FY 2022-2023 Year-In-Review

Health Equity Portfolio (HEP)
August 2023

NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEP FY 22-23 REPORT: PROGRESS, PRIORITIES, OPPORTUNITIES

FY 22-23 HEP Priorities

1. Solidifying the *infrastructure* of the Portfolio

2. Aligning HEP to four (4) *NCDHHS 2021-2023 Strategic Plan Goals*

3. Supporting NCDHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley's priorities, which include *Behavioral Health and Resilience, Child & Family Well-Being*, and a *Strong and Inclusive Workforce*

MISSION

Embedding equity through trust, collaboration, innovation, leadership and quality service delivery

VISION

Foster fair and just opportunities for all people of North Carolina to achieve their healthiest outcome.

Figure 1 - HEP Mission and Vision

Notable Accomplishments in the FY 22-23

✓ Introducing an impactful *HEP website and internal hive site*, showcasing efforts and vital resources to tackle health disparities.

✓ Educating staff through a dynamic *Lunch and Learn*, which fostered knowledge of people, culture, belonging, and health equity.

✓ Uniting 260 leaders in the *Black Faith Leaders Network*, HEP emphasized vital links between faith networks and health equity in priority communities.

✓ Providing consultation and assistance to communities and partner organizations, through the Offices of DEI, HE, and Rural Health. The HE Historically Marginalized Populations *(HMP) Connections Network* reached over 600 health equity advocates from July 2022 to April 2023.

✓ Disseminating culturally relevant *DEI and HE resources* for improved health outcomes across North Carolina's diverse population.

✓ Supporting equity by creating or sustaining *access to care in rural* and underserved communities.

✓ Engaging over 300 staff and leaders in the on-going work of formalizing the *NCDHHS governance structure* for people, culture, and belonging within our workforce and our engagement with our partners as the foundation for advancing and sustaining health equity strategies for NC.

✓ Integrated the *Olmstead Team* which is focused on development of community solutions and addressing the unique needs of individuals with disabilities into the HEP.

✓ Successfully launched the NCDHHS Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Serving Institutions, *HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program* in partnership with the Division for Public Health for purposes of building a strong and inclusive public health workforce pipeline. 86 interns representing all HBCUs and two MSIs have participated in this program for 2022-23.

FY 2022-2023 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HEP STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

📐 Laying the Foundation

1 HEP developed the **NCDHHS Health Equity Framework** to be used by NCDHHS and as a foundation to catalyze action to put health equity at the center of work.

2 HEP developed the **NCDHHS Health Equity Governance Model** that promotes an aligned and amplified health equity call to action. The model serves as a path for creating a decision-making structure within DHHS.
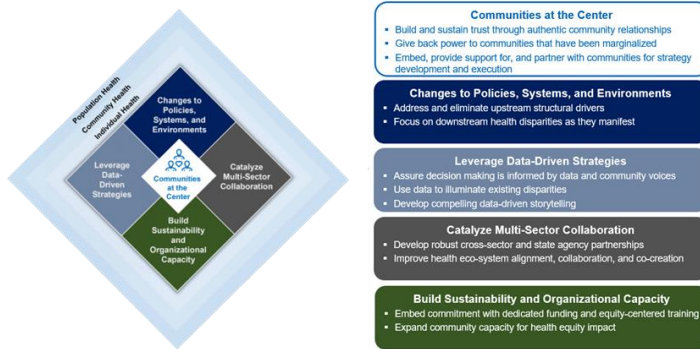

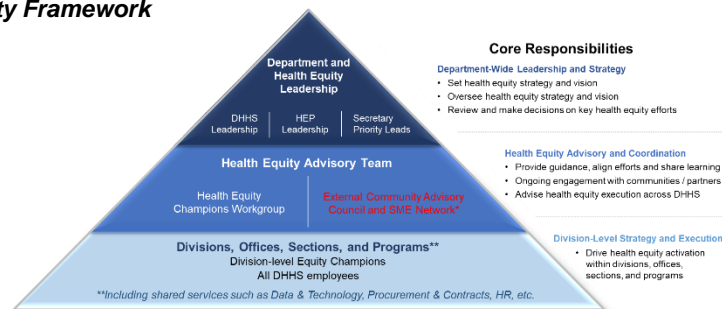*Figure 2: NCDHHS Health Equity Framework*
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Figure 3: NCDHHS Health Equity Governance Model
Appendix Slide: 19

🖥️ Establishing a Digital Footprint

Office of Rural Health (ORH) previously established a website, and over the course of the fiscal year, the remaining two offices, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) and Office of Health Equity (OHE), have subsequently launched their respective official websites (public) and intranet sites (DHHS employees-only).

