

Event Summary:

EDI Action Network

Meeting #1: May 26, 2021

Introduction

The [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Action Network](#) is a space for connection, shared learning, and development for students, staff, and faculty working to advance EDI initiatives at UBC. UBC's EDI Action Network is organized and supported by the Equity & Inclusion Office, in partial fulfillment of action 2K of the [Inclusion Action Plan](#), which calls for the creation of an "Equity Leads Network" to support EDI champions in UBC's units and departments.

The inaugural event of the EDI Action Network was held May 26, 2021, online via Zoom. This report provides a summary of the event and participant feedback, to support continuity and transparency as the network continues to evolve.

Event Summary

Attendance

To help manage demand for this initial event, invitations were based on EIO staff members' knowledge of individuals who have engaged with tools and structures that support implementation of the Inclusion Action Plan. The final invitation list contained approximately 145 students, faculty, and staff. 95 individuals registered for the event and approximately 85 attended. Over time, the goal is to build up a distribution list that includes everyone actively leading EDI initiatives in their respective units and departments across UBC.

Opening Plenary

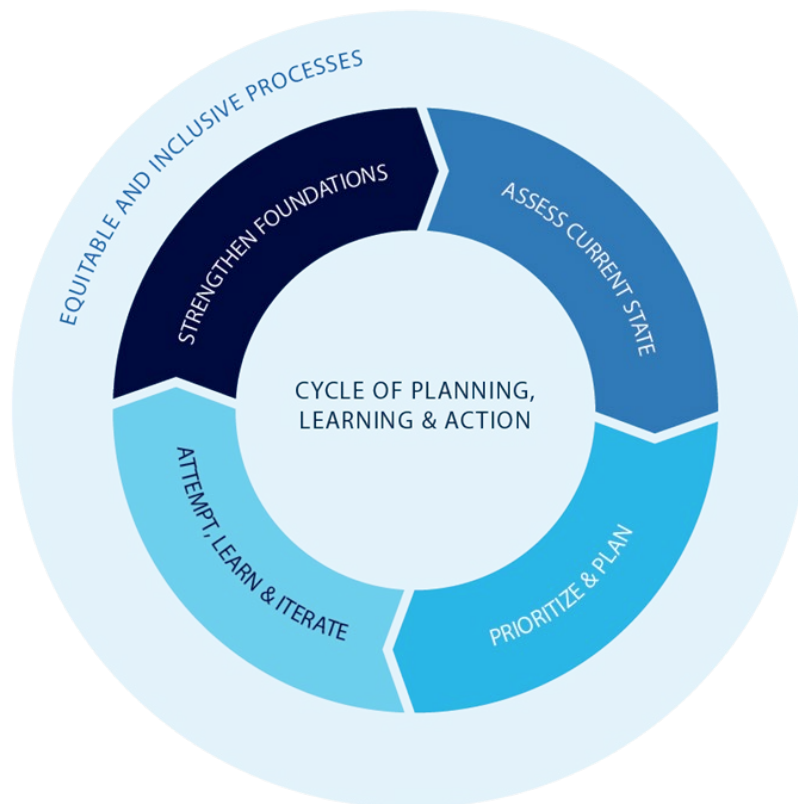
Sara-Jane Finlay, Associate Vice-President for Equity & Inclusion, opened the event with a land acknowledgement and introduction to the EDI Action Network. The goals of the network are to:

- Strengthen existing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work with practical tools, frameworks, and ideas
- Build connections and decrease silos among those of us doing this work
- Amplify the impact of units' EDI initiatives by expanding their reach across UBC

Lucy Buchanan-Parker, Strategist for Institutional Initiatives in the Equity & Inclusion Office, introduced community expectations and then led the group in three rounds of a “speed meet and greet” where participants met in groups of three, for five minutes each, with a prompting question to discuss in each round.

After participants had a chance to meet one another in the virtual space, Lucy introduced two approaches to EDI change that the EIO has been working with recently: the cycle of planning, learning, and action, and the nested systems framework.

Cycle of Planning, Learning, and Action



The cycle of planning, learning, and action is a framework for understanding the stages of a unit’s EDI transformation. It is presented as a cycle to signal that departments can start at any point in the cycle, and also that there is no fixed “end point” to EDI efforts; rather a continuing cycle of working to make a unit more equitable and inclusive.

Around the outside of the cycle, “**equitable and inclusive processes**” indicates that, at all stages of the cycle, *how* a unit approaches its work is as important as the outcomes of the work itself—an EDI lens needs to be applied to all stages of the process.

