



Executive Summary of Organizational Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Assessment Plan

BACKGROUND

Homelessness and racial equity are inextricably linked. Structural racism is a root cause of homelessness, and people of color—particularly Black and Indigenous people—experience significantly higher rates of homelessness in the United States than their white counterparts. Once homeless, people of color face ongoing discrimination in housing, employment, and many other aspects of community life that make it difficult for them to obtain and maintain safe, accessible, and affordable housing.

It is in this context that PATH and PATH Ventures have initiated efforts over the past several years to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in its work. Guided by a DEI Committee composed of PATH staff and leadership, the organization has made strides in advancing DEI in many aspects of our work.

Beginning in January 2021, PATH and PATH Ventures began an organizational assessment to determine how well the organization is living out its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and what it can do better to implement DEI strategies. To guide this process, PATH engaged Racial Equity Partners (REP) and National Innovation Service (NIS), a partnership that has led national, statewide, and local work to implement racial equity across homeless service programs and systems.

This document is an executive summary of the findings from the organizational assessment and next steps in our work to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

APPROACH

The assessment involved the following activities:

- **Focus Groups with PATH Program Participants** In Q2, we held four focus groups with a total of 15 program participants all identifying as people of color. Ten were housed in PATH programs and 5 were unhoused at the time of the focus groups.
- **Focus Groups with PATH Staff** We also held four focus groups with a total of 17 PATH staff from across all PATH regions. Most were case managers, although we had participants from management and outreach teams as well. All identified as people of color, specifically naming Black/African American, Latinx/Chicana/Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous identities.
- **Staff Survey** The REP/NIS team administered an online survey in Q2 for all PATH staff. 500 out of approximately 750 staff completed the survey. For some questions, we compare the responses of staff who identified as a person of color (n= 342) to staff who identified as White (n=110). The remaining 39 respondents did not provide information on race/ethnicity (see Appendix A for questions and selected data charts).
- **Board Survey** In Q2, we administrated an online survey for board and advisory board members of PATH and PATH Ventures. There were 21 individuals who responded.
- **Data Analysis** Our team worked with the PATH data team to pull data and examine program/client-level data for trends around racial disparities.
- **Policy and HR Review** We reviewed various human resources documents, employee manuals, and data to identify opportunities for strengthening the organization's focus on DEI.

FINDINGS

The REP-NIS team analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from the assessment, then identified broad themes. Each theme is presented below, along with highlights that illustrate the theme.

THEME 1: Organizational Commitment to DEI

Staff survey respondents were asked to rate **how well PATH is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion** in how it functions as an organization. The average rating across all respondents was 77 out of 100. The average rating did not differ between staff of color and white staff. Board members rated the organization slightly higher, with an average rating of 84 out of 100.

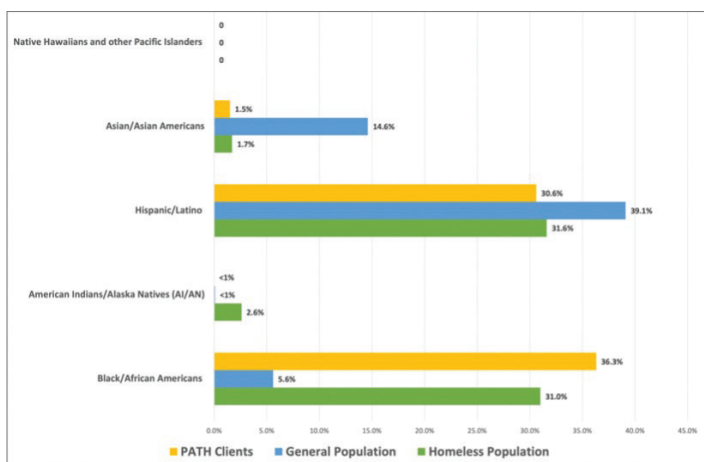
Several respondents pointed to importance of the **DEI Committee**. Some specifically noted the role of discussion during **all staff meetings**.

Not all staff, however, experience PATH's commitment to DEI as yet fully integrated into the organization's work. Some staff do not see themselves as authentically participating in setting priorities for the organization and are curious and sometimes skeptical about whether the investment in racial equity consultants will result in change for the organization.

