

Best Practices for Building Leadership Diversity Programs

Building a diverse leadership team requires commitment, time and a variety of best practices. Diversity practices that best fit a health care organization will be highly customized to the organization’s governance, culture and community needs. Through self-examination, hospital and health care system leaders can identify blind spots and match best practices to address those areas. Each best practice can be molded to fit different career levels within the organization, though some best practices may be more appropriate for one or more levels. Best practices being used by hospitals and health care systems include mentoring programs, partnerships with educational groups, and internal diversity committees, described with examples in the table “Best Practices for Building Leadership Diversity Programs.” In addition to commitment and time, allocating funds such as tuition reimbursement or seed money is important to support formal mentoring programs and fellowships.

Best Practices for Building Leadership Diversity Programs

Best Practices	Entry Level	Mid-career Level	C-suite Level	Board Level
<p>External Resources</p> <p>Local and national diversity-related organizations offer resources that range from exposure to new ideas through shared best practices, conferences and case studies, to fellowships and formal mentoring programs.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>The Institute for Diversity in Health Management’s Summer Enrichment Program matches and places minority health administration graduate students with health care organizations for a 10-week paid internship. More than 700 students have successfully completed the program.¹ The Institute for Diversity and the Center for Healthcare Governance also host the Hospital Trustee Professionalism program, a series of American Hospital Association-sponsored educational programs designed to prepare participants for service as hospital board members. The institute’s Minority Trustee Candidate Registry compiles profiles and resumes from everyone who has attended one of the Hospital Trustee Professionalism events. Attendees may maintain their profile on the registry, using connections with the AHA, to be available and eligible for placement on a hospital trustee board.² In addition, the institute’s Career Center offers an online searchable database, which links health care employers and diverse job candidates.³</p>	X	X	X	X

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<p>Mentoring Programs</p> <p>Hospital and health care system leaders identify staff and pair them with an experienced professional to develop specific skills and knowledge that are aligned with the organization. These working relationships allow the health care organization to provide one-on-one training and identify future leaders.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>Baystate Health, based in Springfield, Massachusetts, has two formal mentorship programs available to its workforce. Both programs have an external educational component with an aligned internal mentorship and leadership development program. External opportunities for professional development and education are provided on soft skills such as negotiating, branding and conflict resolution. Baystate Health’s programs engage participants and help them build networks and grasp opportunities to develop their careers. Participants then either identify a mentor within the organization or are matched with a mentor. The entire mentorship program, including the external education, spans one year. The mentorship program is linked back to the organization’s talent improvement initiatives, and the program’s effectiveness and impact are measured on an ongoing basis.</p>	X	X		
<p>Partnerships with Educational Institutions</p> <p>Collaboration with high schools, community colleges, universities and graduate schools allows hospitals and health care systems to expose students to the work in their organization and in the health care field. For example, a hospital or health care system can partner with a hospital administration graduate program to identify candidates and interns for jobs at their organization.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>For nearly 20 years, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Jersey has partnered with the New Brunswick Health Sciences Technology High School, supporting a program that engages local Latino and African-American high school students in health care careers. Today, more than 40 students who have completed the program are working in a variety of jobs at RWJUH — ranging from doctors of pharmacy, nurses, professional staff and other paraprofessional jobs.⁴</p>	X	X	X	X

