

Balancing Business and Health Equity: Private Sector Efforts Webinar Summary and Call to Action



Webinar Focus

The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted the webinar, *Balancing Business and Health Equity: Private Sector Efforts* on May 16, 2023. Panelists engaged in discussions about health equity from the perspective of the private sector, highlighting how businesses can contribute to health equity solutions. This report provides a synthesis of key takeaways, solutions, and action steps identified from the webinar.

Webinar Voices

- › **Caryn Bell**, Associate Director, P4HE, [Tulane School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine](#)
- › **Tawana Thomas Jefferson**, Senior Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer, [American Cancer Society](#)
- › **Tawanda Muzhingi**, Director of International Programs, [Plant Based Food Association](#)
- › **Chandra Teddleton**, Director of Project Management, [New Orleans Business Alliance](#)

Key Resources

- [The ESG Framework for Balancing Profitability and Social Good](#)
- [Health Equity Strategy Playbook](#)
- [Occupational Health Equity](#)

Your Voice

P4HE values collaboration. If there is a resource on this topic that you would like to share with us, provide it [here](#).

Key Takeaways

Addressing health equity in the private sector requires business owners to evaluate their internal practices and build equitable and socially responsible action plans. This webinar discusses ways corporations can leverage research and advocacy to make changes internally and through community partnerships to advance health equity. The balance between social responsibility and profitability ultimately proves that [supporting health equity solutions is good for business](#). Collaborations between corporations and organizations from different sectors are essential for utilizing various health perspectives in the pursuit of the shared goal of improving health for all.



Webinar participants noted that an “all hands-on deck” approach is needed to move the needle for health equity. They highlighted that businesses must listen to advocates and collaborate with communities to see action, including addressing internal practices and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives that invest in communities.

Call To Action



“What good are you doing in the community? What difference are you making? What is the social impact that you’re having on communities and on the customers you serve?”

Tawana Thomas Jefferson, Senior Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer, American Cancer Society.

Below we've summarized immediate action steps shared by the panelists and identified by webinar participants to be taken to advance health equity within businesses.

Health Equity through Internal Practices

Use equitable hiring practices and diversify the talent pool for hiring health professionals



Offer employees extensive benefits and wellbeing resources (e.g., health insurance, childcare reimbursement, mental health resources, etc.)

Offer employees generous leave and paid time off options

Use employee focus groups to learn about their health and wellbeing needs

> **Change policies and practices to meet the health and wellbeing needs of employees throughout recruitment to retention.**

Companies, advocates, and researchers can collaborate to identify and alter policies that address the health and wellbeing of staff. The first step in change is to acknowledge the underlying problems and work to understand them. Researchers can help companies understand the systemic connections between equitable hiring, work conditions, access to quality health care, and health outcomes through the dissemination of research in [plain language](#). Once problems are understood, companies can leverage that knowledge to develop more [inclusive and equitable hiring practices](#) and expand the talent pool to [underrepresented areas](#). These changes to hiring practices are important to not only to improve team performance but also to [strengthen DEI efforts](#) in various sectors, where diversity in staffing [impacts patient health outcomes](#).

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“When we’re looking at health equity [in business], we should be looking at the totality of the individual, even within the business mission. [Businesses need to] address their internal practices, their hiring practices, their mental health days, their leave concepts. People are often foregoing their physical and mental health for work.” Chandra

Teddleton, Director of Project Management, New Orleans Business Alliance.

Improve [employment quality](#) by offering staff generous paid leave and time off options, such as [parental and family leave](#), [sick and medical leave](#), and [vacation leave](#), as well as [flexibility in work conditions](#), to improve health outcomes. Emphasize the importance of employees’ mental health by providing [mental health resources, training, and wellness days](#). Invest in employees’ health and livelihood needs through various benefits, including [health insurance](#), [childcare resources and financial assistance](#), and [retirement plans](#). Bring in researchers to conduct [focus groups](#) and [surveys](#) with employees; ask about their health circumstances and how the company could better serve them. Collaborate with advocacy organizations to promote policies requiring that businesses implement internal practices for advancing health equity. Leverage funding from government agencies to change internal practices. Implementing internal practices and policies that address the health and wellbeing needs of staff will improve the health of the community employed at these organizations.

> Expand partnerships to collaborate on health equity initiatives.



“We need a holistic approach to address common global challenges...It’s not about one person being wrong or one sector being right, but it needs all hands on deck...We need more collaborations, more partnerships” Tawanda Muzhingi, Director of International

Programs, Plant Based Food Association

Working together with external organizations allows us to incorporate diverse, insightful perspectives into initiatives for advancing health equity. Collaborate with [nonprofits](#) and community-based organizations on initiatives to help increase education and awareness of health-related topics. Endorse [policies that aim to improve health outcomes for all](#) alongside advocacy groups and [grassroots organizations](#). In addition, partnering with other private sector businesses is another useful strategy as you can leverage each other’s resources and networks to widen the reach of health equity initiatives.

Collaborate with service providers by providing them necessary funding, resources, and innovations to improve their service delivery, staff capacity, and equitable health practices. Establish [public-](#)

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[private partnerships](#) with local government agencies, such as the [partnership between New Orleans Business Alliance and the City of New Orleans](#), that utilize private sector funding and innovations from corporations to enhance public services aimed to advance health equity, that utilize private sector funding and innovations from corporations to enhance public services aimed to advance health equity.



“[Organizations need to] work in partnership with corporations that get at the systemic and the structural issues that perpetuate health inequities...[leading] us to a more sustainable and true tangible impact, as it relates to closing disparity gaps.” Tawana Thomas Jefferson,

Senior Vice President & Chief Diversity Officer, American Cancer Society.

