



**Communities
for Our Colleges**

BUILDING AN EQUITY ACTION PLAN

**A TOOLKIT FOR STUDENTS,
FACULTY, & STAFF IN WASHINGTON'S
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGES**



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INTRODUCTION

Community colleges in Washington state have the potential to close racial and economic gaps in the state. Most students in the state's Community & Technical Colleges (CTCs) are BIPOC, immigrant & refugee, and low-wealth students. These colleges are crucial pathways to social and economic attainment for many communities that have been historically discriminated against and face barriers to progress.

But for CTCs to fulfill their potential as vehicles for equity, they must also be equitable in their hiring, policies, and practices. Advancing equity in community colleges – racial, gender, and class equity, etc. – will, in turn, advance equity in the state as a whole. But achieving equitable outcomes in our institutions of higher education is not easy.

This toolkit is a guide for stakeholders to achieve equity outcomes in our colleges, rooted in successful examples, universal principles, and social change methods.

Background

For years, the State Board for Community & Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and its 34 CTCs have developed equity plans and goals. Key college stakeholders have worked with the aim of making public colleges inclusive, welcoming, and responsive to changing communities. For example, Clark College's equity framework states,

“ Clark College understands, confronts, and challenges the institutional systems of power, privilege, and inequity so that all members of the Clark College community can succeed. Embedded within Clark College's Strategic Plan is the objective to facilitate student learning by providing conditions that improve educational outcomes and eliminate systemic disparities among all groups. This objective is the guiding principles that guide Clark College's decision-making, policies, and processes.” – **Clark College 2021-2026 Social Equity Framework**

But everyone agrees that social equity and justice is a long journey, not a simple destination. There's lots of work to do to build on this legacy of equity work.

In 2021, Governor Inslee signed the **Our Colleges, Our Future Act** (SB 5194) into law. The law, among other things, provided crucial investments in diversity, equity, and inclusion for CTC students and faculty. The law also mandates that every CTC conduct a climate survey on equity every two years, create an equity plan with student, faculty, and community input, and publish these plans publicly.

“ Beginning July 30, 2022, all community and technical colleges must submit, on a biennial basis, strategic plans to the state board for community and technical colleges for achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races on their campuses ... Colleges must create their strategic plans using an inclusive process of stakeholders including, but not limited to, classified staff, faculty, administrative exempt staff, students, and community organizations. Colleges are encouraged to use campus climate surveys to develop and update strategic plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races ... ” – **Legiscan**

The law, written based on the needs identified by students, faculty, and other campus stakeholders, holds colleges accountable for fulfilling their equity goals and is the ground floor for building engaged and equitable colleges in the state.

Communities for Our Colleges (C4C) was a key player in winning the passage of SB 5194. C4C is a student-centered coalition that aims to create the political will for much-needed investments in Washington’s Community and Technical College system. Students, faculty, and staff came together through the coalition and built a consensus that the outcome of these investments had to advance racial equity. For students, this meant that barriers to accessing and completing college had to be removed for all. This included financial barriers, access to needed wrap-around services, and counseling services both to navigate college pathways and to support students. In addition, the diverse student body wanted to see more faculty that shared their racial and cultural heritage and wanted to see other racialized barriers (language, child care for undocumented parents with undocumented children, access to work-study, etc.) removed. Addressing these needs required convincing the legislature to make much-needed investments in our community and technical college system.

In 2020, COVID-19 emerged in Washington state. As the pandemic spread across the country, state legislatures braced for recession and believed that with limited resources, they should lead from an austerity mindset. The landscape was equally shaped by George Floyd’s violent death at the hands of the police and the subsequent vibrant racial justice movement. That movement created a powerful public dialogue about racial injustice and the need to prioritize policies that would lead to equitable outcomes.

Students and their coalition partners discussed how to make the case for larger investments and create a process to measure those investments against our equity goals. Put another way, asked: How do we create accountability across the college system to ensure that equity goals drive each community college’s vision and work plan? From that discussion came the concept of a fully engaged stakeholder process that could help prioritize resources to address barriers to accessing and completing college for those students who needed it most. This led to the drafting of SB 5194, which created and funded a process to fully engage all stakeholders in a process to lift student needs and center equity in goal-setting and evaluation.

It is important to note that the goal of SB 5194 was to learn from and build on the investments that colleges have made and are making as we discern inequities in outcomes and push to address them. This process does not stand alone but is part of shaping larger systems and plans. For example, the newly mandated equity plans need to be integrated into each college’s overall strategic plan.

This toolkit is a guide to help key stakeholders navigate the process of creating equity action plans for their community college. Based on experiences from the first round of these plans in 2022, previous equity work, and existing best practices, we have compiled strategies, tools, and guides to organize, build engagement, and implement an equity action plan process. Of course, each college is a little different, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Each process will be a little different, too. We hope this toolkit helps you achieve successful and impactful equity work for your college community.

Achieving the Power to Get it Done

In order to reach the goal of creating and implementing equity plans with real impact on students and communities, we have to understand how institutional changes are made. This requires an understanding of power and how to use it. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose.” Therefore, to achieve the purpose of advancing equity in our colleges, we must have the power to create meaningful equity plans and effectively implement them. And we have to understand how power operates at those colleges in order to get the power we need. First, it is important to understand how each college makes decisions and assigns resources to implement strategies. Then, we have to develop a strategy to build the power of all stakeholders and to align powerful decision-makers with our goal.

An SBCTC vision statement adopted in 2019 and affirmed in 2023 says,

“Leading with racial equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.”¹

So, we know there is agreement on values and goals. Sharing values and vision around culture and outcomes is important but in itself insufficient. The question becomes: What are we doing to have our college live up to the culture and outcomes we aspire to, and are administrators and financial resources committed to those values?

Spokane’s Community College Equity plan acknowledges the need for institutional change to achieve equity when it says,

“Equity requires the elimination of systemic barriers that have been deeply entrenched in systems of inequality and oppression. Equity achieves procedural and outcome fairness, promotes dignity, honor, and respect for all people. Equity ensures everyone has full access to the opportunities, power, and resources they need to flourish and achieve their full potential (Adapted from the WA 2020 Office of Equity Task).”
– Spokane Community College Equity Plan

1. <https://www.sbctc.edu/about/edi/#:~:text=SBCTC%20Strategic%20and%20Equity%20Plans&text=%E2%80%9CLeading%20with%20racial%20equity%2C%20our,service%20to%20our%20diverse%20communities.%E2%80%9D>

Every change process begins with a power analysis. Consciously or unconsciously, there are people who are benefiting from the status quo, and they are likely to defend it. We need to understand who is with the plan and who is in the way. It is important to recognize that power is fluid, not static, and those shifts create the opening for change.