✳️ *Now HEP and its three offices all have active and updated websites, establishing a digital footprint to promote health literacy and education.*

The websites and intranet sites will enhance communication and engagement with communities and partners and facilitate the dissemination of DEI and HE initiatives and resources.
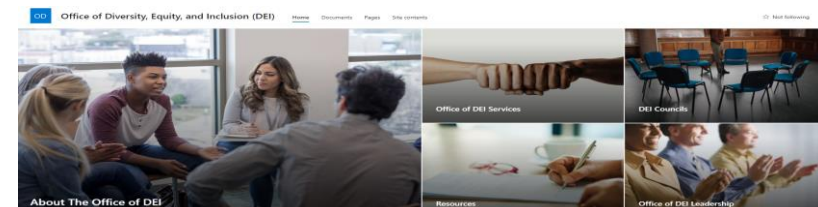

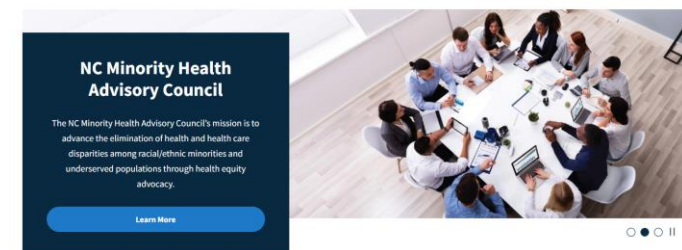*Figure 4: ODEI Hive (Intranet Site)*

Office of Health Equity

Figure 5: OHE's external website

FOSTERING EXCELLENCE IN DAILY OPERATIONS

FOSTERING EXCELLENCE

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Expanded OHE Impact through Staff Hiring

As of June 2023, all permanent and temporary staff positions have been filled to rebuild and reestablish OHE's capacity to lead and implement health equity programs and services and provide consultative guidance. With **11 new staff members** successfully onboarded, **OHE is better equipped** to proactively respond to the needs of the community and state of North Carolina.

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Expanded ODEI Impact through Staff Hiring

To amplify its impact, ODEI strategically expanded its team, bringing in diverse perspectives and expertise through the hiring of **six new team members**, an Administrative Specialist, two Program Managers, a Project Coordinator shared with the HBCU/MSI Internship Program, an HBCU/MSI intern, and a Master of Public Health (MPH) intern. These new team members have become **vital drivers of ODEI's priorities and goals**.

ODEI Centering Session

ODEI successfully inaugurated **its first centering session**, bringing together new staff members and aligning them with the office's goals, strategies, and values and those of the broader portfolio. This session prominently highlighted the **significance of fostering workplace belonging** and **cultivating a positive organizational culture**.

DEI Definitions and Value Statements

To foster a shared understanding of DEI concepts, ODEI introduced definitions and value statements as a foundational framework, **guiding team members towards a deeper appreciation** of diversity and equity in the workplace.

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DRIVING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSIVITY IN NCDHHS WORKFORCE

Key Milestone: Active DEI Council Network with 29 Councils

ODEI is taking transformative actions that ripple across NCDHHS, leaving a **lasting impact on culture and operations**. Since its inception, ODEI has taken a leadership role in transforming DEI practice and culture across the Department **through a network of 29 NCDHHS DEI councils**, representing different Divisions and Offices across the Department and teams. These councils serve as **catalysts for collaboration**, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in addressing diversity challenges and **promoting inclusivity across the organization.**

Key Milestone: Over 175 DEI Council Members Convened

Over **175** DEI Council executive sponsors, co-chairs, and members **joined our first and second DEI Council Network Meetings** in March and June 2023. Councils were provided with department-wide DEI updates, information, and presentations from the NCDHHS-HR team and Office of State Human Resources (OSHR).