THEME 2: Demographic Data, Outcomes, and Experiences of Program Participants

PATH primarily serves Black, Latino, and white clients, with Black/African Americans making up the largest racial group served by PATH programs. (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

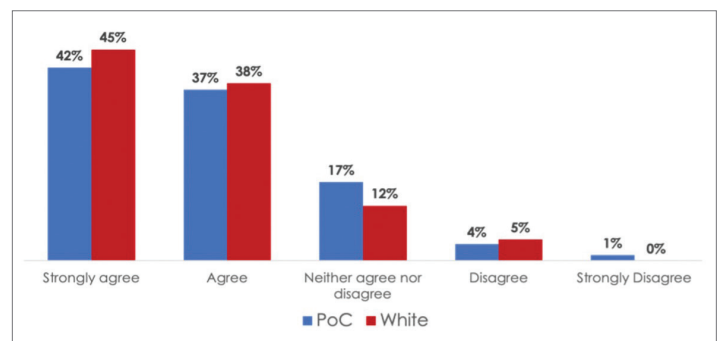


We found that **Black clients were more likely than other groups to return to homelessness** or to end up in either permanent or transitional housing, while white, Asian, and Native American clients were more likely than others to end up in institutions. A confounding factor is the large number of Latino clients who show up in the data as “other housing situation” (88.5%). This makes it difficult to determine housing outcome patterns not only for Latino people, but for the other groups as well, given the large number of Latino clients served by the organization.

We asked PATH clients who participated in focus groups (all people of color) about their experiences with PATH programs. They generally expressed being **pleased with their experiences**.

We also asked staff in the survey to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree that people of color are treated fairly in PATH programs. Overall, 78.3% of all staff agree or strongly agree that people of color are treated fairly, with the most respondents endorsing “strongly agree” (41.5%). Results were similar for staff identifying as white compared to staff identifying as people of color. Figure 2 shows how the agreement varied, with staff of color overall endorsing slightly less agreement.

FIGURE 2 - STAFF SURVEY RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “PEOPLE OF COLOR ARE TREATED FAIRLY IN PATH PROGRAMS.”



THEME 3: Staff, Management, and Board Diversity

Numerous survey respondents (PATH staff) were happy with PATH's **diverse group of employees**. People noted that their teams are diverse across race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and experience, and that they are representative of the area and those they serve.

Some clients specifically identified feeling safe and thriving when connected to case managers or other PATH staff with who they share common racial identities.

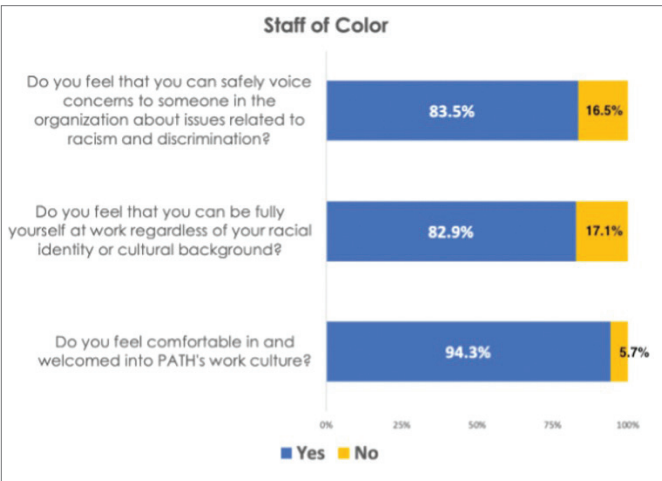
In addition to staff diversity overall, several respondents also indicated that the organization was making progress towards **diversity at the leadership level**.

1 in 5 PATH staff members have themselves experienced homelessness.

Many staff suggested that there is still work to be done in this area, and that PATH should **hire and promote more people of color, particularly to upper management**. Staff suggest that although employees feel the workforce “at the lower level” is diverse, PATH should support the advancement of staff of color.

Another important area for improvement is **board diversity**. Of the 21 board/advisory board members who completed the survey, 94% identified as white and 6% (or 1 individual) identified as Black/African American. Three individuals skipped the question. Further, 76% identified as women; 24% as men; and none as non-binary. Seventy-eight percent of respondents were over 65 years old, and the group is predominantly (72%) Los Angeles-based. The need for greater board diversity was echoed by board members themselves.

FIGURE 3 - RESPONDENT RESULTS FOR STAFF OF COLOR



A major strength of the organization is the number of staff with **lived experience** of homelessness and a range of other issues related to the organization’s mission. Specifically, **1 in 5 PATH staff members have themselves experienced homelessness**.

