Event Summary: EDI Action Network

Meeting #5: April 25, 2023

Introduction

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Network is a space for connection, shared learning, and development for students, staff, and faculty working to advance EDI initiatives at UBC. UBC's EDI Action Network is organized and supported by the Equity & Inclusion Office in partial fulfillment of action 2K of the Inclusion Action Plan, which calls for the creation of an "Equity Leads Network" to support EDI champions in UBC's units and departments, and in alignment with StEAR *Roadmap for Change* strategic action 1.4D, to expand equity leads at multiple levels as part of networked leadership. The EDI Action Network was formed in May 2021 and meets twice a year, in addition to convening on Microsoft Teams.

The fifth meeting of the EDI Action Network was held April 26, 2023, online via Zoom. This report provides a summary of the event and participant feedback, to support continuity and transparency as the network continues to evolve.

Participant Overview
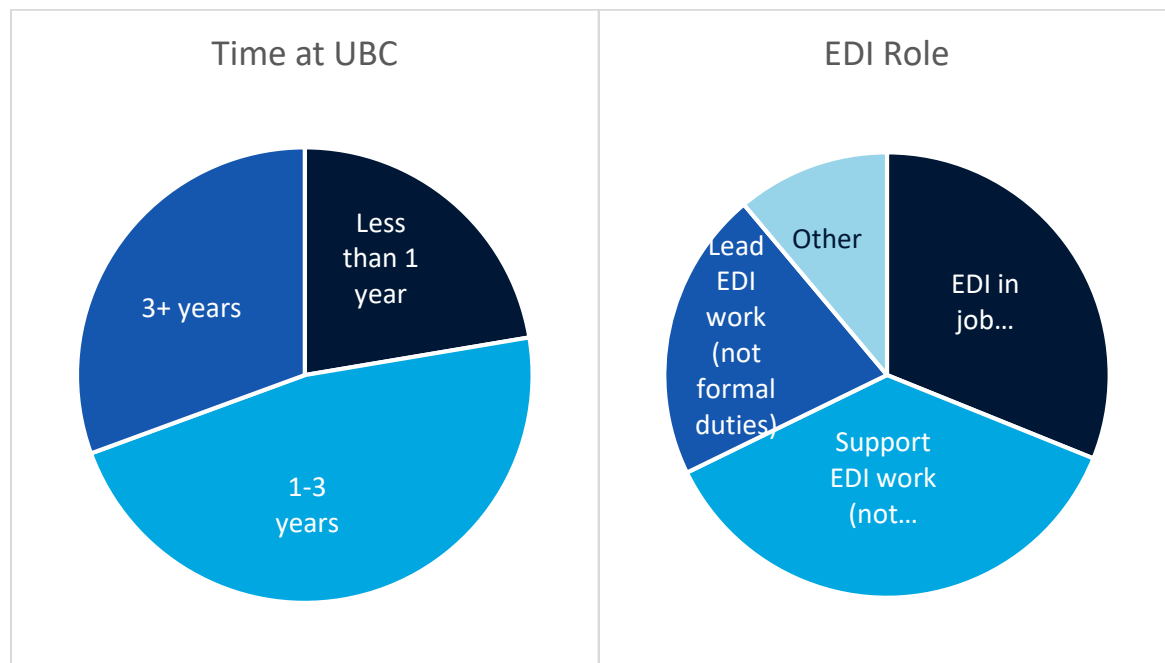
Awareness of the network continues to expand through word of mouth and targeted invitations. For the April 2023 event, the invitation was sent directly to over 230 people on the EDI Action Network listserv, with encouragement for recipients to forward the invite to additional colleagues. 95 individuals registered for the event and approximately 68 attended.

Event Summary

Opening

Arig al Shaibah, Associate Vice-President for Equity & Inclusion, opened the event with a land acknowledgement and a warm welcome to participants.

Lucy Buchanan-Parker, a Strategist in the EIO, provided an overview of the event agenda and shared community expectations for the event.

Attendees then participated in two rounds of short "speed meet-and-greets" to get to know some of their colleagues in the meeting.

Institutional updates

Arig shared updates on the progress of the emerging [Strategic Equity and Anti-Racism (StEAR) framework](#) and described the development process to date.

Hélène Frohard-Dourlent, a Strategist in the EIO, provided an update on the final report of the Trans, Two-Spirit, and Gender Diversity taskforce which was released in April 2023. Hélène used the example of the Taskforce report to illustrate the process of developing the StEAR framework using UBC's various EDI-related plans and reports. This included mapping recommendations from plans and reports into one (or more) of the four StEAR domains, as well as grouping similar recommendations from different plans and reports together under salient StEAR objectives.