In the upper left corner of the cycle, “**strengthen foundations**” indicates the need to identify and bolster the infrastructure needed to undertake EDI work. This may include:

- creating EDI committees
- identifying leadership and accountability structures
- finding the resources needed
- ensuring everyone has the knowledge and skills needed to move forward

Next in the cycle is “**assess current state**,” when a unit’s main task is to understand the landscape of EDI within the unit. This may include finding answers to questions like:

- How do the unit’s current practices and ways of working relate to EDI?
- What are the unit’s current and past efforts to advance EDI in the unit?
- How do people in the unit, especially those with marginalized identities, feel about EDI in the unit?

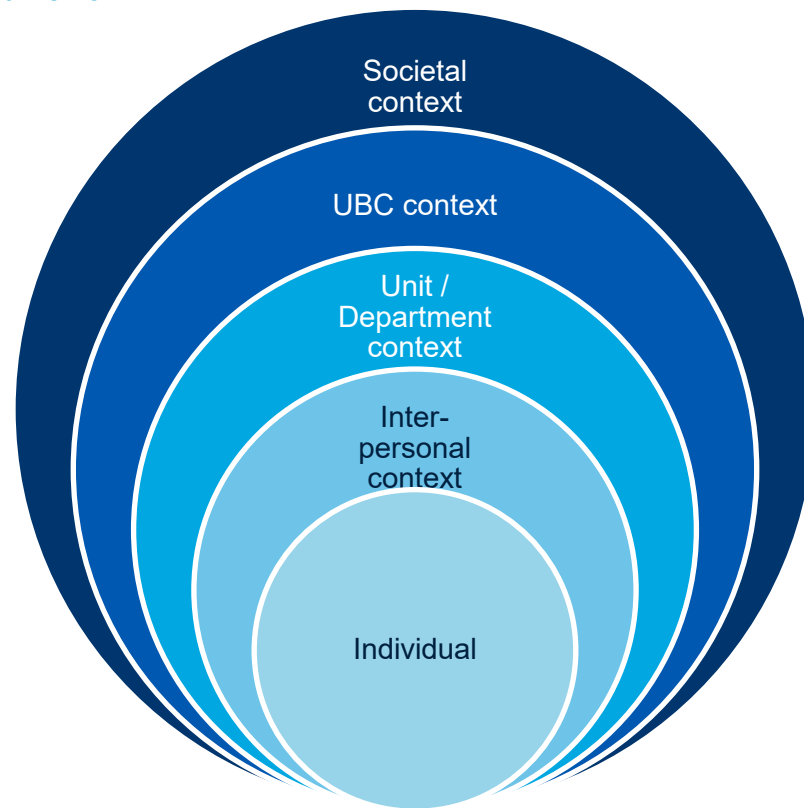
The next stage is “**prioritize and plan**.” In this stage, units use their understanding of EDI in the unit to identify and prioritize the concrete changes that need to be made, and make a clear plan for how they will achieve those changes.

In “**attempt, learn, and iterate**,” the unit implements their plans for change. As they do so, they learn and re-evaluate what is working, make adjustments, and try again.

As they are implementing their initiatives, a unit might find that they need to build up more EDI infrastructure to do the work effectively, or there is another information gap that they need to address. They may return to other parts of the cycle and build again from that point.

Participants annotated the slide to indicate where their initiatives fall within the cycle, which signal that there is great diversity of where in the cycle the units and departments represented in the EDI Action Network see themselves. Slightly more participants identified their units as in the “strengthen foundations” or “prioritize and plan” phases.

Nested Systems Framework



The nested systems framework is a way of thinking about EDI change that emphasizes the multiple systems and contexts that are influencing, and may be influenced by, an EDI change effort. The different levels of systems interact with each other in both directions; for example, an individual is influenced by the unit/departmental context in which they are situated, but they can also impact their unit/department through their actions and behaviours.

Although change is needed at all levels, each initiative or unit does not need to target all levels. By understanding which levels or contexts an EDI initiative is targeting, a unit gains clarity about the expected impacts of their initiative, and can assess whether their initiative is targeting the most strategic level.

Participants annotated the slide to indicate which levels their initiative targets. Initiatives within UBC units and departments are targeting all levels of the system, especially the individual, interpersonal, and unit/department contexts.

Concurrent Sessions

Following the opening plenary, participants chose from among three workshop offerings, each hosted by EIO staff and featuring a mixture of practical concepts and tools, and small-group discussions.