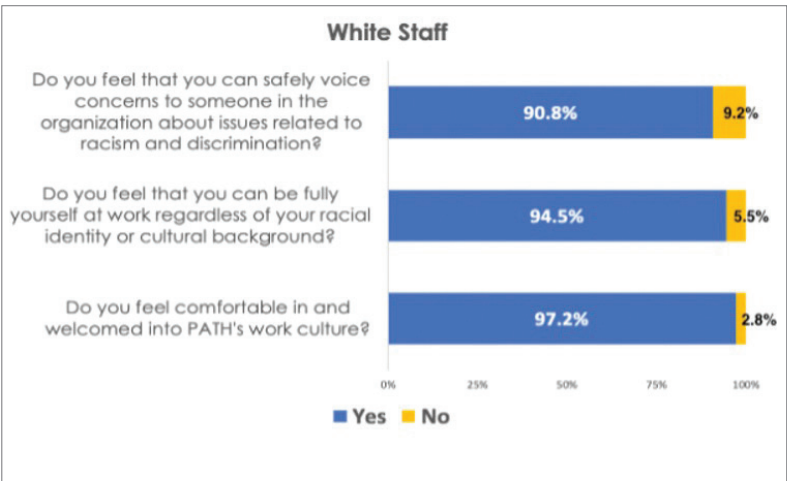
THEME 4: Organizational Culture and Staff Experiences

The majority of survey respondents felt comfortable and welcomed in PATH’s work culture, stated that they could be fully themselves at work regardless of their racial identity or cultural background, and felt they could safely voice concerns about racism and discrimination to someone in the organization. In addition to results for all respondents, results for white and staff of color are shown in the figures below. Overall, most respondents of color still reported feeling safe and welcome in PATH’s work culture, but some felt unsafe reporting concerns to someone in the organization about issues related to racism and discrimination (Figure 3), and some staff indicated that they did not feel like they could be fully themselves at work—higher than the ratings among white staff (Figure 4).

Importantly, staff described not only diversity of racial and ethnic identity but an inclusive environment in which issues related to racism, equity, and inclusion are talked about openly. Many respondents appreciated the organization for consistently **communicating about issues to increase awareness** and providing **space for discussion** and “difficult conversations.”

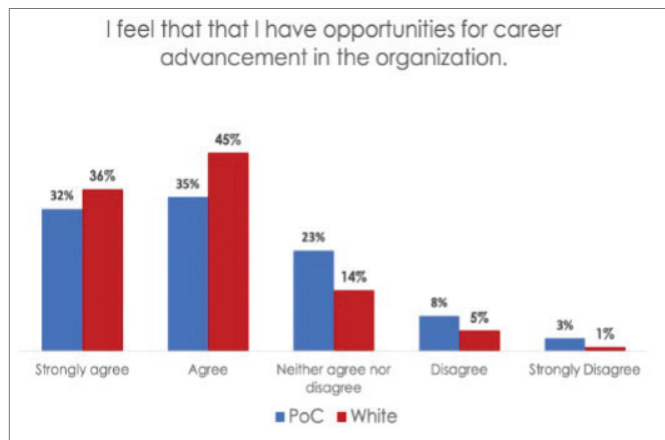
We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement:

FIGURE 3 - RESPONDENT RESULTS FOR WHITE STAFF



"I feel that I have opportunities for career advancement in the organization." Overall, most respondents agreed or strongly agreed (69%) that there was opportunity for advancement at PATH. On average, white staff endorsed greater agreement, and staff of color were more likely to disagree (see breakdown below in Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 - RESPONSE TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT



THEME 5: DEI Training

Staff noted that they appreciate DEI education and professional development that has been offered but would like to see **expanded and applied training**. These responses included suggestions for training to strengthen staff skills, more trainings led by people of color, and more training related to issues facing LGBTQIA+ communities.

Some respondents specifically suggested a need for **training for management or leadership**.

Many survey respondents reported that opportunities for formal **training and continuing education** were supporting the organization's efforts towards DEI. This theme was the most prevalent among respondents (at least 22% of answers discussed training), as people were able to point to trainings as concrete examples of what PATH is doing well.

THEME 6: Potential Directions for PATH/PATH Ventures DEI work

Survey respondents were asked what PATH could do to become a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization. Most respondents presented tangible ways that PATH could be a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organization. A common sentiment was that

PATH was on the right track (e.g., with discussing issues) but had room to progress towards driving equity forward.

A number of respondents indicated that **PATH should make structural changes to encourage more anti-racist work** in the organization. Some of these respondents indicated that they would like to see **more involvement from management/leaders in the organizations**.

Respondents also mentioned that they **needed more clarity from PATH** on whether it was appropriate to do antiracist work, or how the organization would like to see it being done.

Some respondents offered more **tangible ways PATH could encourage its employees to engage in antiracism work**. These responses included actions like promoting BIPOC staff, allowing divisions to have a voice in the creation of DEI policies and procedures, workshops and volunteer events, a reporting system for bias, signs and posters in Spanish.

Some respondents suggested ways that PATH can **engage with external stakeholders**. These include supporting grassroots organizations, efforts to strengthen partnerships with housing and service systems, helping other systems develop trauma-informed practice, and advocacy related to local housing policy. Most of these comments were focused on how PATH can be a better service provider and center equity and inclusion in its efforts to serve clients and the community.

A few respondents suggested the importance of **research and data** that is focused on racial equity.