Power maps are useful tools for analyzing power in an institution. Several tools and processes are used to create a power map.

Often, the first question asked is about the landscape or climate in which we are operating. The landscape for change in Yakima is different from that in Seattle. Understanding the larger public dialogue and how it influences local conditions is an essential first step. For example:

- Are there racial justice groups advocating for improvements?
- What are parent organizations advocating for, and are parents of color involved in these organizations, or are they predominantly white?
- Is the concept of DEI being challenged by political actors?
- Are there groups calling for book bans?
- Are there groups that support our values and goals not present in the public debate?

Understanding the landscape that you are operating in is important to creating an effective strategy.

The next level of assessment is about formal decision-making.

- Who makes the decisions needed to achieve the goal?
- Who influences those decisions? Who influences the decision-makers?
- How does budgeting intersect with decision-making, and how will resources be assigned to initiatives?

This can be complex. For example, the process may identify a deficit in math achievement, and the goal might be to increase completion rates for X or Y group by 20%. The strategy might include a tutoring intervention. This would impact the math department's budget and curriculum development and intersect with tutoring support systems to address the deficit and drive improved outcomes.

The equity plan planning process also has power considerations. It is designed to give voice to the needs of students who are “at risk” of failing to achieve the academic and career goals they have set for themselves.

How do these stakeholders and their concerns create shifts in the power map to create the changes that will support their future success?

How are resources, staff, and money assigned? How do the stakeholders we are bringing into our change process have the power to impact decision-makers and, ultimately, the decisions?

There is an additional analysis that needs to be done to implement the plan. Is there resistance to change at the operational level, and if so, what is the strategy to overcome that resistance? It may include inspiring, training, and setting new expectations. But when push comes to shove, there has to be follow-up accountability with those implementing the change.

Power is all about what is possible. So understanding who has the power to shape and carry out equity policies and knowing our power and its limitations will allow us to make realistic and effective strategies.

So what exactly is a strategy, and how do we develop one?



STRATEGIES & TOOLS

A strategy is a particular approach to achieving your goal.

A strategy has to take into account the political landscape, the resources that are available, and an assessment of our power and that of those who stand in our way. In the end, each group of stakeholders has to have a strategy to reach the goal. At one college, where there is an engaged and supportive campus administration, the strategy might emphasize using institutional resources and existing structures. In a college where there is an active and developed student movement, the focus might be on student engagement and mobilization. Every college in Washington has to have an equity plan.

What follows is a rough outline of how to build a leadership team and develop a strategy to create effective equity plans that have a real impact on student achievement and campus life.

Review the Climate Surveys

One aspect of the **Our Colleges, Our Future Act** was the creation of campus climate surveys. The climate surveys aim to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each college's equity measures. From the bill: "Colleges are encouraged to use campus climate surveys to develop and update strategic plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races."

Having completed the first round of campus climate surveys in 2022, colleges should now be evaluating the results and the research process itself. Reviewing your college's climate survey is also the starting point for advancing equity plans going forward. This will tell you where you are at on the equity journey and where you have to go next.

Communities for Our Colleges published a report in early 2023 that summarized the experience with climate surveys from several colleges, based on student research and interviews. Here are some of the findings of the report, *The Road to Equity – Washington's Community & Technical Colleges*:

Participation: Although different schools had different participation rates, many students, faculty, and staff noted that there needed to be more participation to disaggregate the information by stakeholder groups, including racial groups, immigrants, first-generation students, returning students, etc. Suggested best practices for greater participation included releasing the survey early in the fall semester.

Data: Getting data returned before Christmas enabled committees to identify areas for improvement and investment and involve stakeholder groups in reflecting on those categories and identifying others.

Coordination Across Colleges: While it is true that different colleges have different programs or stakeholder groups that they are working to engage, having a core set of questions asked across the colleges would enable colleges to identify shared concerns and disparate outcomes, creating learning opportunities between colleges. It also gives us a more global sense of how the entire system is performing. The suggestion has been to have a standard core set of questions while enabling schools to have questions that focus on issues specific to their college.

Reviewing your college's climate survey is the first step in any strategy for advancing equity on your campus. Next is building a leadership team.

Build a Stakeholder Coordinating Committee

Creating a successful equity plan and process requires engaging key stakeholders and leaders from different sectors. A coordinating committee is important because it builds pathways into our under-represented communities. This includes administration, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders from the broader community. Committee members should be connected to their community leaders, institutions, and individuals from their community.

Committee members need to share the values and the vision of the project. This includes both the process and the outcomes that are driven by building strong, accountable equity plans. In addition, understand that moving toward racial equity and justice is a continuous journey.

Note: Having the administration participate in the process is critical to creating and maintaining alignment with both the process and the outcomes.

How should you think about building the committee and getting representation from key constituencies?

