times and the worst of times, with the highs and lows of the COVID-19 pandemic and great political unrest.¹⁻³

In the best of times, we have seen that the power of collaboration has been key to vaccine success and in the worst of time we have seen health inequities/disparities highlighted in certain populations (e.g., low-income or middle-income countries and underserved/marginalised communities).⁴

The widespread impact of the pandemic on individuals, healthcare systems and economies has highlighted the interconnectivity in healthcare - how we can benefit by all coming together with a common goal. It is only by leveraging and accelerating our 'collective genius' - i.e., embracing diverse experiences, thinking and voices with a view to creating breakthrough solutions - that we can tackle today's most pressing challenges - and those that we have yet to face.⁵

Recent events have highlighted the urgent need for our strong future foundation to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) efforts - recognising the importance of individualism - ironically the one thing we all have in common. DE&I efforts have the power to enhance insights, agility and connections that uniquely deliver impact, and accelerate progress and change. In fact, DE&I is a powerful enabler of business performance.¹

The HCA has committed to placing DE&I at the heart of our own work. And we encourage all healthcare organisations to put DE&I at the forefront of your ethos; for DE&I to drive everything we all do - internally, in our operations, our teams, and our work, and externally in our partnering and societal interactions.



**“
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at different stages
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but it is a journey
we must all make.
”**

This HCA framework encourages us all to move beyond conversations to actions that have an impact, both in our internal and external interactions.

As we move into 2022 and beyond, the HCA will be running sessions on how DE&I efforts can be implemented in practice. The HCA hopes to cultivate, empower and celebrate inclusive organisations that value diverse demographics, experiences and thinking, and will share best practice to enable examples and opportunities to be emulated.

What is diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I)?

It seems obvious that everyone is entitled to a fair and just opportunity - yet this is not reality. Achieving this goal requires focus on fostering diverse perspectives by putting DE&I at the forefront of an organisation's essence.⁶ And just talking about it is not enough; employees need to feel and perceive equality and fairness of opportunity in their workplace for it to translate into the multiple benefits that DE&I brings.¹

But what is DE&I?

DE&I efforts seek to create meaningful, systemic change towards more equitable environments.⁷

“
...how could you possibly represent your customers if you don't deeply understand them, if you don't have empathy, and literally if your company does not reflect them.²
 ”

Diversity	Equity	Inclusion
<p>The characteristics with which we are born and gain through experience, both seen and unseen, that make us different and similar.⁸</p>	<p>The outcome of diversity, inclusion, and anti-oppression wherein all people have fair access, opportunity, resources, and power to thrive with consideration for and elimination of historical and systemic barriers and privileges that cause oppression.⁸</p>	<p>The actions taken to understand, embrace, and leverage the unique strengths and facets of identity for all individuals so that all feel welcomed, valued, and supported.⁸</p>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion commitment states:⁶

"We recognize that individuals' perspectives are shaped by a host of factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, familial status, education, religion, legal status, military service, political affiliation, geography, and other personal and professional experiences.

We know that the presence of diverse perspectives alone is not sufficient. Therefore, we also are committed to creating inclusive environments where all individuals are encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences. We believe that only through valuing our differences and similarities, and remaining vigilant in advancing equity, will we be able to maintain an equitable workplace and actively pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We commit to being continuous learners and working alongside others to cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion."



It is this strong sense of belonging for all people that the HCA encourages us all to achieve.

Why does DE&I matter in healthcare communications?

DE&I matters everywhere – in healthcare and beyond.

We all need to have an organisation that can continually adapt and innovate over time.⁵ We all need to create a community that is willing and able to generate new ideas.⁴ We all need to be part of a community in which anything can be disclosed and supported, and in which we all have equal opportunities. And all this emerges from foundations built on the values encompassed by DE&I.

The ‘why should we do this?’ has multiple responses.

Of course, it is the right thing to do but it offers individuals and companies so many more benefits:

- DE&I fosters innovation, creativity, and empathy in ways that homogeneous environments rarely do.⁸ Susan Hill wrote in the Harvard Business review: *“In the way they behave and structure the organizations where talented people work, leaders can draw out the slices of genius in each individual and assemble them into innovations that represent collective genius. The question is not “How do I make innovation happen?” but, rather, “How do I set the stage for it to happen?”*⁵
- As noted in the 2020 McKinsey report ‘Why Diversity Matters’, the likelihood of diverse companies (e.g., according to gender and race) being more profitable than non-diverse companies has increased significantly since the 2015 report.¹
- Companies who welcome diverse talents and include multiple perspectives emerge stronger – not only from the pandemic but for the future.¹
- DE&I brings a sense of belonging and true inclusion² – whether that be in an organisation, a community or a society. And it is not only about race and gender; all under-represented groups must be considered, such as the neurodiverse.² Without a sense of community, ideas cannot flourish, partnerships cannot function and innovations cannot happen.⁵

“
A diverse and inclusive health care workforce - both in clinical and non-clinical/corporate settings - can help improve trust and empathy, and strengthen the connection with patients and communities
”

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In healthcare specifically, the strong connection has been demonstrated between DE&I in a workforce and improved health equity outcomes among patients.⁷

Addressing racism and other biases advances health equity and can give organisations a competitive advantage, helping them attract the best talent and elevate their reputation, as well as enhance quality of care from the organisation outwards.⁵ It is by embracing the 'lived experience' - direct, personal experience of a particular issue or service - brought by different people that we can truly understand future patient cohorts and future healthcare audiences.⁹

Of course, we do not yet know many of the healthcare challenges that lie ahead - but we must have a workforce, outputs and partners in place to meet any challenges and opportunities. DE&I efforts have the power to enhance insights, agility and connections to uniquely deliver impact in the same way that collective genius has allowed us to accelerate vaccine development and delivery.