REP RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the REP team offered various recommendations for PATH leadership and the DEI Committee as they seek to center racial equity in PATH's work:

- 1 Develop a DEI Implementation Plan to guide its work. The plan should be comprehensive, robust, time-bound, and focused on specific, measurable outcomes to track progress.
- 2 Increase racial diversity in management, leadership, and boards.
- 3 Integrate people with lived experience at all levels of the organization and develop support/mentoring for them to succeed in all roles.
- 4 Make safe spaces for staff at all levels of the organization to become involved with PATH's DEI efforts. These may include ongoing discussions, time at staff meetings, affinity groups, regional town halls, and other activities.
- 5 Develop an overarching DEI training strategy for staff and board. Building on the REP training in spring and summer 2021, the DEI committee and leadership should develop a long-term strategy for providing training for staff and board at the moment of onboarding and in an ongoing way.
- 6 Evaluate pay equity across all PATH staff and make regional/statewide adjustments to ensure that pay continues to keep pace with the increasing cost of housing. PATH has a history of committing to pay staff a livable wage, and this commitment should be revisited at least every two years, with pay increases built into development goals, annual budgets, and future grant-writing.
- 7 Create opportunities for professional development and career pathways for all PATH staff, with a particular focus on leadership development for staff of color.
- 8 Examine racial differences in staff turnover.
- 9 Develop a specific set of racial equity data measures that the PATH data team will track and report at least quarterly.



RACIAL EQUITY ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

This plan is the result of that collective work. While this summary provides high level strategies and actions to guide our work, the DEI Committee and organizational leadership are working from a more detailed operational plan that includes timelines, responsible parties, and benchmarks for measuring our progress. The plan is meant to be a living document that will evolve as the organization makes progress and faces challenges in implementation.

Strategic Priority 1: Staff and Board Development

GOAL: Equip PATH staff and board members at all levels with DEI tools and practices so that our staff/board members are supported internally and carry DEI practices into our work and with our community

Activities

1.1 Create an ongoing DEI learning strategy and spaces/platforms for shared learning and experiences

1.2 Create a strategy and curriculum that promotes professional growth for all staff (program, supervisors, directors), with a particular focus on leadership development for staff of color

1.3 Create targets and implementation strategy for board diversity. Include diversity in race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and lived experience of homelessness.

Strategic Priority 2: Lived Experience

GOAL: Integrate lived experience perspectives at all levels of the organization to inform best practices in racial equity

Activities

2.1 Formalize feedback and input opportunities for people with lived experience

2.2 Develop the role of lived experience within the organizational culture

2.3 Further develop the roles of individuals with lived experience within the organization

Strategic Priority 3: Housing Placements

GOAL: Ensure that PATH/PATH Ventures is working to reverse the impact of redlining and other discriminatory housing practices through how and where it develops new housing and places residents

Activities

3.1 Assess PATH/PATH Ventures' current patterns of housing placement

- Conduct internal analysis of current housing placements and map it out
- Identify barriers to diversifying equitable housing portfolio regarding site selection
- Collect data for external communities – other housing developments – and regionally across other jurisdictions
- Using the collected data, develop a plan to cultivate more PSH and scattered site housing opportunities

Strategic Priority 4: Human Resources

GOAL: Create a diverse workforce that is representative of the population we serve and inclusive in our process

Activities

4.1 Develop strategy to retain and keep staff engaged

4.2 Develop an inclusive recruitment and promotion/ career advancement strategy to support a diverse workforce, create opportunities for professional development and career pathways for BIPOC staff

4.3 Increase racial diversity in management, leadership, and boards

4.4 Develop a transparent strategy to collect and analyze data on staff engagement across different demographics



Strategic Priority 5: Communications

GOAL: Develop an overarching communications plan that informs staff, stakeholders, and supporters how DEI is essential to PATH's work to end homelessness and helps people become advocates for the work

Activities

5.1 Finalize our formal DEI Statement and Mission

5.2 Develop and coordinate internal and external communications campaign strategy to deliver via multiple platforms (social, video, forums, etc.)

Strategic Priority 6: Data and Research

GOAL: Develop racial equity data measures and integrate that data to inform service delivery, advocacy, and human resources

Activities

6.1 Create an advisory group made up of leadership, DEI Committee members, people with live experience of homelessness, human resources, quality control, and finance to develop measurable data to inform racial equity within PATH

6.2 Data advisory group will evaluate current data

6.3 Create method to present data to staff and board

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 7: ADVOCACY

GOAL: Mobilize our communities to further our mission by promoting systems change and addressing housing inequity

Activities

7.1 Conduct public education activities on racism and homelessness

7.2 Engage landlords to reduce housing discrimination

7.3 Elevate community voices and the perspective of people with lived experience

7.4 Promote legislation and policy change focused on dismantling structural racism