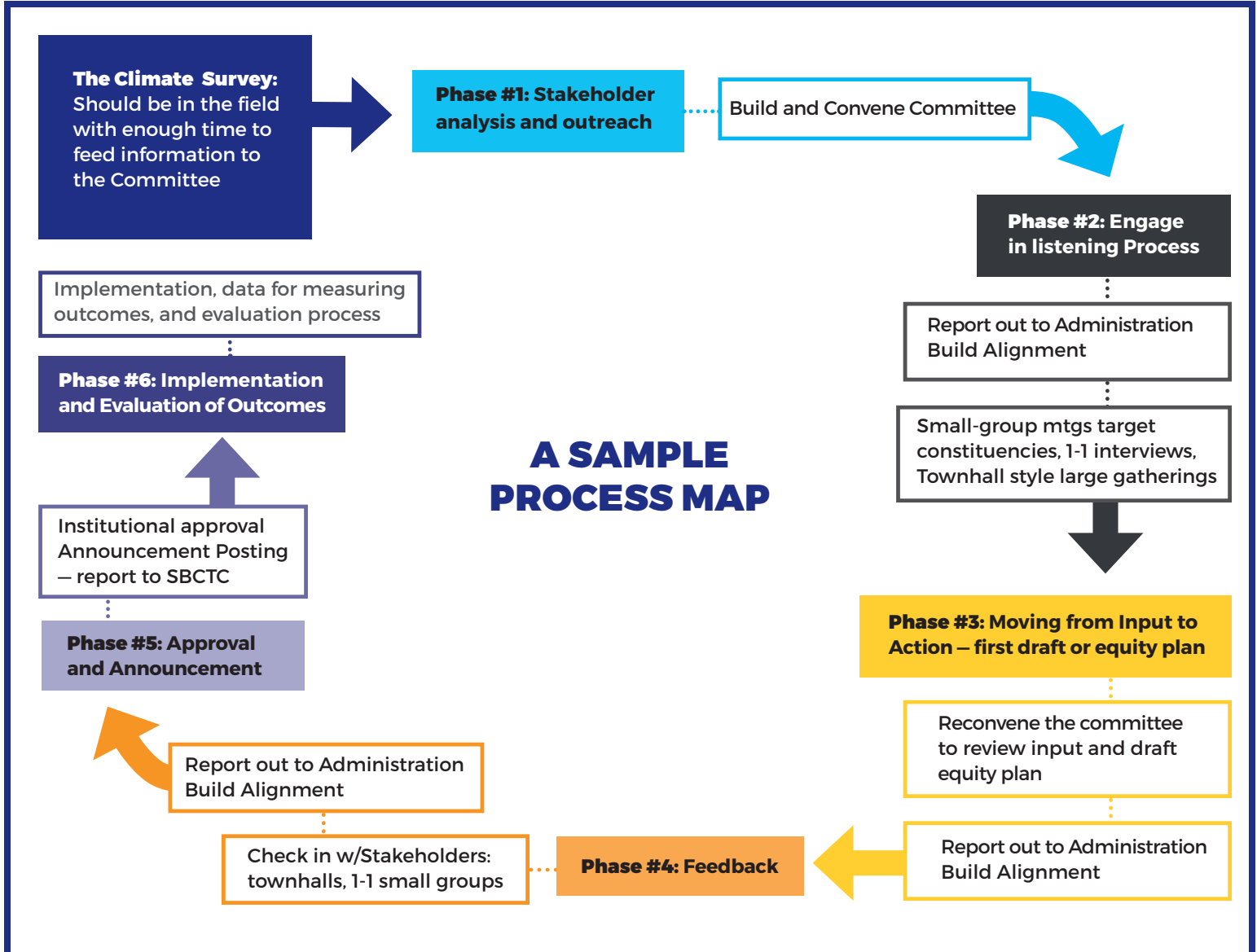
- ↪ **Step #1** Complete the process map.
- ↪ **Step #2** Conduct outreach meetings to assess people's motivations and interests in the project.
- ↪ **Step #3** Think about the ideal balance between ethnic and/or racial groups, the campus community, and the community at large—as well as interest & identity groups (disability, sexual identity, etc.).
- ↪ **Step #4** Identify the people you would like to invite and meet with them to review the role, timeline, and their level of interest.
- ↪ **Step #5** Assess yeses and nos and the balance you are working to achieve; invite others as needed to achieve the balance you are working toward.
- ↪ **Step #6** Convene your first meeting.

Make a Process Map

As we have said, achieving equity is a long journey. And sometimes, it is hard for stakeholders to know where we are at in the process. What came before? What comes next? And where are we headed? Creating a process map is a helpful tool to answer some of these questions and is a key first step to building your stakeholder coordinating committee.

Process mapping is used to map out a process or a workflow visually. By creating a visual map or flowchart, you can communicate how a process works in a simple, clear, and concise manner.

The process map can be posted and used with stakeholders to explain the process and timeline. It can be posted on the website to increase the accessibility of the process.



Organizing the First Meeting of the Coordinating Committee

Once you have a process map and a list of potential participants in a stakeholder coordinating committee, it's time to organize the first meeting. Below is a guide to structuring the meeting.

Purpose: To build consensus around a shared vision and work plan to create an Equity Plan

Outcomes:

- Build relationships and trust between committee members.
- Build a shared understanding of the project's purpose and process.
- Share the top takeaways from the climate assessment and discuss participation rates and the concerns that have surfaced.
- Get specific commitments to support the process.

Sample agenda for the first meeting:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review the purpose of the committee and committee member roles.
3. Round robin: Why is access to community college important to your community?
4. A 5-minute presentation on key takeaways from the climate survey, including who participated and what issues surfaced. Discussion:
 - a. What voices may not have been surfaced and heard from?
 - b. What do the findings tell us?
5. Getting started:
6. Present the proposed process and get input and feedback from the group.
7. What are community considerations that we need to understand?
8. We need help with:
 - a. Publicizing the town hall
 - c. Doing 1-1 outreach meetings
 - d. Co-facilitating small group meetings
 - e. Getting commitments from committee members
9. Evaluation and next meeting



ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Outreach and Listening Process

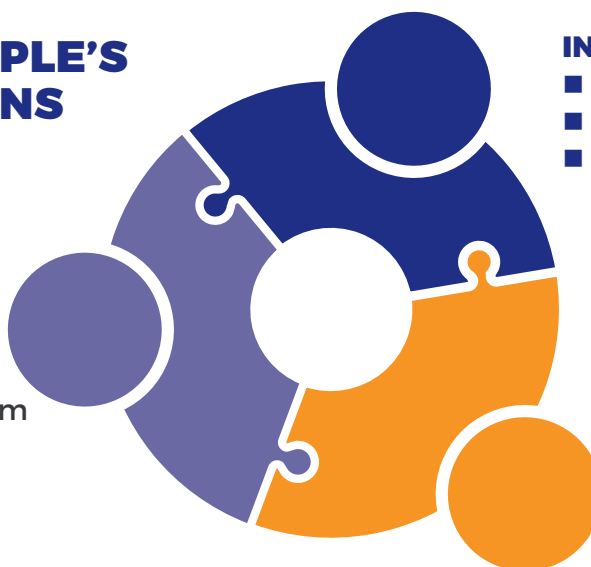
It is not enough to have a plan to reach out to key stakeholders and constituents. We also need to know HOW to do that outreach. The outreach and listening process aims to elevate the experiences and desires of under-represented constituencies in the discussion. We want to understand what barriers they have run into and what solutions/changes they would recommend to enhance student success across the system,

Outreach involves listening for and to people’s motivations. People’s motivations are varied and change over time. Organizers should listen for the values, belief systems, worldviews, hopes, aspirations, and ideas people hold that may encourage their participation. They may become active because they are directly impacted by one of the barriers and want to see it addressed in the process – they come to the table because of a direct “interest.” In addition, although we all hold multiple identities simultaneously, one of those identities may propel us to action.