Key Milestone: DEI Governance Model Established and Promoted across NCDHHS

ODEI implemented a comprehensive decision-making/governance model that is focused on **fostering a collective commitment to DEI principles** and creating a more inclusive organizational environment where ideas flow equitably. The model highlights the critical role everyone plays in DEI work at all levels.
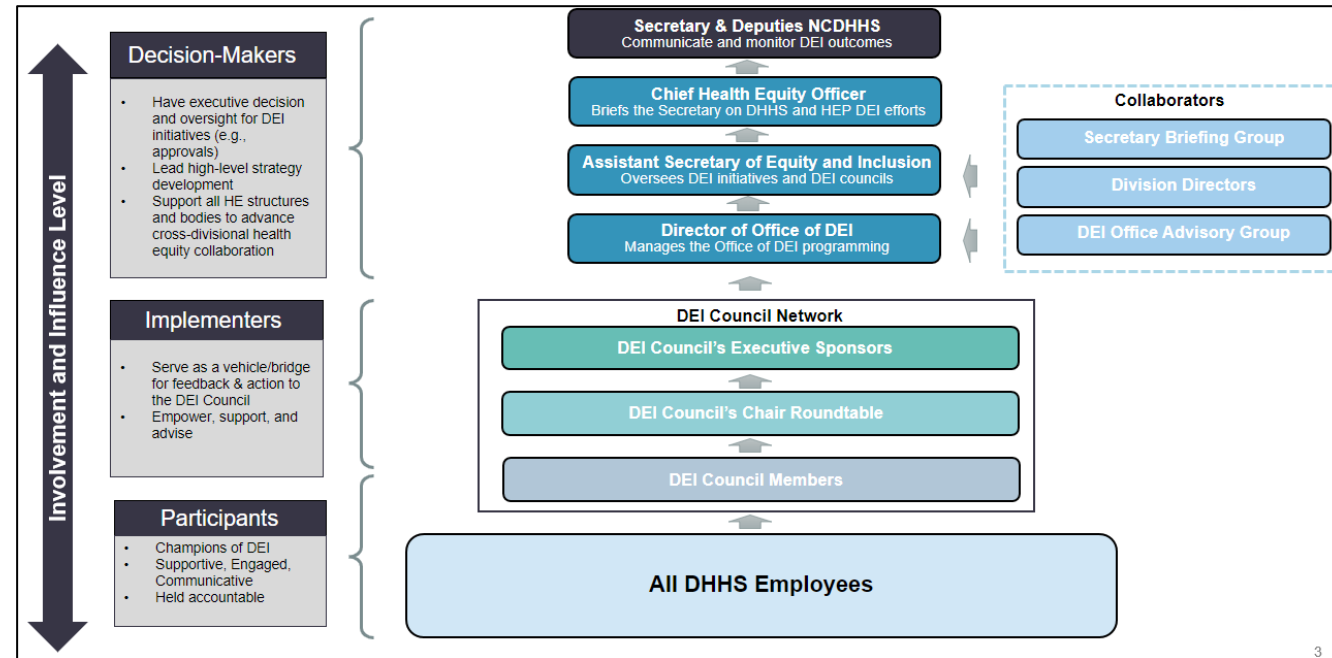

Figure 6: ODEI Decision-Making/Governance Model
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DRIVING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSIVITY IN NCDHHS WORKFORCE CONT.

Office of DEI's (ODEI) Involvement in NCDHHS Workgroup for Strong and Inclusive Workforce

ODEI joined the NCDHHS Strong and Inclusive Workforce Workgroup in May 2022 to apply data-driven strategies to address workforce challenges (e.g., **attrition, retention, vacancy rates, recruitment**). Through active participation in monthly leadership meetings, the workgroup has convened necessary cross-division experts to design and accomplish plans to access and analyze HR data for offices and divisions to determine **workforce solutions**. Disaggregated DEI/HR data became available and was shared with Division Directors and DEI Councils, with goals crafted for improvement targeting Q2 of 2024.

Examples of Data Disaggregation Key Activities

- Identify data sources
- Understand data access rules/policies
- Understand core data and technical requirements
- Collect, compile, and consolidate core data and technical requirements
- Develop a metrics crosswalk
- Map metrics collected to metrics crosswalk
- Develop an execution plan

HBCUs/MSIs Milestones

✓ There were three cohorts of interns (Summer 2022, Winter 2023, and Summer 2023) consisting of 86 talented students from HBCUs/MSIs who were provided valuable opportunities for professional development and contributed to building a diverse talent pipeline.

✓ The HBCUs/MSIs Change Champions initiative was launched for the Fall 2023 cohort aimed at empowering and supporting students to create positive change within their respective institutions.

