Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plan

*Update: July 2024*

*For External Use*
A Message from the Chief Diversity Officer and Administrator

Over the past four years, the Office of Equal Opportunities and Civil Rights (OEOCR) has worked with many invaluable partners to launch an array of strategic initiatives to further ingrain diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and accessibility into the fabric of the Agency. In 2022, we published the first iteration of the Agency’s DEI Strategic Plan to formally establish our vision and goals for DEI at CMS and to foster accountability for their achievement by publicizing the plan Agency-wide and to the American public.

We identified five DEI Goals with respect to DEI infrastructure, culture, talent processes, analytics capabilities, and leadership support and accountability for DEI. Since we published the previous strategic plan, we have operationalized more than 50% of the plan – some of which was achieved ahead of schedule. Specifically, we implemented 22 out of the 44 original DEI initiatives to support the achievement of our overarching goals and vision. These initiatives ranged from expanding talent support and organizational capacity for DEI (e.g., establishing a DEI Council and Ambassador Program, appointing a Chief Diversity Officer) to enhancing DEI data collection and transparency, and building DEI into our talent processes and culture (e.g., expanding DEI trainings, piloting programs to mitigate bias in hiring and various elements of the talent lifecycle).

While we are proud of the progress that we have made, we recognize that we are at a critical inflection point for DEI at the Agency. It is imperative that we continue to build and sustain programs that will drive lasting change that can be felt at every level and facet of the organization. To do so, we must be open to listening and adapting our strategies to meet the ever-evolving needs of our staff and the operational realities we face. While our commitment to achieving the Agency's goals and vision for DEI remains constant, our mechanisms and approaches to doing so have become more ambitious and agile. In this new iteration of the DEI Strategic Plan, we have expanded our focus by adding three new DEI initiatives as well as adapting and expanding the scope of several existing initiatives to directly respond to staff feedback and lessons learned throughout our DEI journey to date.

Anita Pinder
Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights (OEOCR)

Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Executive Summary

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) workplace. The organization understands that it's the employees who help CMS achieve its vision of providing high-quality health care to all customers. The focus is not only on eliminating health care disparities but also on ensuring employee satisfaction and equitable access to opportunities. This DEI Strategic Plan is designed to enhance existing initiatives and provide a more comprehensive, strategic approach to DEI. Evidence shows that an inclusive workplace is critical to employees, with 78% emphasizing the importance of equality in the workplace.

Furthermore, organizations that champion inclusivity see 22% lower attrition and 22% higher productivity. CMS is progressing towards becoming a truly equitable and inclusive agency. Through DEI current state assessments in 2020 and 2023, CMS has identified areas for improvement and enhancement. The assessments revealed inconsistencies in DEI experiences across the organization and disparities in leadership representation and performance metrics based on race, sex, veteran status, and disability.

Following the assessments, CMS has developed a comprehensive DEI strategy and started its implementation. Steps have been taken to reduce biases and inequities in talent processes, which have led to a decrease in demographic disparities and higher favorability ratings in the DEI-related Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey questions. This plan outlines specific DEI goals, priorities, and initiatives based on the 2020 and 2023 assessments. While ambitious, CMS is dedicated to achieving these goals as their success is integral to the Agency's mission.

CMS leadership is committed to building a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture that fosters collaboration and fairness. This effort is led by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights, in partnership with the Office of Human Capital, the Office of Security, Facilities, and Logistics, and the Office of Information Technology. However, success is contingent upon the involvement of every Center and Office. Continued engagement with staff at all levels is crucial to realizing the vision of a fully inclusive organization.

CMS’ DEI Vision

Designed by several CMS senior leaders, the following is CMS’ DEI vision statement that serves as a North Star for the Agency and this Strategic Plan:

CMS aspires to create:

- A culture that values and recognizes our employees' unique identities and perspectives, which further the mission and enhance our culture.
- An environment that provides all employees with equitable access to opportunities for growth and development; and
- A workforce that reflects the communities we serve.
CMS’ DEI Values

CMS leaders also defined values that are intended to reflect and uphold CMS’ vision for advancing DEI and create a shared sense of purpose around embodying DEI each day. These values are to **A.C.T. F.A.S.T.** to advance DEI:

- **Accessibility:** We build a community where everyone has equitable access to systems, resources, and opportunities for growth and development.
- **Commitment:** We consciously align goals, actions, and behaviors to enable achievement of our DEI mission with a commitment to continuously reflect, learn, and improve.
- **Transparency:** We are transparent about organizational barriers to DEI and the actions we are taking to address them and build a better CMS for our people and the communities we serve.
- **Fairness:** We promote fairness and equity through our policies, programs, and systems.
- **Accountability:** We hold ourselves and others accountable for embodying our DEI Values and Behaviors.
- **Safety:** We foster a culture where all employees feel safe bringing their authentic selves to work and can flourish in their individuality to advance our culture and encourage equitable inclusion in the workplace.
- **Trust:** We build a community of trust where everyone feels confident that the Agency is acting in their best interests.

CMS’ DEI Goals

To further realize the DEI vision, CMS aims to accomplish the following strategic goals:

- **Invest in DEI Infrastructure**
- **Embed Inclusion into the Culture**
- **Build DEI into Talent Processes**
- **Transform CMS’ DEI Analytics Capability**
- **Equip Every Leader to be a DEI Champion**
Goal 1: Invest in DEI Infrastructure

CMS has recognized the need to establish processes and mechanisms to enhance oversight and accountability across all stakeholder groups responsible for advancing DEI at the Agency and to better align business and organizational decision-making to achieve its DEI vision and goals.