Private Sector Partnerships for Advancing Health Equity



Nonprofits & Community-based Organizations

Policy & Advocacy Groups

Youth Organizations & Schools/Colleges

Service Providers

Government Agencies

Other Private Sector Organizations

> Be proactive, not reactive, in pursuing health equity missions.



“Support and implement different practices that are part of your blueprint rather than additive when something happens.” Chandra Teddleton, Director of Project Management, New Orleans Business Alliance.

Embedding health equity frameworks before an incident or crisis, such as [COVID-19](#), occurs is necessary. Push [board members and high-ranking executives](#) of companies and organizations to prioritize health equity in their work and overseeing of business activities. Such company leaders can do so by listening to internal advocacy from employees and external advocacy from customers on the importance of instilling health equity into the company's mission and values. Research and implement effective [Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion \(DEI\) efforts](#) that promote a welcoming and inclusive work environment for employees. Adopt an [Environmental, Social, and](#)

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Governance (ESG) framework for conducting business activities and investments that considers the needs and interests of all organizational key players: company leadership, employees, customers, suppliers, and the communities where the business operates. It is important to pursue and uphold the ESG principles through socially conscious actions, not just words, that will have tangible and positive effects on health equity, such as donating money and resources to advocacy groups, nonprofits, and healthcare service providers. Companies can also engage with researchers to evaluate their corporate social responsibility impacts and how it can further support improving health outcomes for all. Being proactive in pursuing health equity missions within the company *“employs you to not just be a ‘good human,’ but you have some standards and practices that are embedded in regulatory principles that you have to follow.”* Chandra Teddleton, Director of Project Management, New Orleans Business Alliance.

› Incorporate young people in generating solutions for advancing health equity.



“I’m really proud of the young people...They are taking charge of their future, and they are voting with their mouths...I hope our colleagues across sectors [and] our policy makers will continue to listen to the young people so that they can respond to their needs.” Tawanda Muzhingi,

Director of International Programs, Plant Based Food Association.

Listening to youth voices and understanding their experiences and hopes for improving health is important. This can include allowing young people opportunities to lead the conversation surrounding health equity and corporations’ obligations to improve the health and wellbeing of their staff and the community at large. Working with youth advocates that are engaged with on-the-ground efforts for advancing health equity through local, state, and national policies is a useful strategy. At a minimum, conducting focus groups with youth or young people employed to collect information on their perspectives and needs at your company and from the community. This inclusion also requires young people be included in the process of developing new internal practices and policies that will address the health needs of employees.

State of the Science

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Framework

Panelists highlighted the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework. This framework provides a set of standards for a company to follow in the promotion of socially conscious and responsible business activities and investments related to the environment, social issues, and the governance of the company. This framework encourages the balance between social responsibility and profitability through actions that drive change in the private sector. The environmental criteria

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considers the company's policies and actions towards protecting the environment and combatting climate change to create a safer and more habitable planet for all. The social criteria examines how the company's policies and actions positively impact social causes and the health and wellbeing for all people in the workplace and in the communities where they operate. Lastly, the governance criteria evaluates how a company pursues integrity in management, selecting diverse leaders, and embracing [corporate transparency](#) to champion equity at top. Conducting further research on the effectiveness of ESG frameworks could influence policymakers to standardize and enforce mandatory ESG regulations across the private sector, helping to advance health equity.

Black Directors Health Equity Agenda (BDHEA)

The [Black Directors Health Equity Agenda \(BDHEA\)](#) was mentioned in the webinar chat as a resource for integrating health equity into business practices. This collective is comprised of Black directors and other senior leaders that are committed to advancing health and wellness for Black communities. [BDHEA's approach](#) involves implementing new initiatives, building on existing, effective programs, advocating for equitable health policies, and promoting other data-informed strategies to ensure access to high-quality health care and to diminish the impacts of [social determinants of health](#), thereby, reducing the disproportionate health disparities that Black individuals face. Key focuses of their work include increasing the number of Black senior executive leaders within organizations dedicated to eliminating health inequities and expanding the pipeline of Black medical professionals into the healthcare system to create [culturally appropriate care delivery networks](#). Through collaborations with researchers, policymakers, service providers, and other organizations, the BDHEA seeks to use a multidisciplinary approach for generating sustainable solutions to improve health outcomes for Black communities.

Deloitte Health Equity Institute's Health Equity Strategy Playbook

[Deloitte Health Equity Institute's Health Equity Strategy Playbook](#) outlines a three-phase process for organizations to follow to define and develop their health equity vision and strategy. The playbook defines health equity and identifies [systemic and structural racism and bias](#), inequities in [nonmedical drivers or determinants of health](#), and [structural flaws in the healthcare system](#) as barriers to equitable health outcomes. It provides key tools including an [Equity Activation Model](#), [Drivers of Health Framework](#), and [Health Equity Domains Framework](#) to provide organizations with additional guidance for establishing their health equity strategy. Corporations can use this playbook, and its embedded tools in collaboration with researchers and community organizations to execute the best course of action for driving change and improving health outcomes for all.

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About P4HE

The P4HE Collaborative harmonizes goals, advances learning, and facilitates collaboration to improve health equity. It is led by the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and is part of the Tulane Institute for Innovations in Health Equity. Support for this program is provided by ICF. Funding is provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Foster

the co-creation and spread of knowledge.



Sharpen

our research tools to focus on solutions, facts and stories.



Disrupt

traditional research approaches.



Harmonize

our voices.



Challenge

the status quo.



Shine

light on practices that are indefensible, irrational and inconsistent.

To learn more about these issues, or Partners for Health Equity's calls to action, a resource library including a full recording of this, and all previous P4HE Webinars, can be found on the P4HE [website](#).