✓ The Executive Branch HBCUs/MSIs Networking Group was established to foster connections and collaboration among HBCUs, MSIs, and government agencies to promote diversity and inclusivity.

NCDHHS' HBCUs/MSIs Summer Programs: Strengthening Future Talent Through Internship Programs

ODEI and OHE in collaboration with the Division of Public Health hosted three cohorts of intern students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities/Minority Serving Institutions (HBCUs/MSIs). The primary focus of the internship program is to **foster public health careers**, train in health equity and DEI, and address recent public health changes.

OHE Latinx Policy and Strategy Internship Program

Four bilingual and bicultural graduate students supported the Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy with projects including COVID-19 communication, language access elevation, community health needs assessment, and Medicaid Expansion outreach and recommendations.

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DHHS AND NC FOOTPRINT: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

INTERNAL

2023 Health Disparities Data Report & Resource Guide

OHE launched cross-departmental engagements to develop a new **2023 Health Disparities Data Report & Resource Guide** to update the 2018 North Carolina Health Equity Report (Figure 7) through the establishment of a data collaborative workgroup with the NCDHHS Data Office. The Report will measure and monitor the state's progress towards eliminating disparities, health status gaps experienced by HMPs, and provide current data and evidence-based recommendations to aid communities across NC in devising strategies to address health disparities.

Translating All NCDHHS Press Releases

The OHE Latinx Policy and Strategy Program collaborated with the NCDHHS' Communications Office to strengthen Spanish communications by translating all DHHS press releases (total of 12 for FY 22-23).

DEI Collaboration with NCDHHS Division of Human Resources

ODEI established a new partnership with HR to actively create initiatives, resources, policies, and programs aimed at promoting DEI throughout the organization through Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Fundamental (EEODF) Training Courses, Training playlists, 2023 EEO Plan, and Data Disaggregation Workgroup.
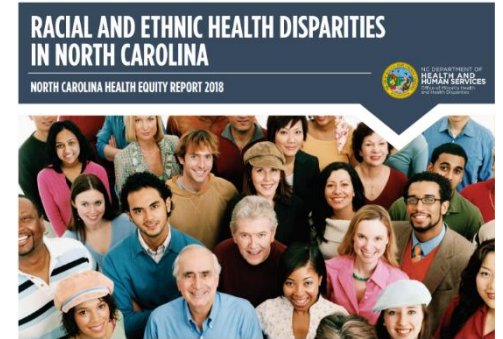

Figure 7: North Carolina Health Equity Report, 2018

EXTERNAL

Healthier Together Program

The Healthier Together program was established as a public-private partnership between NCDHHS and NC Counts Coalition in 2021 to increase demand for and access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Over 1.3 million interactions and contacts have been engaged.

Equity Interfaith Leaders Network

OHE launched phase one of the Equity Interfaith Leaders Network by convening North Carolina's Black Faith Leaders on February 27th, 2023. Approximately 260 faith leaders, community members, and NCDHHS employees gathered to share health matters important to the communities they serve.

Other Notable Engagements in FY 22-23:

- ✓ Shared information on **Medicaid expansion**, NCTRACKS Modular Implementation/Provider Data Manager/Credentialing Verification Organization with a group of 35 behavioral health providers from historically underrepresented communities
- ✓ Hosted **Legislative Black Caucus** meeting in June 2023 to discuss priorities and opportunities for alignment
- ✓ Participated in a **Men's Health Webinar** focused on Sexual Health in June 2023
- ✓ Presented and participated at the **Andrea Harris Taskforce**
- ✓ Hosted events highlighting **National Farmworker Awareness week**: highlighting the work of the NC Farmworker Health Program in the Office of Rural Health

Figure 8: Healthier Together Impact by Numbers

EXTERNAL

Latinx Policy and Strategy Program Community and Partner Engagement

The Latinx Policy and Strategy Program's community and partner engagement efforts have reached over **50,000 Spanish-speaking and Latinx/Hispanic individuals** across North Carolina through:

Public Service Announcements

The Program created **160 public service announcements** (PSAs) on health equity materials targeted to Spanish-speaking members of the community.

Interviews

The Director of Latinx Policy and Strategy also completed **29 interviews** on local Spanish-speaking radio stations regarding vaccine rates, services to communities through NCDHHS programs, and health promotion.