IDENTIFY PEOPLE’S MOTIVATIONS

IDEAS

- Values
- Belief System
- Worldview
- Hopes



INTERESTS

- Material needs
- “Self-interest”
- Threats

IDENTITY

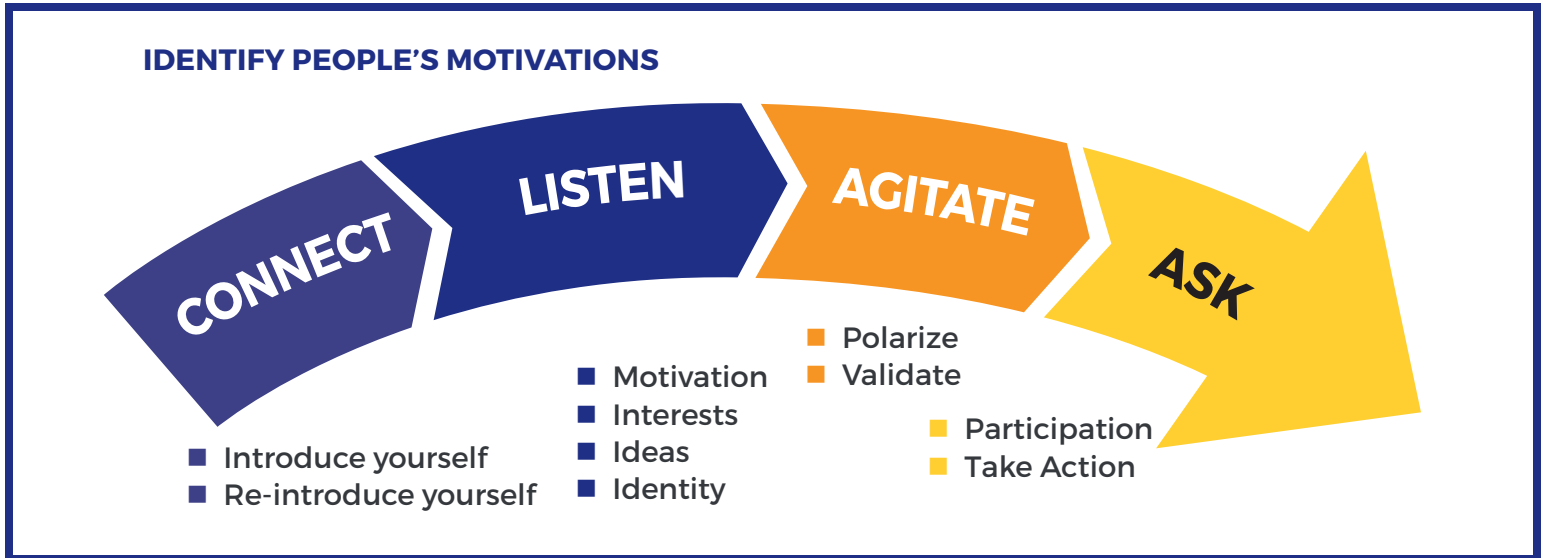
- Sense of community
- Belonging
- Identity group
- Friends and family

One-on-One Meetings

One of the main forms of outreach to stakeholders is the one-on-one meeting. One-on-one meetings, done in person, enable us to listen to and build relationships with key individual stakeholders. One-on-ones are much better than group meetings at identifying motivations and moving people into action. One-on-ones are best done in person in a place where the person you are meeting with feels safe. It is critical to listen more than talk and to focus on understanding people's experiences and motivations. We do this by asking open-ended questions. For example:

- What do you see as the value of a college education?
- Do you have experience in college?
- If yes, can you share your experiences?
- What helped you achieve your goals? What were the barriers to meeting your goals?
- Is it time to address those barriers?
- Is that action best done by one person advocating or a process that raises the voices of those who have experienced these or other obstacles?

The image below outlines the process of a one-on-one meeting. Our first step is to introduce ourselves and the project and then to connect with people. This can take many forms: "Is that a photo of your daughter? I have a child of the same age." "I heard you went to Yakima Valley Community College before going to Central — is that so?" Our second step is to listen. Listening is core to our effectiveness. Ask open-ended questions to identify the person's motivations. And then listen, listen, listen! In step three, we transition to questions that clarify the person's readiness to take action. We call this "agitation," but we are just challenging the individual to live up to the motivations they just mentioned. In the final step, we make an ask. The ask may be as simple as, "Can I stay in touch? Would you be willing to push out information and encourage others in your community to participate — parents, potential current and past students, etc.?" Or you could ask someone to come to a meeting or testify at a hearing. The level of the ask should be appropriate to the level of your relationship with the person and their level of commitment.



HERE ARE ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR ONE-ON-ONES:

- 1. Draw on their experiences.** Ask people to share their educational experiences, achievements, and barriers they experienced along the way. The goal is to tap into the concrete experiences that shape a person's life and values.
- 2. Acknowledge their experiences and the impact they have had on their lives.** This includes acknowledging experiences as well as reflecting on the emotions that the experience has elicited. For example, if they say, "That made me angry," you might say, "Yeah, that sounds infuriating." If they show feelings in tone or body language, you might say, "It seems like you were proud of that," or simply, "How did that make you feel?"
- 3. Explore choices.** It is helpful to explore hard choices; for example, what made you leave school? What pressure were you under? And then move the conversation to explore what supports, if in place, would have led to a different choice.
- 4. Challenging or "Agitational" Questions** are designed to test people's readiness to invest in solutions and your project. Examples:
 - ➡ It sounds like not only have you run into issues achieving your goals but you have heard the same from other people in your community.
 - ➡ You had great ideas about solutions. Is it time to make change happen?
 - ➡ Does our approach of involving multiple stakeholders make sense?
 - ➡ Will you support the project?