Implications for Unit and Department Initiatives

Lucy introduced a metaphor to help describe how the StEAR framework and roadmap for change at the institutional level relates to individual unit and departmental initiatives to advance EDI.
- You can think about the goal of advancing EDI and anti-racism through the four StEAR domains as a harbour.
- The "central" institutional infrastructure of UBC is a large cargo ship that is hard to maneuver. Setting or changing course requires a lot of coordination.
- The containers on the cargo ship are the "strategic actions" named in the StEAR Roadmap for Change. This is what the central institutional infrastructure is bringing to harbour.

- In order to reach the harbour, the central institutional infrastructure will use 18 lighthouses to guide it to port—these are the 18 StEAR strategic objectives.
- Think of decentralized units and departments at UBC as sailboats. The sailboats are more nimble and can go places that the container ship can't. They have more flexibility and can follow the local winds.
- The sailboats (unit and departmental EDI initiatives) may pass by some of the 18 lighthouses (objectives) on their way to harbour, but they don't necessarily have to visit all of them. If they are lost in the fog, the lighthouses can help to guide them – but there is no reason they need to follow the lighthouses, as they are heading to the same harbour in the end.
- Sailboats have opportunities to visit areas beyond the container ship's designated path. They can provide information to the container ship on additional areas that it may not have traveled to yet, and alert the ship to hazards it may not be aware of.

With this metaphor in mind, participants moved into breakout rooms hosted by EIO staff members. Participants discussed how their units' and departments' EDI strategies, plans, and priorities are aligned with the [four StEAR domains](#), and what kinds of experience or expertise participants' units and departments hold that could support greater change at the institutional level.

Discussions varied across the different breakout rooms. Some people were newer to the StEAR Framework and spent time further digesting the Framework. Other participants readily saw how their work fit into one or more of the StEAR domains. There were productive discussions about the role that the StEAR Framework and Roadmap could play in synthesizing and clarifying how units and departments can engage with UBC's many EDI-related commitments, plans, and reports. Many participants are also eager to share what they have learned through their own initiatives with the broader UBC community.

Upon returning to the main room, participants engaged in a Q&A period with Arig, allowing for further exploration of the forthcoming StEAR Framework.

Case Studies and Lessons Learned from Unit and Departmental Change

After a short break, Lucy introduced the panelists presenting case studies and lessons learned from their efforts to advance EDI:
- Dr. Vanessa Andreotti & Bernadette Ma from the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies spoke about the implementation of four guiding principles for PWIAS' Catalyst Program.
- Erin Trifunov from UBCO IT spoke about the UBC IT / OCIO EDI committee's workplan development and their use of the Activating Inclusion Toolkit.
- Kat Cureton & Holly Kim from the Office of Community Engagement spoke about the Community Engagement Network's approach to building capacity for justice and equity in community engagements.

- Nadia Joe from the UBC Sustainability Hub / UBC Climate Emergency spoke about applying a climate justice lens and her approach to making transformational change at UBC.

Following the panel presentations, Arig facilitated a discussion around lessons learned and keys to success in this work. Themes that emerged from the discussion included:
- Strategies for staying engaged and hopeful in the face of large and overwhelming projects.
- How to engage different audiences and parts of the community, when people are bringing different paradigms to EDI work.
- The importance of relationality and collaboration.

Closing

In closing, Lucy provided a few updates for the EDI Action Network:
- Summaries of previous events are made available on the EDI Action Network webpage.
- The MS Teams space for the EDI Action Network space has grown to over 100 members. Participants were emailed a link to subscribe, or can contact Lucy to be added.
- The EDI Action Network has been gathering two times per year. We anticipate the next gathering to be in Fall 2023.

Feedback and Reflections

The event feedback survey was completed by less than 15% of attendees (9 responses), consistent with the most recent event but a marked decrease from the previous events, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the participant experience. The feedback was broadly positive, although fewer participants than in previous events responded affirmatively to the statements on participant experience. For example:

- 71% connected with someone working on similar issues;
- 75% will apply content from this session to their work/initiatives; and
- 88% would like to participate in future meetings of the network;

Respondents particularly valued learning about the Activating Inclusion Toolkit, the StEAR framework, the case study examples, and the encouragement for self-reflection in undertaking EDI work.

In terms of event logistics, participants were evenly split as to whether the overall event length was "about right" or "too long". The majority of participants felt time spent in the main session was about right, but would have appreciated more time in breakout rooms and in breaks. This event was an experiment in providing only one break rather than two, but we will return to a two-break format in the future.

One participant left an insightful comment about the value of clarifying the purpose of the EDI Action Network and refining how the network is structured to better serve multiple purposes. With the introduction of the StEAR framework there is an opportunity to take stock and make adjustments to better serve network members. The EIO will continue to explore opportunities for refining and communicating the purpose of the network as it expands and evolves moving forward.