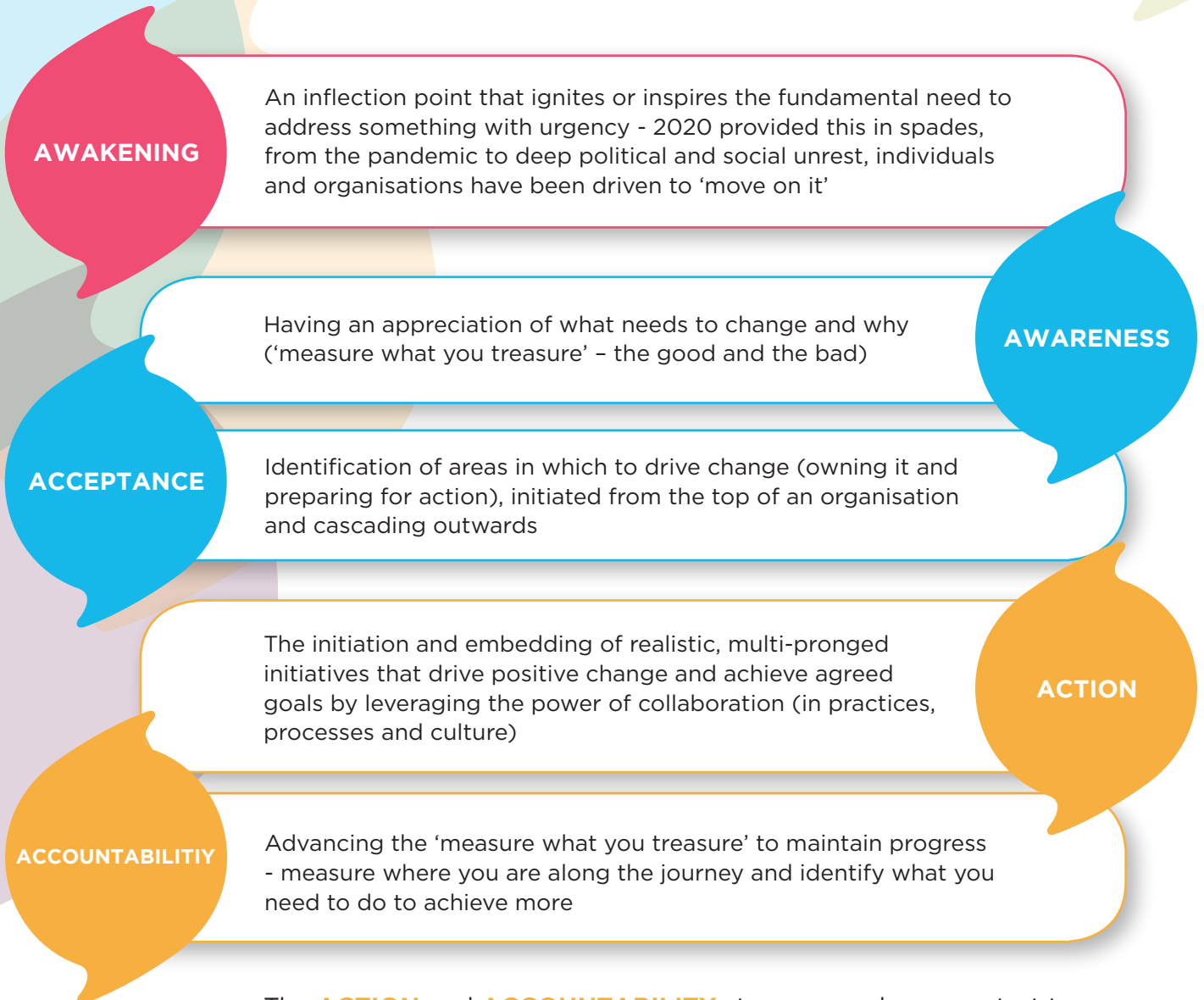


Using the 5 ‘A’s to advance your DE&I journey

We know from behaviour change modelling that an individual’s readiness to act in a healthier, more positive way is a journey – made up of different stages.¹⁰

This applies also with all of our DE&I journeys.

With an appreciation that every organisation is at a different stage of their DE&I journey,^{2,3} it is helpful to consider the framework for positive change in five stages:



The **ACTION** and **ACCOUNTABILITY** stages are where we start to make and measure actual changes.