Use POP for Effective Meetings

Meetings are also important outreach tools. Of course, everyone has had experiences with boring, ineffective, or downright painful meetings. We want meetings that are effective, fun, and make people want to come back next time. The POP model (Purpose, Outcomes, and Process) is a helpful tool for building great meetings. Leslie Sholl Jaffe developed this tool for planning events and meetings. Here are the basics:

PURPOSE:

Explain why you are having the meeting. Why are we undertaking this?
What is the purpose?

OUTCOMES:

What specific outcomes do we want to accomplish as a result of this action?

PROCESS:

What steps will we take to achieve these outcomes and fulfill the purpose? For a meeting, this is the agenda.

We give examples of POPs in the various sample meeting agendas we provide in the toolkit.

Small-Group Discussions

Another important tactic for outreach and engagement is the small-group meeting. While not as personal as a one-on-one meeting, organizing small-group discussions can be an effective way to get substantive stakeholder engagement and feedback on an equity plan. Identity groups, including clubs, cultural organizations, and sports teams, at the college and high school levels have been brought into the process using a small-group meeting format. Participants may be more comfortable sharing their experiences and challenges with the support of their peer group. It is often effective to follow a small-group meeting with individual one-on-ones. Here is a model agenda for a small-group outreach meeting:

PURPOSE: To build relationships with a specific community and understand their experiences within the college system.

OUTCOMES:

- Participants understand the purpose of our equity plan and the role of an inclusive process.
- Build relationships with the community.
- Understand aspirations and barriers to achievement.
- Identify possible solutions.

PROCESS/AGENDA:

1. Introduction to you and the project (purpose, process, and outcomes)
2. Round-robin introductions: Why is college achievement important to you?
3. Snowball exercise aims to surface barriers to accessing and completing community college. Give each participant 5 sticky notes and a marker to write down any barriers they have encountered applying to and achieving their educational goals. Ask participants to post the notes on a wall. And then to group common experiences and barriers.
4. Discussion: What are your reflections about these experiences? What, if any, solutions would you recommend? Any additional thoughts that you would like to share?
5. Evaluation
6. Next steps and adjourn

Small-Group Meeting Example: Seattle Central

In May 2023, Seattle Central College's Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Community (EDIC) hosted a Women of Color Empowerment Luncheon. The meeting provided an opportunity for staff and faculty who identify as women of color to share their experiences and be supported and acknowledged. This created an opening for longer-term engagement on equity issues on the campus.

Town Hall Meetings

A town hall meeting is a larger, public gathering that casts a bigger net of participants than a small-group meeting. A town hall meeting can be an effective strategy for building momentum for your equity plan. Town hall meetings give diverse constituencies a place to share their experiences and concerns and hear from others. They create transparency, build awareness across communities, and can help identify barriers to participation. These large public meetings can also surface solutions you haven't thought about.

Some tips for a successful town hall include:

- Using your coordinating committee to inform your agenda, do outreach, and support facilitation at your event.
- Assessing the unique characteristics and issues across the various stakeholder groups: The analysis should include demographics, culture, and history of barriers to attending and completing college.
- Having clarity of purpose: The goal of the town hall is to create a shared space where stakeholders across your larger community can speak to their experiences — including barriers to access and completion — and surface solutions.
- Having strong logistics: Effective town halls are held at locations accessible to the targeted stakeholder population, have built a participatory agenda, identified strong facilitators, have appropriate staff to support the event, and have materials for distribution.
- Having effective outreach and promotion: We want to use our earlier outreach contacts to publicize the event, It should be announced on the website, in the local paper, on social media, and through on-campus email.

Create a Timeline for the Town Hall Meeting

Town hall meetings are bigger and more complicated than small group meetings. You need to make a timeline 12 weeks before the event to have success. Below is a sample timeline as a guide. Adapt to your needs,

- Review your resources — 3 months out
 - Coordinating Committee.
 - Stakeholders who will help publicize the event.
 - Communications staff inside your college. Be creative. Is there a communications class that would help develop materials if this isn't available? Are there students who would help document the event?
 - Access to college: website, social media, email list, newspaper, etc.
- Working with your coordinating committee — 2 months out
 - Review and agree on the purpose of the town hall.
 - Select a date.
 - Review and agree on stakeholder populations to do targeted outreach to.
 - Propose and review an outreach plan.
 - Divide up roles and responsibilities.
- Outreach and promotion — 3 weeks out
 - Create materials, including posting for college websites, social media, email announcements and reminders, flyers, posters, and the same materials for partners from your stakeholder analysis and outreach efforts.
 - Contact partners and reconfirm willingness to distribute materials.
 - Create a timeline for distribution.
 - Do face-to-face outreach to stakeholder groups on campus. For example, clubs, groups that you did small group discussions with, unions, etc.
- Build an Agenda and agenda and prep presenters and facilitators (see sample below) — 2 months out
- Think through how you will document the event — 2 months out
- Hold the event.
- Debrief the event with the coordinating committee.
 - What worked?
 - What could we improve in the future?
 - What did we learn?
 - Where are there still gaps in our understanding of the problems or ideas about solutions?

Planning a Town Hall Agenda

Here is a model agenda for a town hall meeting:

PURPOSE: To ground the equity action plan in a shared understanding across stakeholders and communities about the experiences/barriers to accessing and community college, as well as to begin the process of identifying potential solutions.

OUTCOMES:

- To hear directly from different stakeholders/college community members about the experiences/barriers to accessing and completing community college
- To identify patterns in experiences across different stakeholder/college community members
- To create a shared understanding across the entire community of the experiences/barriers to accessing and completing community college
- To begin to surface solutions that break down the barriers to access and achievement

Note: In planning the process, it is helpful to understand how many participants you expect and to think through what you would do if more or fewer people were participating than anticipated.

Your facilitation team should be diverse, representing key stakeholders. This sends a message that you are ready to hear what is shared.

Think in advance about how you will document and collect the experiences, concerns, and solutions suggested by participants. How will you share your approach to documentation with participants?

Process/Agenda:

1. Welcome participants and review of the purpose and outcome of the town hall meeting.
2. Introduce your facilitation team.
3. Identify and review community ground rules for participation.
4. Surface experiences of barriers to access and completion. (There are many ways you can get participation from the group. See sidebar for participation methods or choose your own.)
5. Summary of findings: Have facilitator(s) share what they have heard and learned from participants. This requires having someone document key findings as they are surfaced. Then ask participants if they still need to include anything.
6. Evaluation:
 - a. Provide an online survey participants can access from their phones.
 - b. Hand out evaluation survey to fill out.
 - c. Use a popcorn method to hear from participants.