Stream 1: Using Data and Evidence to Advance EDI

In this workshop, Greg Lockwood and Tora Oliphant facilitated a discussion about the importance of an equity-informed lens when working with data and evidence as part of an EDI initiative. They highlighted that data is never objective and often flattens the complexity of reality. They also highlighted the recent Office of the BC Human Rights Commissioner’s framing of “[The grandmother perspective](#)” in disaggregated data collection, which comes from Gwen Phillips of the Ktunaxa Nation. It is framed as a perspective of collecting data in order to care for communities, in contrast to a “big brother” perspective of collecting data for surveillance and control.

Tora and Greg presented a framework for thinking about different types of EDI data at UBC:

| Information type | Description |
|--|---|
| Demographics | Information about the composition of your unit |
| Pathways | Information about the career or degree trajectories of people in your unit or whom your unit serves, including those who leave the unit |
| Perceptions and experiences | Information about the self-reported experiences of people in your unit; their perceptions and impressions of your unit |
| Equity-minded behaviours and practices | Information about the extent to which people in your unit have adopted behaviours and practices that advance EDI |
| Processes and systems that promote EDI | Information about the extent to which your unit has applied an EDI lens to its processes and procedures |

Next, they presented [various tools](#) that are available to units who wish to use data and evidence to advance EDI in their unit:

- Inventory of Existing Knowledge
- Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool (ISAT)
- Demographic Question Guides
- Considerations for EDI Surveys

The workshop then split into small groups for further discussions around a number of topic areas:

- Applying the EDI Data Framework: Brainstorming opportunities and barriers to applying the framework in your unit
- Experimenting with using one of the tools in the Activating Inclusion Toolkit
- Sharing Successes: Sharing examples of how engaging with data led to a positive EDI-related change in your unit

In the report back after the small group discussions, participants highlighted questions about response rates, the employment equity survey and how to access its information, and the pros and cons of institutional-level vs. department-level data collection.

During the closing plenary, participants shared their next steps after attending this session, including:

- Using the data framework presented to build a faculty-wide EDI evaluation framework
- Further work with the tools and resources presented
- Expanding their work to include both qualitative and quantitative data
- Questioning the assumption that “more data” is the key to building trust and engagement in EDI beyond existing supporters

Stream 2: Building Capacity for Implementing Change

In this workshop, Rachael Sullivan and Hanae Tsukada led a discussion about how to coordinate capacity building initiatives in your unit by introducing a broader approach, which guides you to align capacity building activities with other levers of change.

Together, the group identified common pitfalls as units try to build capacity for EDI work, such as assuming that education can only come from outside experts, or placing all the unit’s hopes for change on a single hour-long workshop.

Rachael and Hanae then introduced the “[what?, so what?, now what?](#)” approach to support participants’ reflections on a recent capacity building activity or initiative they have had and what it did and didn’t accomplish in order to recognize the limitations of implementing capacity building activities alone.

Rachael and Hanae then introduced the ABCD Theory of Change (developed by the EIO) as a way of aligning capacity building with other levers of change, to create a more strategic and holistic approach for implementing change that supports EDI.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Awareness</p> <p>Changing individual attitudes, behaviours, and practices through cognitive and affective approaches.</p> | <p>Bureaucracy</p> <p>Altering and enhancing institutional structures (e.g., policies, procedures, organizing principles, plans, systems, accountability mechanisms) to scale up and sustain change beyond the individual and small group.</p> |
| <p>Community</p> <p>Building relational spaces where marginalized community members can retreat, find belonging, get nourished, network, and organize to lead the way toward change.</p> | <p>Discourse</p> <p>Constructing new narratives, images, rituals, and physical environments that reflect our aspirations, and influence individual, community, and institutional behaviour.</p> |

Participants were introduced with the following four steps for using the ABCD Theory of Change to identify:

1. The change they would like to see
2. What resources, opportunities, or initiatives exist to support the change in each domain
3. What is missing or acting as a barrier for the change to happen and be sustained in each domain
4. What needs to happen in each domain in order to activate, amplify, and sustain the desired change

While time ran short for participants to deeply engage with the ABCD Theory of Change model, during the closing plenary, participants identified key insights and next steps from attending the session, including:

- Using the “what, so what, now what: W3” approach to help provide focus to the unit’s action plan
- The challenges and frustrations of implementing systemic change from within the system
- Capacity building is meaningless without accountability, and awareness needs to be converted into meaningful action

