

Mathematica



Equity Continuum Toolkit: Case Study

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Background

Mathematica is a research, technology, data analytics, and consulting firm that partners with federal, state, and local government agencies; businesses; foundations and NGOs with the goal of using data to improve public well-being. For more than 50 years, Mathematica’s work has informed policies and programs around the world and guided strategic decisions across issue areas including health, education, child welfare, nutrition, employment, criminal justice, and climate change.

The Equity Journey

Mathematica takes pride in its commitment to offering a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming workplace, where staff are always encouraged to bring their full selves to work. Over the course of the company’s equity journey, a number of initiatives have increased diverse representation among staff, and ensured that research projects and services are viewed through an equity lens. Continuing to expand its DEI commitment, Mathematica is embarking on a multi-year strategic DEI plan led by Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Dr. Dawnavan Davis and her team, intended to grow both the internal foundation and the external reach of the company’s commitment to equity.

Program & Activities

As an organization that provides research and policy analysis to its clients, Mathematica sought to reflect principles of equity in its research approaches and methods. According to Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer Dr. Dawnavan Davis, this represented an important pivot point in Mathematica’s equity journey: “This is a critical milestone for us, pivoting from internal to external—how do we embed equity and equitable principles in the substance of the work that we do?” Mathematica formed an “Equity Community of Practice,” which provides a structure and resources to continuously incorporate equity principles into project work. This manifests in different ways depending on the project, but the overarching premise is to “learn from and with” the communities directly facing inequities. For example, in a recent project with the Colorado Health Foundation, Mathematica focused on health inequities experienced by LGBTQ youth and youth of color, capturing the perspectives of these communities as well as nontraditional service providers that reach them. Clients have spoken to the value of Mathematica’s commitment to equity in its research. According to the [Colorado Health Foundation](#): “The [Mathematica] team had been incredibly thoughtful and willing to engage in a deep, reflective exercise about bias, to think about how that might impact the work so they could take steps to avoid [biases].”

Organization & Operations

Mathematica's equity journey began with an effort to diversify its staff, recognizing that a greater range of perspectives would help the organization produce the best possible research. "We started with our workforce: how do we diversify our talent?" Dr. Dawnavan Davis, Mathematica's Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer said, "and we have been very successful putting quite a few initiatives in place to support the diversification of our talent cycle." For example, Mathematica has partnered with Howard University to offer the first Summer Institute in Computational Social Science at a historically black college or university. It has created fellowship and internship programs that reach students from underrepresented groups; helped launch The Sadie Collective (an organization which aims to increase the representation of Black women in economics and related fields) by hosting its first event; and instituted expectations requiring diversification across our recruitment process for all company positions. These efforts are beginning to show real results. In 2017, 11% of staff hires and 13% of senior staff hires were Black or Latinx; in 2021 thus far, these metrics have nearly tripled.

Culture

Mathematica has sought to improve equity and inclusivity in its workplace culture at all levels of the organization. CEO Paul Decker is a member of CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion and as part of the group has signed the "[CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion](#)" pledge. Mathematica has a Diversity Council, which fosters awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues within the organization. It also has a robust set of employee resource groups (ERGs), including ERGs organized around Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific American, and LGBTQ identities, along with ERGs to support employees with disabilities and parents and other caregivers. In 2020, members of Mathematica's LGBTQ ERG created a guide to transgender inclusion that has made it possible for the company to use non-gender inclusive language throughout its internal and external communications. Mathematica has instituted unconscious bias training (for supervisors) and inclusive leadership training for staff. According to Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer Dr. Dawnavan Davis, "The structures we've created have formed spaces for learning, and also for building connection and a sense of community."