SNOWBALL EXERCISE

The goal of this activity is to surface barriers to accessing and completing community college. Give each participant 5 sticky notes and a marker to write down any barriers they have encountered applying to college and achieving their educational goals. Ask participants to post the notes on a wall. And then collectively group common experiences and barriers.

This might be followed with a listening session where participants have 1 minute to share their personal experience with a barrier.

This might be combined with Dot Voting (see below) to prioritize shared concerns.

Small-Group Discussion

Break out participants in groups of 5-10. Assign a facilitator, a note taker, and a report-back person to take notes with marker on butcher paper.

Give each group a marker and butcher paper. Ask them to go around the circle and give each person 2 minutes to share their experiences. Participants can take a pass if they are uncomfortable sharing. Then ask the group to create a list of barriers on their butcher paper and indicate with a star which ones seemed to be more common than others.

Ask participants to post their butcher paper on a shared wall, creating a gallery walk. Have a report-back person be ready to respond to other participants' questions about their group's list.

Have participants walk past and read other butcher papers and be able to ask the report-back person any clarifying questions they may have.

Think about how you want to document the storytelling part of the small-group discussions and what follow-up and permissions would be necessary to share their stories more broadly.

DOT VOTING

Assuming the climate survey or other approaches to outreach have surfaced a set of systemic barriers, list them on butcher paper (or you could use technology to do this – for example, using a QR code, have participants access a survey) and give participants “dots” to vote for or flag any barriers they have experienced.

Have other categories to surface additional barriers.

FISHBOWL EXERCISE

The fishbowl technique is used to organize medium- or large-group discussions. Participants are organized into a small inner circle and a large outer circle. Participants in the outer circle are listeners, and the inner-circle participants are organized to surface and begin the discussion. As the discussion proceeds, outer-circle participants are invited to “tap in” – i.e., tap on the shoulder of an inner-circle participant and take their seat as they move to the outer circle. There is a facilitator or moderator of the discussion, who proposes the questions and intervenes if necessary to move the question along, invites participation from the outer circle, encourages participation as necessary, etc.

It is important to set up the original participants in the inner circle. To meet our purpose, these are important considerations:

- Does the inner circle represent the various targeted stakeholder groups?
- Prep this inner circle in advance so they are OK with it and prepared to answer the questions as they are posed.

Sample questions to kick off the conversation:

- What current student supports have you benefited from? Please share any challenges you have had accessing or attaining your educational goals.
- How would you address the challenges that surfaced in this discussion?

OPEN MIC SPEAKOUT

The facilitator introduces the question and projects it on a screen. Allow participants to share their experiences and concerns at an open mic, with a time limit (2 minutes).

Sample questions to kick off the conversation:

- What current student supports have you benefited from?
- Please share any challenges you have had accessing or attaining your educational goals.
- How would you address the challenges that surfaced in this discussion?

This technique may be combined with dot voting. Summarize the categories of concern and ask participants to indicate which of those concerns they have experienced and/or ask them to take 3-4 dots to identify their top-level concerns.



MOVING FROM INPUT TO EQUITY ACTION PLAN

Creating Equity Action Plans

Another important aspect of the Our Colleges, Our Future Act was the mandate for colleges to create equity plans. **They should really be called “equity action plans,” because equity can’t be achieved without taking proactive steps.**

In 2021, the Washington State Legislature aimed for 70% of the state’s residents to achieve a postsecondary education in order to reach the state’s workforce development goals. Increasing enrollment and completion of all students, but particularly BIPOC students, was made a statewide objective.

To achieve this goal, investments are needed to address under-enrollment and low completion rates by looking at both the constituencies that were underrepresented and needed to be included in the student population that was completing college as well as where some effective supports and programs have improved completion rates. The goal was to improve the participation of all populations, but with increased attention to students with disabilities, first-generation students, low-income students, and underrepresented minority students.

Equity plans were put in place to build ongoing stakeholders’ input to surface and address barriers to college access and completion.

The legislature clarified that to create the plans, there needed to be the following:

- An inclusive stakeholder process

“ including, but not limited to, classified staff, faculty, administrative exempt staff, students, and community organizations. Colleges are encouraged to use campus climate surveys to develop and update strategic plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races.”

- Each college would allow and foster students from marginalized communities to create “diversity opportunities,” student-based organizations, peer mentorship and navigation programs, and ensure access to trained mentorship programs.
- Culturally appropriate outreach programs that could include using community-based organizations to expand outreach and helping students navigate the student aid system.

Timeline:

“ Beginning July 30, 2022, all community and technical colleges must submit, on a biennial basis, strategic plans to the state board for community and technical colleges for achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races on their campuses.”