Use the HCA roadmap [see next page] to determine your own actions and measures, and advance your DE&I efforts.

The journey towards authentically embedding DE&I practices into an organisation's internal and external interactions takes time. There is no one size fits all, and no single approach for DE&I.³

What is clear is that DE&I is not about one person in an organisation; this needs to be driven from the top, but everyone in every organization must be engaged.^{3,11} It should be embedded in every aspect of your organization.

Wherever you are in your DE&I journey, once you have got to the **ACTION** and **ACCOUNTABILITY** stages of your 5 'A's' thought processes, the HCA recommends that you use our roadmap of 'avenues' to guide you on moving forward.

This involves scrutinising four key 'avenues' in your organisation: operations, culture, work and partnerships and societal interactions – and seeing where and how DE&I efforts could be embedded, improved and assessed.²

The HCA DE&I Roadmap

Steer

Overview

Avenue 1

Operations

How you operate your internal systems of recruitment, retention, managing individual needs, ensuring policies and processes are in place for your DE&I efforts

Avenue 2

Culture

How your people function to live by your company's DE&I efforts internally

Avenue 3

Work

How you deliver the work that reflects your DE&I values – ensuring a diverse customer base and integration of lived experiences.

Avenue 4

Partnerships/societal interactions

How you select partners with similar values and live by your DE&I efforts in all external interactions and ultimately bring change to your diverse customer base and

Quick wins

- Undertake audits to establish your DE&I baseline;^{2,11}
- Show commitment; ensure your people know about your commitment to DE&I and engage with your teams about your DE&I policy. Make DE&I enterprisewide – not a separate department⁸
- Agree a clear vision for moving forward

Measuring Progress

- There are steps along the way that you can be proud of achieving, and measure
- Set targets for improvement, e.g., to implement at least 50% of the targets you state in an agreed time
- Align internally on interventions to allow you to meet the set targets
- Have a policy in place to assess if needs are being met, e.g., 3-monthly

What should leadership be doing?

- Provide clear support to teams
- Actively work to meet set targets and sharing what good looks like
- Ensure staff, suppliers and partners reflect DE&I values
- Use analytics tools to build visibility in processes and outputs
- Identify what is not achieving target and why, and changing the process
- Challenge clients and partners within their business needs to include DE&I

- Implement a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory behaviour of any kind¹
- Foster belonging through unequivocal support for multivariate diversity, in which the culture is such that all employees feel they can bring their whole selves to work¹
- Conduct an accessibility audit across your site⁶

- Ensure your team reflects the audience groups you are supporting, or reflects the city you are working in
- Ensure your recruitment process allows for a diverse workforce/do your team members feel protected?⁶
- Consider special populations; are their needs being met, is access inclusive?
- Share best practice so learnings and opportunities can be shared

- Ensure your teams always present your DE&I strategy to all clients, as well as their marketing/business strategy proposals
- Build DE&I into all your briefs, including writing, creative and visual
- Ensure products and services are accessible and supportive of all populations' health⁴
- Ensure the work that comes from the company culture is inclusive²

- Engage a diverse pool of consultants, contractors and suppliers with similar values to yours,⁶ and an agenda that drives DE&I⁴
- Challenge partners to be transparent about initiatives and held responsible for upholding DE&I principles⁴
- Convene stakeholders outside your organisation to address DE&I challenges together as a sector

Examples

In reality, your journey along each 'avenue' may be advancing at different paces.

Moving forward on your personal DE&I journey

Diversity, equity and inclusion is not a tick-box exercise; it must be embedded in our healthcare organisations so that we can better understand and meet the needs of our customers and patients, and so that anything can be disclosed and supported within our organisations. Initiatives and activities must be measurable, sustainable and meaningful.⁸

DE&I is a journey; whilst we are all at different stages of this journey, we must all progress our journey along each parts of the roadmap so that we can all achieve greater things together.

The power of collaboration must enable us to 'measure what we treasure' -be representative of all people - and enable MedComms to lead the business world in DE&I efforts.

As we work to embed this essential thinking more across MedComms, it will be important to identify quick wins, embrace the power of collaboration, and avoid tried and tested pitfalls.

We will not all achieve DE&I perfection instantly, but we must focus on prioritising progress over perfection.

This must now be embedded in everything all of us do, and the HCA is here to support you on your journey.

Let this framework be the start of a great journey for us all.

Resources to support your DE&I journey

- Hunt V, et al. McKinsey and Company. Diversity wins. How inclusion matters. May 2020.
- Atkins P, et al. Amplifying Black voices. Deloitte Insights. 22 July 2021.
- Truelove C. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Special Feature: Agencies Continue DE&I Journey. PharmaLive. Available at: <https://www.pharmalive.com/diversity-equity-inclusion-special-feature-agencies-continue-dei-journey/>. Accessed February 2022.
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More information to support the DE&I journey can be found at: the-hca.org/DEI

Contact the HCA at: info@the-hca.org



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11. Vaughan N. How diversity, equity and inclusion can influence healthcare. Relias. 20 September 2020.