Newsletters

The Latinx Program sent **32 Noticias de NCDHHS Bilingual Newsletters** during the 22-23 fiscal year. Throughout the year, the bilingual newsletters were opened 6,142 times, and the links to information and resources listed in the newsletter were clicked 4,284 times.

Cafecitos & Tele-town Halls

The Latinx Program conducted Spanish-Language Cafecitos & Tele-town Halls live-streamed from the NCDHHS Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts as part of the state's ongoing efforts to ensure equitable access to timely health information, resources, and vaccines, and eliminate health disparities in the Latinx/Hispanic populations. These events reached over **64,000 people from July 2022 to June 2023** (see the breakdown below):

8 Events	381 Engagements	11,156 Social Media Viewers

19 Unique Panelists/Trusted Messengers	53,619 Called in by Phone

= 64,775 Total Reaches

Figure 9: Cafecitos & Tele-town Hall impact by numbers

ORH IMPACT BY NUMBERS

Grant Facts

$41.9M
Available grant funding (federal, state, philanthropic)

253 FTEs
Full-time equivalent employees supported in local communities

240
Contracts to support communities

Direct Services

618,070
Patients served

88%
Of ORH funding is spent directly on communities

$42.72
Average annual contribution by ORH per patient

Technical Assistance: 3,987 Activities in 95 Counties Provided by ORH Staff

Support Recruitment and Retention
2,212 Activities

Disseminate Rural Health Information
520 Activities

Community Development / Assistance
475 Activities

Site Development
219 Activities

Contract Development
152 Activities

Other
98 Activities

Training Sessions
89 Activities

Conference / Regional Meetings
136 Activities

Software Assistance
86 Activities

Program Reach

174
Agencies Funded

100
Total counties covered

70
Rural counties covered

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TRAINING, CONSULTATION, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

ODEI Training Consultation and Technical Assistance

Learning Management System (LMS) Training Playlist

Created comprehensive DEI training modules, accessible online, covering workplace inclusion, anti-racism and more.

Employment Opportunity and Diversity Fundamentals (EEODF) Training Courses

Ensured compliance with 6 EEODF training courses, fostering understanding of diversity and inclusion for a respectful work environment and aligned progress tracking.

Inclusive Leadership Training

Hosted interactive workshop for NCDHHS Division Directors, guided by Dr. Giselle Corbie, focusing on inclusive leadership competencies, collaboration, and strengthening equity and belonging.

Development of the Inclusive Leadership Guide

Designed a guide for division directors emphasizing inclusive leadership traits, competencies, and values, aiming to foster inclusivity through practical action.

Development and Launch of Informative One-Pagers

Created concise, visually engaging one-pagers on DEI topics including inclusive leadership, belonging, accessibility, and equity terms

Office of Rural Health (ORH) Funding and Technical Assistance

Provider Recruitment and Placement Program

Recruited healthcare providers for underserved areas in NC, with 76 professionals placed in 37 counties, prioritizing FQHCs and hospitals, offering incentives for retention.

Community Health Grants Program

Funded healthcare professionals and services in underserved regions, benefiting 105 grantees in various healthcare settings across 99 counties, particularly rural ones.

Rural Health Information Technology Program

Aided healthcare sites to use technology effectively, resulting in widespread connectivity to NCCARE360 and NC HealthConnex among ORH-funded sites.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Initiative

Enrolled 624 students in NC Community Colleges. Community Health Workers (CHWs) who aid millions of North Carolinians with essential services require standardized training through NC Community Colleges.

USING DATA TO HOLD US ACCOUNTABLE

HEP is committed to continuously improving its mission through ongoing feedback from staff, fostering open dialogue, trust building, and transparency.

All Staff Pulse Survey

76% of staff who responded to the survey felt positive about the direction of HEP in creating a **positive HEP culture**, its focus on **employee engagement**, and were **motivated** to get involved in supporting the Portfolio's mission and vision. Areas of improvement identified include understaffing of the Portfolio and siloed work across the Department.

FY 22 Pulse Survey Results: Health Equity Portfolio Strengths

✓Opportunity to increase access to healthcare.

✓HEP team's commitment and passion for the work that is completed.

✓The flexibility to work around personal schedules and travel to state partners.

✓Self-directed and effective guidance provided by leadership.

✓Proud of the work that is completed to serve NCDHHS customers.