**Highlights of our progress:** CMS has established the foundational infrastructure to drive DEI efforts, such as appointing a Chief Diversity Officer and establishing a DEI Council and DEI Ambassador Program to serve as an advisory body and communicate information on DEI efforts. CMS also developed DEI Values and Behaviors to establish a culture that promotes inclusivity, collaboration, and fairness, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their identities and perspectives, feels a sense of belonging.

We will continue to strengthen our infrastructure and operational maturity to achieve our DEI vision and mission through the following priority areas:

- **Expand support and resources for DEI** to improve CMS’ organizational capacity to achieve its goals.
- **Mature the DEI operating model and governance structure** to improve collaboration and decision-making for DEI programming.
- **Ensure an inclusive workspace for employees** by improving equity and accessibility of physical workspaces, information and communications systems, and employee services.

Goal 2: Embed Inclusion into the Culture

We want every employee to feel valued, included, and empowered to share their perspectives and opinions based on their individual identities and personal experiences.

**Highlights of our progress:** To promote a foundational understanding of DEI and educate staff, CMS developed a DEI Basics course and various complementary trainings reflecting the Agency's DEI vision and goals. DEI has also been incorporated into the New Employee Orientation to set the tone and highlight the importance of DEI at the start of employees’ careers with CMS.

We are committed to fostering an environment that emphasizes DEI and demonstrating the Agency's efforts to create an inclusive culture and experience for all employees. We will continue to accomplish this through the following priority areas:

- **Build and reinforce DEI awareness across the agency** by expanding access to DEI programming and implementing consistent communications across all offices/center.
- **Provide safe spaces for dialogue** including developing tools and resources on how to have crucial conversations and infuse inclusive language into daily interactions.
• **Implement a comprehensive DEI Learning & Development Strategy** that delivers effective and motivating DEI learning experiences and is customized for different employee levels.

### Goal 3: Build DEI into Talent Processes

CMS recognizes the need to focus on recruiting diverse groups who have been historically underrepresented at CMS. Equally important, we must mitigate potential bias in talent processes and policies so that all employees have equitable access to opportunities to develop and grow during their time here.

**Highlights of our progress:** CMS continued embedding DEI into talent processes and policies across the entire lifecycle (from hiring to separation) to eliminate bias from our processes and improve the talent experience for all CMS staff. This included implementing guidelines and requirements for diverse hiring panels to reduce bias in the hiring process. CMS also enhanced its recruitment and outreach efforts, targeting underrepresented populations to increase CMS’ workforce diversity.

We will continue to accomplish our goal of building DEI into talent acquisition and management processes through the following priority areas:

- **Implement customized recruiting plans** and use data-driven approaches to determine opportunities for attracting and recruiting diverse groups to CMS.
- **Mitigate bias and enhance equity in talent processes and policies** by identifying the root causes of disparities in equal employment opportunities and action planning to remedy policies and practices.

### Goal 4: Transform CMS’ DEI Analytics Capability

To make gains in all areas of this Strategic Plan, we must be fully transparent with the data that we collect and analyze. We must also ensure that we are constantly infusing data into our DEI and organizational decision-making.

**Highlights of our progress:** CMS has implemented data analyses beyond the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Directive and the Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey. CMS conducted its second DEI Maturity Assessment using quantitative and qualitative data to identify key DEI strengths and challenges across CMS and understand the trends, enablers, and barriers to achieving an inclusive culture. CMS is also developing a DEI Sentiment Survey to further gain insight into the employee experiences and their perceptions of DEI initiatives.

We will continue to increase transparency and transform CMS’ DEI analytics capability through the following priority areas:
• **Conduct additional DEI-related qualitative and quantitative analyses** to understand the full extent of DEI barriers at CMS and inform Agency-wide strategic planning on an ongoing basis.

• **Define DEI Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) and metrics for CMS** and establish mechanisms to track progress of key DEI programs and initiatives.

• **Report on DEI OKRs, metrics, and other data to increase transparency**, refine and optimize all DEI initiatives and programming, and increase staff awareness and understanding of workforce representation data.

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**Goal 5: Equip Every Leader to be a DEI Champion**

Leadership accountability and support are essential for the advancement of DEI within the Agency. We want all our leaders to be equipped as DEI Champions and embody the DEI values and behaviors that we define.

**Highlights of our progress:** CMS is prioritizing leadership accountability for DEI to ensure that all staff feel valued and included in the organization. The Agency’s executive leaders have participated in various immersive DEI learning experiences since March of 2021 to strengthen their practice of inclusive leadership. We are in the process of developing additional resources to aid leaders in fostering an inclusive environment within their respective offices/centers and teams.

We will accomplish our goal of preparing our leaders to serve as DEI Champions through the following priority areas:

• **Provide leaders and managers with the tools they need to succeed** and enable the depth of change needed for the Agency’s DEI efforts to succeed long-term.

• **Hold leaders and managers accountable for DEI**, developing mechanisms for adhering to equitable hiring, advancement, DEI leadership, and accessibility practices.