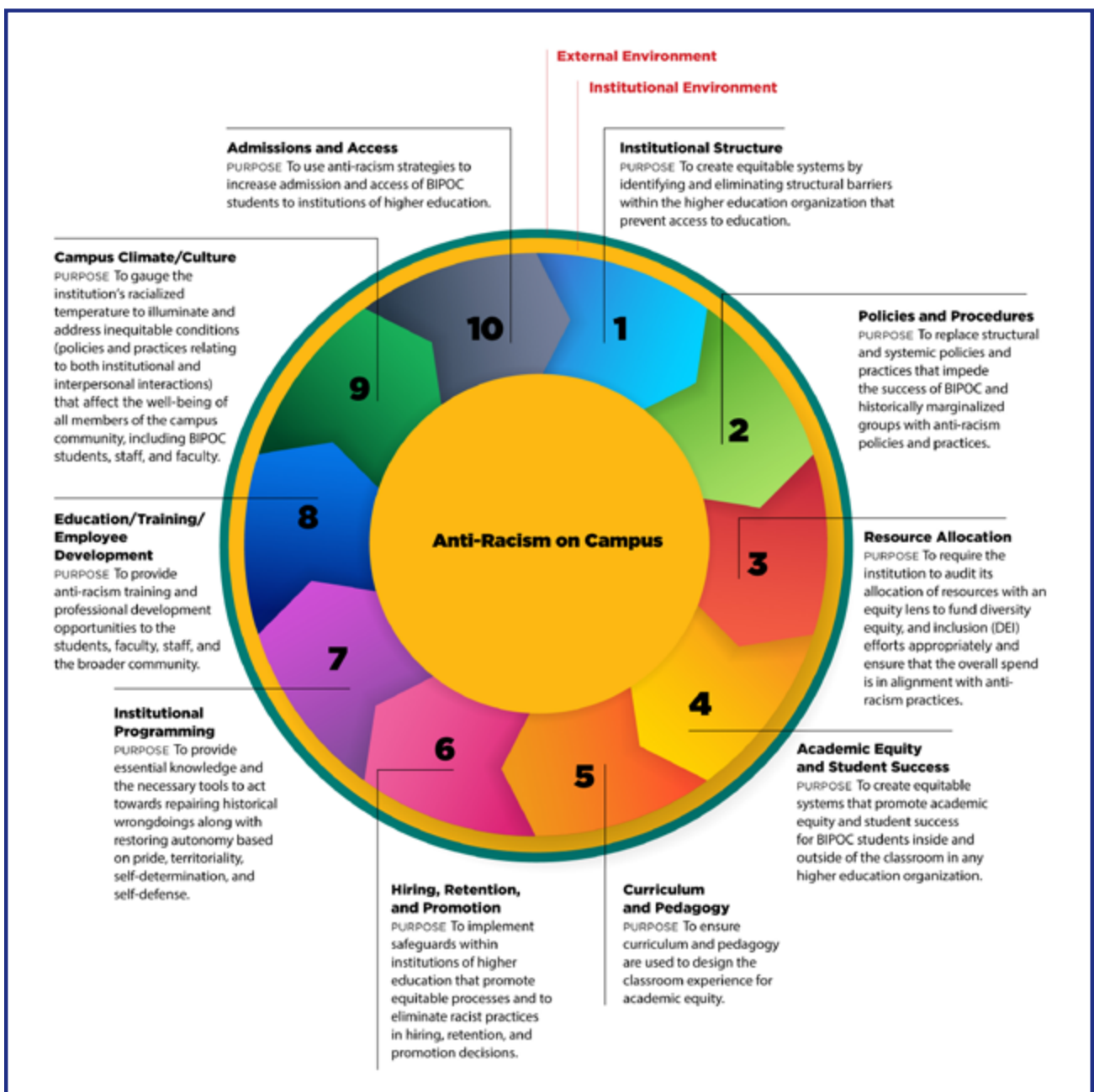
The next equity action plan is due July 30, 2024.

Components of an Equity Plan

An equity plan begins by articulating the college's vision of what role equity plays in achieving the school's goals/outcomes. It also includes what shared values the equity plan is grounded in.

The National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education's Anti-Racism Framework is a helpful tool for understanding the different aspects of equity and inclusion in higher education settings (see chart below).

National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education's Anti-Racism Framework <https://www.nadohe.org/statements/antiracism-framework>



Most importantly, the plan needs to include SMARTIE goals – i.e., goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable. In addition to the SMARTIE goals, the plan should include the strategies employed to meet those goals. Ideally, SMARTIE goals are included in the college’s larger strategic plan. We want equity to be central to the strategic goals of the whole institution and not a side concern.

While these are the components of an equity action plan, each will look a little different. The plan’s effectiveness is not reflected in the length of the document. Rather, it’s in creating a clear vision of what success looks like and the measurable steps/investments the college is taking to move toward that vision.

Here are two samples of effective equity plans on the next pages

CORE THEMES

1 – STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

We prepare students for further education and employment.

Goal 1: Increase student persistence

Measures of Achievement

- Students transition from prior basic skills into pre-college math
- Students transition from 0 to 15 college-level credits within the year
- Students transition from 30 to 45 college-level credits within the year
- Students complete a college-level math within their first academic year
- Students are continuously enrolled during their first academic year

Goal 2: Increase certificate and degree completion in transfer and workforce programs

Measures of Achievement

- Students graduate with a degree/certificate within 3 years

Goal 3: Increase job placement for workforce education students

Measures of Achievement

- Workforce students are employed within 12 months after completion/graduation

2 – EQUITY

Given the diversity of our changing community, we cultivate an environment that reduces barriers and removes equity gaps.

Goal 1: Close equity gaps

Measures of Achievement

- Achievement gap: Fall to Fall Retention
 - Comparison between all full time and part time students
 - Comparison between Historically Underrepresented and Caucasian/Asian students
 - Comparison between students who receive Pell financial aid and students who do not receive Pell financial aid
- Achievement gap: 3-year Completion
 - Comparison between full time and part time students
 - Comparison between Historically Underrepresented and Caucasian/Asian students
 - Comparison between students who receive Pell financial aid and students who do not receive Pell financial aid
- Proportion of Historically Underrepresented graduates mirror the fall enrollments of Historically Underrepresented students.

Goal 2: Increase the ethnic diversity of faculty, staff, and administrative/exempt employees

Measures of Achievement

- Faculty by ethnic demographics
- Classified staff by ethnic demographics
- Administrative/exempt staff by ethnic demographics

3 – LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

We create accessible and enriching student experiences.

Goal 1: Enhance General Education Competency

Measures of Achievement

- Students who meet the College Wide Abilities:
 - Communicate Effectively
 - Computation
 - Critical Thinking
 - Ethics
 - Multicultural Awareness

Goal 2: Enhance quality student experiences and campus life activities

Measures of Achievement

- Student satisfaction with student life activities
- Student satisfaction of campus support services

2. <https://spsc.edu/about/strategic-plan#:~:text=We%20promote%20inclusiveness%20and%20equity,students%20in%20achieving%20their%20goals>.

EQUITY 2023 SHORT TERM ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AVPS EDI

(January 14, 2021)

EQUITY 2023 GOAL 1:

Increase the completion rate for historically underserved BIPOC students from 48% to 66% in the next three years.

Recommended short-term actions:

1. Address life needs and concerns: financial, childcare, transportation, food and housing insecurity
2. Realize and deepen a sense of belonging by creating a first-year experience (FYE) for students and cohort model of in-class and outside of class support, including nurturing existing and emerging ethnic student clubs for students and Affinity Groups for employees
3. Improve financial aid practices, especially student experience
4. Reimagine student entry and onboarding to develop a more equitable experience. Reshape the entire student FYE experience to include one stop services such as financial aid, assistance re: worker retraining (Workforce), and other services and needs (see bullet 1 above)

EQUITY 2023 GOAL 2:

Increase the diversity makeup among faculty and administrative staff by achieving 50% hires of faculty and administrators of color that reflect student body demographics with all new and open positions in the next three years.