NCDHHS Employee Engagement Survey

In the 2023 NCDHHS Employee Engagement Survey, HEP staff identified their ability to **telework**, **work-life balance**, and **a sense of belonging** as strengths of the Portfolio. The ability to be productive and work remotely was rated a 4.88 out of 5. However, the survey highlighted, **promotions**, **growth**, and **recognition** as areas of improvement.

HEP All Staff Meeting Post Session Survey

The HEP hosted two (2) All Staff Meeting(s) with the goal to increase team cohesion and alignment, give visibility to HEP's success, and provide a forum to brainstorm on goals, share information, and gain feedback. Feedback from the post-survey distributed after each meeting provides valuable information on how the Portfolio can continuously improve.

HEP SHOW AND TELL FOR FY 2022-2023

A YEAR OF AWARDS AND CELEBRATIONS

Angela Bryant (left) and Yazmin Garcia Rico (right) were among ten finalists for the *John Rodman Larkins Award*

Angela Bryant (middle) receiving the *Rocky Mount Alpha Phi Alpha Racial and Social Justice Community Service Award*

Dr. Bryle Hatch was named *Triad Business Journal 2023 Class of 40 under 40*

CHEO Debra Farrington was selected as the awardee of *UnitedHealthcare's Excellence in Health Equity Leadership Award*

ORH team members Elizabeth Freeman, Nick Galvez, John Resendes, Maggie Sauer, and Allison Owen received the *2022 Governor's Award for Excellence*

NCDHSH received the *ClearMark Awards from the Center for Plain Language* for its COVID-19 website and Spanish-language COVID educational campaign

Yazmin Garcia Rico was awarded the *Sharon S. Mújica Community Service Award*

AWARDS

RECOGNITIONS

Trenesse Michael (ORH) attended and graduated from the *2023 Leadership DHHS Management Development Program*

Nichole Fields-Pierre (ORH) attended and graduated from the *Homegrown Leaders hosted by the NC Rural Center*

Debra Farrington (fifth from the right) was selected as a *Milbank Fellows*

ODEI, through its network of *29 DEI councels*, recognizes the exceptional dedication and commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within their divisions and counsels.

Angela Bryant was appointed to the *North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice*

CHEO, Debra Farrington, was appointed to the *North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities*

CHEO Debra Farrington spoke to Governor Roy Cooper's *Pages on the importance of Health Equity*

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A YEAR OF FUNDING

Open Care Media

- ✓ HEP secured $15 million to launch a K-12 Initiative to address access and barriers to mental health care and an anti-stigma campaign.

- ✓ The campaign titled Open to Care included partnerships with the **Child and Family Wellbeing Portfolio**, the **Division of Mental Health**, **Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services**, and the **NCDHHS Communications.**

Expansion of Partnerships and Community Engagement

- ✓ ARPA Public Health Funding granted $857k to the HBCUs/MSIs Internship Program administered by ODEI/HEP in partnership with DPH
- ✓ OHE secured the below funding to expand their public/private partnerships and community engagement strategies

$790,665 CDC COVID Health Equity Grant	**$250,000** CDC Funds for MPox and CoAg work

$300,000 HE Broadband Engagement Initiative for Digital Equity

Rural and Underserved Community Support

- ✓ ORH administered $27.5 million in funding across NC to support rural and underserved communities in collaboration with state partners, federal agencies, and other philanthropic organizations

LOOKING AHEAD TO FY 2023-2024

LESSONS LEARNED AND WHAT'S NEXT

Fiscal Year 22-23

Lessons Learned

As HEP looks ahead to FY 2023-2024, our work will be guided by lessons learned from the previous year. Partnerships and building infrastructure will be supported through the following guiding principles:

1. Cross-divisional/departmental priorities are foundational
2. Transparent, open communication and staff engagement
3. Career paths for job advancements
4. External partner engagement is aligned across DHHS
5. DEI and Health Equity resources are readily available for all to access.