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<p>Fellowships</p> <p>Hospital and health care systems can create fellowship programs that select candidates for hands-on education and training. Though roles vary within the hospital, fellowships for C-suite positions can be used to provide experience and to expose the fellow to many different functions of the health care organization.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>The Minority Faculty Development Awards program at University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland provides mentoring, education and hands-on leadership experience to several high-potential junior faculty physicians each year. Participants, chosen by individual departments, plan a three-year project that focuses on career growth while targeting work to eliminate health care disparities. Working with a mentor, participants execute their plans with the help of a \$75,000 cash award for research, equipment, academic enrichment and professional development. In its first six years, the program has included six African-American women, six African-American men, five Hispanic women and two Hispanic men.⁵</p>		X	X	
<p>Diversity Committees</p> <p>Internal committees that are focused on diversity initiatives and programs allow hospitals and health care systems to identify potential leaders with an interest in diversity. Individuals who participate on and lead these committees gain valuable experience that is transferable to new positions. Additionally, these committees help guide and recommend changes related to diversity within the organization.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>The University of Mississippi Medical Center created a Healthcare Disparities Council with 40 members, including interpreters, administrators, nurses, physicians and members of the registration staff. Four subgroups support the council's efforts and focus on health literacy, patient access and experience of care, education and awareness, and quality of care for diverse populations.⁶</p>	X	X	X	

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<p>Enhanced Hiring Practices</p> <p>By developing and implementing enhanced hiring practices, hospitals and health care systems can identify a diverse group of candidates for an open job position. Ensuring a diverse candidate pool involves additional effort by the hospital or health care system. Hiring managers can advertise job openings via community bulletin boards, cultural community groups and local community centers. It is important that hiring practices align with the health care organization's internal benchmarks for diversity.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>Greenville Health System in South Carolina overhauled its leadership search and selection process to better match the diversity of its workforce and the communities it serves. For each leadership team vacancy, a search and selection committee with a diverse membership is established to develop a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates. The first year after implementation of the new process, 70 percent of leadership team appointments were from underrepresented groups and 50 percent were racial and ethnic minorities.⁷</p>	X	X	X	
<p>New Job Titles and Responsibilities</p> <p>Hospitals and health care systems can create new job positions — such as a chief diversity officer — that are dedicated to promoting diversity within the organization. In addition, health care organizations can set up internal diversity committees and designate staff to serve as leaders for increasing diversity.</p> <p>Case Study</p> <p>Recognizing the need for diversity management, Sparrow Health System in Lansing, Michigan, hired a diversity director to help align the organization's diversity goals with its overall strategic goals. The director has helped with the creation of a Diversity and Inclusion Council and also educates hospital leaders on topics pertaining to diversity management and on integrating diversity goals into division, department, functional and individual goals.⁸</p>			X	X

Source: American Hospital Association, 2014.

Endnotes

1. Institute for Diversity in Health Management. (2014). Summer Enrichment Program Overview. Retrieved from <http://www.diversityconnection.org/diversityconnection/education/education-SEP-Program-Overview.jsp?fill=S4&sl=S40>
2. Institute for Diversity in Health Management. (2014). Trustee Education Program & Minority Trustee Candidate Registry. Retrieved from <http://www.diversityconnection.org/diversityconnection/education/About%20Trustee%20Prof%20Prog.jsp?fill=S5>
3. Institute for Diversity in Health Management. (2014). Career Center. Retrieved from <http://www.diversityconnection.org/diversityconnection/career-center/Career-Resource-Center.jsp?fill=S3>
4. Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Jersey. (2014). Equity of Care Award Application. Unpublished award submission.
5. University Hospitals, Cleveland. (2014). Equity of Care Award Application. Unpublished award submission.
6. American Hospital Association, Association of American Medical Colleges, American College of Healthcare Executives, Catholic Health Association of the United States, and National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems [now America's Essential Hospitals]. (February 2012). Eliminating health care disparities: Implementing the National Call to Action using lessons learned. Chicago, IL: American Hospital Association.
7. American Hospital Association, Association of American Medical Colleges, American College of Healthcare Executives, Catholic Health Association of the United States, and National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems [now America's Essential Hospitals]. (February 2012). Eliminating health care disparities: Implementing the National Call to Action using lessons learned. Chicago, IL: American Hospital Association.
8. Health Research & Educational Trust, Institute for Diversity in Health Management. (July 2011). Building a culturally competent organization: The quest for equity in health care. Chicago, IL: Health Research & Educational Trust.