Stream 3: Moving to Action: Developing Tangible Initiatives

Elsie Achugbue, Louise Griep, and Mai Yasue led a session that was focused on how units can implement tangible changes in their units and departments. Participants started by brainstorming common challenges they faced as EDI champions in their unit, including:

- Workload and sustainability
- Gaining support from leadership
- Denial that a problem exists
- Challenging interpersonal dynamics
- Access to information that would support the work
- Fear of making a mistake or being uncertain if they have the skills and experience needed

Afterwards, panelists from different parts of UBC presented on the concrete changes to advance EDI that they have made in their units and departments:

- Cinda Heeren and Michelle Ng from the Department of Computer Science discussed their efforts to diversify students the department through outreach efforts
- Thandi Fletcher and Sachi Wickramasinghe from UBC Media Relations presented on their efforts to support diverse experts and scholarship in the news
- Michele Koppes from the Department of Geography discussed the Decolonizing Geographies project to transform teaching and learning in the department
- Tegan Stusiak from the School of Biomedical Engineering presented on the changes they have made to the faculty merit process to recognize EDI efforts

- Allison Beardsworth from Enrollment Services presented on their initiative to provide EDI training to profile readers in Admissions

After participants convened in small groups to share initial reflections and questions on the presentations, a facilitated discussion with the panelists drew out their key lessons learned and factors that were important to the success of their initiatives. The EIO hopes to develop these examples into case studies that will be made available at a later date.

Participants then posted their key insights from the session, including:

- The importance of relationships and engaging with others in the unit, especially those who bring different perspectives than your own, when implementing change
- Data and evidence can be used to help understand what actions are needed, as well as garner leadership support
- The importance of flexible time scales and slowing down when necessary
- The value of localized, seemingly small efforts in changing the system over time
- Linking efforts to a unit's or the university's strategic goals can be a useful way to find support, but there is also a place for breaking with traditional processes and "the way things are done"

During the closing plenary, participants also highlighted:

- The importance of connections across different departments and units
- The value in knowing that others face similar challenges in doing EDI work
- The need for more resources to move EDI forward

Closing Plenary

In the closing plenary, participants reflected on the sessions they had attended, first individually while they considered what their next steps would be, and then collectively as they shared the concepts, tools, or ideas that they would bring with them from the sessions they attended.

Next, participants had the opportunity to reflect on what forms of connection and engagement they would like to see as part of the EDI Action Network, in addition to the semi-annual convenings. There was broad support for all of the ideas presented, including:

- An email listserv
- A collaborative workspace using Microsoft Teams or Slack
- Informal spaces or coffee clubs to connect with others doing EDI work
- Tool-specific workshops around the Activating Inclusion Toolkit

Participants also suggested creating a shared server or repository for documents and resources that departments and units generate in the course of their EDI work.

Finally, participants were invited to make note of any topics they were hoping to connect with others about in the short term (as EDI Action Network structures are still under development). These collaboration invitations would be circulated back to attendees via email.

Feedback and Reflections

The event feedback survey was filled in by 37 of the approximately 85 attendees. EIO staff involved in supporting the event also received informal feedback from attendees. The feedback was broadly positive: 95% of survey respondents said that they would like to participate in future meetings of the EDI Action Network and 86% said they learned about a valuable tool or resource related to advancing EDI. Participants particularly valued the opportunity to connect with others from across UBC, the inclusive facilitation approach, and the concrete case studies presented in the Moving to Action panel.

The survey also asked for participants' ideas for how to strengthen future events and the EDI Action Network in general. The majority of suggestions fell into three broad categories:

1. Content:
 - Add even greater focus on case studies and examples from UBC colleagues
 - Consider bringing in external speakers or otherwise highlighting expertise and experience from beyond UBC.
 - Create more opportunities for those with similar interests, roles, or identities to connect with each other.
2. Participants and invitation process:
 - Give greater consideration and acknowledgement to how identity shapes experience in this space, particularly for people who hold marginalized identities.
 - Expand participation for future events and adjust the invitation/registration process to make it more welcoming and inclusive.
 - Clarify the role of leadership in relation to this network and to EDI work more broadly.
3. Timing
 - Participants were roughly evenly split on whether the overall event length and time spent in the main plenary session was “about right” or “too long.”
 - The large majority of participants felt that the time spent in concurrent workshops, small breakout rooms, and breaks was “about right.”

The EDI Action Network planning team within the EIO will consider how to incorporate these suggestions (and all feedback received) in planning for the next meeting of the EDI Action Network in autumn 2021, and as other network activities and supports take shape.