What's Next

The HEP team will focus on the following areas as they continue to grow and create action plans for each of their offices:

1. Prioritizing the collection and use of data by implementing CRM tool
2. Promoting a culture of inclusion by enhancing employee engagement in HEP work and HEP culture
3. Finalize, standardize, and publicize partner engagement
4. Ensure sustainability of capacity to address health equity across DHHS

Fiscal Year 23-24

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MEET THE PORTFOLIO LEADERS

Debra Farrington
*Chief Health
Equity Officer*

Angela Bryant
*Asst. Sec. for
Equity & Inclusion*

Ava Crawford
*Director, Office of
Health Equity*

**Dr. Bryle
Henderson Hatch**
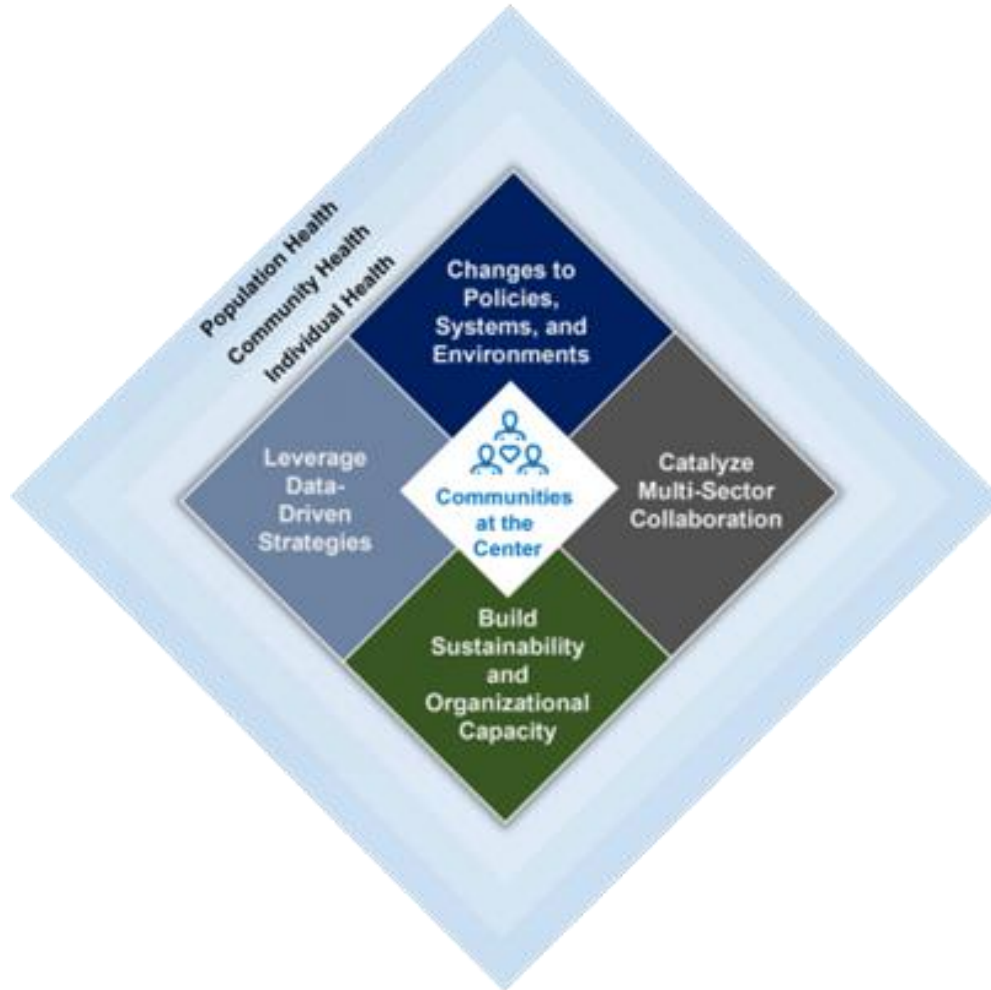*Director, Office of
DEI*

Maggie Sauer
*Director of Office
of Rural Health*

APPENDIX

NCDHHS HEALTH EQUITY FRAMEWORK

Communities at the Center
- Build and sustain trust through authentic community relationships
- Give back power to communities that have been marginalized
- Embed, provide support for, and partner with communities for strategy development and execution

Changes to Policies, Systems, and Environments
- Address and eliminate upstream structural drivers
- Focus on downstream health disparities as they manifest