Recommended short-term actions:

1. Hiring practices - train Hiring Authorities, Search Chairs, and Search Committees to recruit and build the pool of applicants to reflect the demographics of our students and community, review job requirements to screen in candidates
2. Expand and offer Inclusion Advocate and implicit bias training to more employees with a focus on training for specific search committee roles, e.g., Search Committee Chairs, Members, and Hiring Authorities
3. Focus on increasing retention of BIPOC employees to include onboarding, mentoring, professional development opportunities, and Affinity Groups

EQUITY 2023 GOAL 3:

Develop and implement mandatory anti-bias and anti-racist training for all nonteaching staff; work with AFT-Seattle to develop and offer professional development workshops on biasfree teaching and learning for all faculty.

Recommended short-term actions:

1. Fund and support District Equity Institute to expand anti-bias anti-racist training for all employees. In order to be completed in the short term, budget outlay of \$12,000 per training is needed: if we offer for 3 quarters/year = \$36,000, and if 4 quarters/year = \$48,000. Faculty stipends for faculty are also needed to assist in this lift and to more broadly scale it across District.
2. Support existing FDIC (Faculty Diversity and Inclusion Committee) training for faculty hiring to increase number of faculty to reflect student demographics.

3. https://www.seattlecolleges.edu/sites/seattlecolleges.southseattle.edu/files/inline-files/Equity%202023%20Short%20Term%20actions%20recommendations%20from%20AVP%20EDIs%20condensed_0.pdf

First Draft of the Equity Plan

The coordinating committee is a key resource to review stakeholders' input and help draft the SMARTIE goals that are the heart of the equity action plan.

Note: It is important to check to make sure that the committee members include representation from college departments where potential challenges have been identified. These faculty and staff will be implementing recommendations and should be part of the goals-setting and strategy design so that there is a built-in commitment to implement the strategies.

It is likely that this means the coordinating committee may have multiple meetings or assign smaller groups to design goals and outcomes.

MODEL POP FOR COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING

PURPOSE: To move from stakeholder input to drafting an equity plan

OUTCOMES:

- Review and summarize findings from the various outreach and listening activities.
- Review ideas to address the barriers.
- Discuss and recommend plan to draft the plan.

PROCESS/AGENDA:

- Review and summarize findings from the various outreach and listening activities.
- Review ideas to address the barriers.
- Discuss and recommend:
 - Do we need to prioritize barriers to be addressed over the next 2 years?
 - What are the solutions, experiments, and/or strategies that can be assigned to each of the barriers?
 - Who would be involved in implementing the change, and have they been consulted about the goal and the implementation strategy?
 - What would be the cost of implementation?
 - What would be the measures of success?
 - Who are the stakeholders that need to be checked in with before affirming the recommendation?
- Review the process to touch back with stakeholders for additional feedback.

Feedback From Stakeholders and Key Constituencies

Check in with the administration to ensure that the proposed solutions are within the budget and the resources of the college and will be supported if proposed.

Three approaches to stakeholder feedback:

- Committee members share outreach and check-ins with their community.
- Reconvene a town hall-style meeting to review the recommendations and elicit feedback.
- Continue with small-group listening sessions.
- Recommended strategies will include shifts in current programming, the creation of student supports, and the reallocation of funding. It is important to listen to the deans, faculty, and staff who will be implementing the changes. Without their ownership of the goal and a concrete plan for implementation, progress will be very slow.
- It is important for the committee to focus on levels of agreement, including these:
 - **Step 1:** Do we agree with the assessment and the problems we are addressing?
 - **Step 2:** Do we agree with the outcome we are driving toward?
 - **Step 3:** Do we agree with the strategies that must be employed to implement the strategies and achieve the intended outcomes?

Final Approval and Budget Process

To actually make the equity action plan a reality, you need final approval from the administration and an allocation of budget and resources to put it into action. By including administrators in the coordinating committee and updating the participation in the coordinating committee regularly, the equity action plan is positioned to be adopted. It is crucial to identify any tensions that the administration has with the goals and strategies early in the process so that they may be resolved.

Common problems in any planning process include these:

- Unrealistic goals: The goals can be scaled back or extended over a longer period of time.
- Although an implementation strategy is not part of the public plan, a draft strategy is helpful to ensure steady progress toward the goals. If possible, it should be included and reviewed at this juncture.
- Finding the financial and staffing resources to implement the plan.
- Competing priorities.
- A disagreement around the problem and, therefore, the solutions proposed.

As with the coordinating committee, it is important to build levels of agreement across the administration throughout the process. The questions are the same:

- **Step 1:** Do we agree with the assessment and the problems we are addressing?
- **Step 2:** Do we agree with the outcome we are driving toward?
- **Step 3:** Do we agree with the strategies that must be employed to implement the strategies and achieve the intended outcomes?



BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation process begins with engaging the people responsible for the implementation in creating the goals and strategies. If this hasn't happened or there is still resistance to change, the following strategies may be helpful.

- Engagement with a goal of motivating implementers: This could mean bringing in experts, students who are impacted, parents, or other community members to present and discuss the problem and solutions.
- Review the goals and strategies so all implementers are fully informed not only about their role but how it fits into a larger change model.
- Review of current and new roles and updated or new job descriptions with clear expectations.
- Breakdown of key strategies to identify interim outcomes and check-in points to address challenges as shifts and investments are made.
- What is the data system being used to measure progress?
- Celebrate small victories by sharing with the entire community. This can be shifts found in the data, it can be stories about student success and the impact of strategies that have been prioritized, and/or it can be stories of work completed by faculty and staff.

Climate surveys and a renewed process to update equity plans occur in two-year cycles. The first plan was due in July 2022. This means that new or updated plans are due in July 2024. We need to kick off the next cycle of stakeholder engagement in the fall of 2023.

An evaluation of past performance against the equity plan's goals needs to kick off the next cycle. The creation of a learning environment where there is the "safety to fail" and applying those lessons to building stronger plans is critical. Equity is a journey, not a destination. To move forward, stakeholders need to acknowledge and address failures and ongoing disparate outcomes.