Leverage Data-Driven Strategies
- Assure decision making is informed by data and community voices
- Use data to illuminate existing disparities
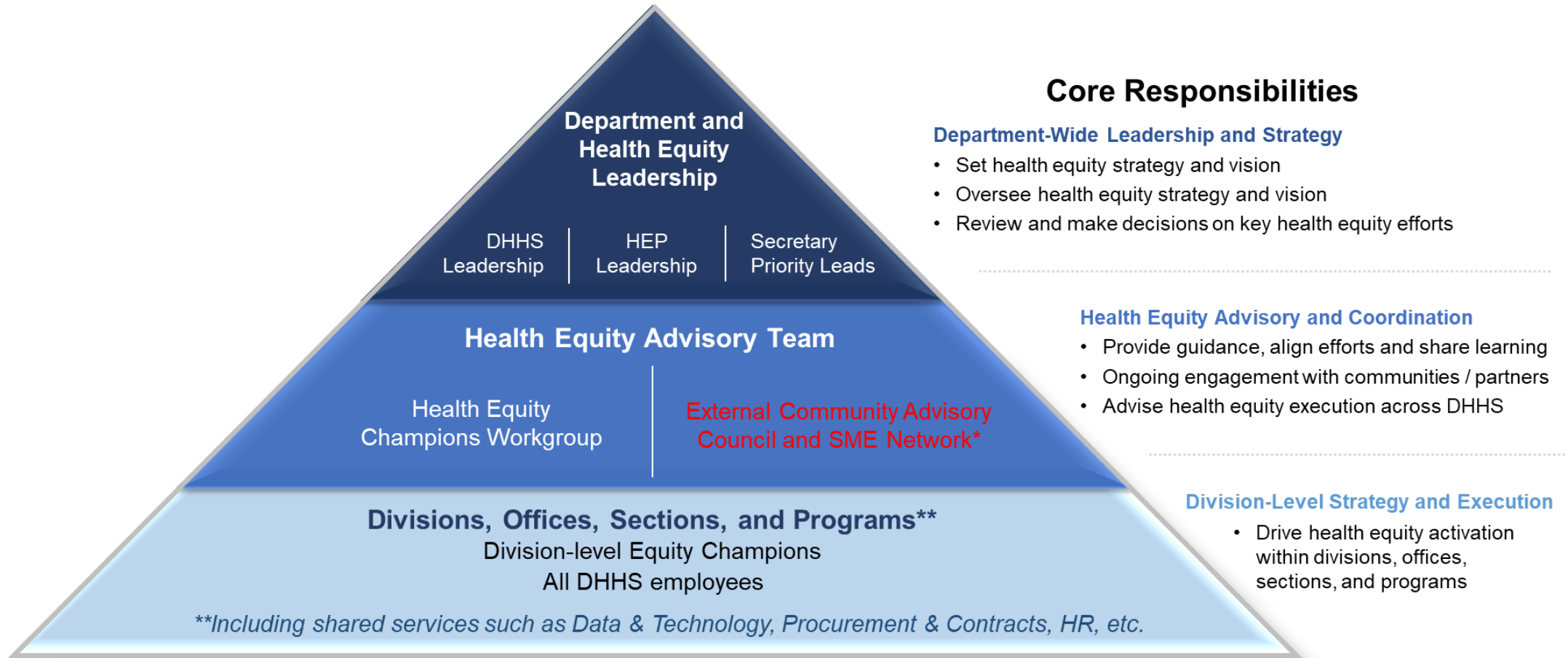- Develop compelling data-driven storytelling

Catalyze Multi-Sector Collaboration
- Develop robust cross-sector and state agency partnerships
- Improve health eco-system alignment, collaboration, and co-creation

Build Sustainability and Organizational Capacity
- Embed commitment with dedicated funding and equity-centered training
- Expand community capacity for health equity impact

NCDHHS HEALTH EQUITY GOVERNANCE MODEL

Department and Health Equity Leadership

DHHS Leadership | HEP Leadership | Secretary Priority Leads

Health Equity Advisory Team

Health Equity Champions Workgroup | External Community Advisory Council and SME Network*

Divisions, Offices, Sections, and Programs**
Division-level Equity Champions
All DHHS employees

**Including shared services such as Data & Technology, Procurement & Contracts, HR, etc.*

Core Responsibilities

Department-Wide Leadership and Strategy
- Set health equity strategy and vision
- Oversee health equity strategy and vision
- Review and make decisions on key health equity efforts

Health Equity Advisory and Coordination
- Provide guidance, align efforts and share learning
- Ongoing engagement with communities / partners
- Advise health equity execution across DHHS

Division-Level Strategy and Execution
- Drive health equity activation within divisions, offices, sections, and programs

External Community Advisory Council informs DHHS' health equity approach but sits outside internal Governance Model. A SME is defined as a subject matter expert.

DEI DECISION-MAKING/GOVERNANCE MODEL