INCREASING EQUITY AT THE WORKPLACE

SEPARATION SYSTEM TOOLKIT

EQUITY

STEP 4:
GENERATE IDEAS FOR INNOVATION

BOSTON COLLEGE
School of Social Work

WORK EQUITY

Directors

Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, PhD
Samuel L. Bradley, Jr., DSW
Kathleen Christensen, PhD

Work Equity is an initiative of the Center for Social Innovation at the Boston College School of Social Work.
www.bc.edu/workequity

Questions?
Please contact us at workequity@bc.edu

4.0 Introduction

We have organized Step 4 of the Toolkit for the Separation System into two sections.

Section 1: The tasks in this section will help your organization generate ideas for innovations that can strengthen the equity of your overall Separation System, using the seven Levers for Change.

Section 2: Recognizing that innovations in separation practices – one of the Levers for Change – can be catalysts for deep change in the equity of the Separation System, your organization will focus particular attention on separation in Section 2.
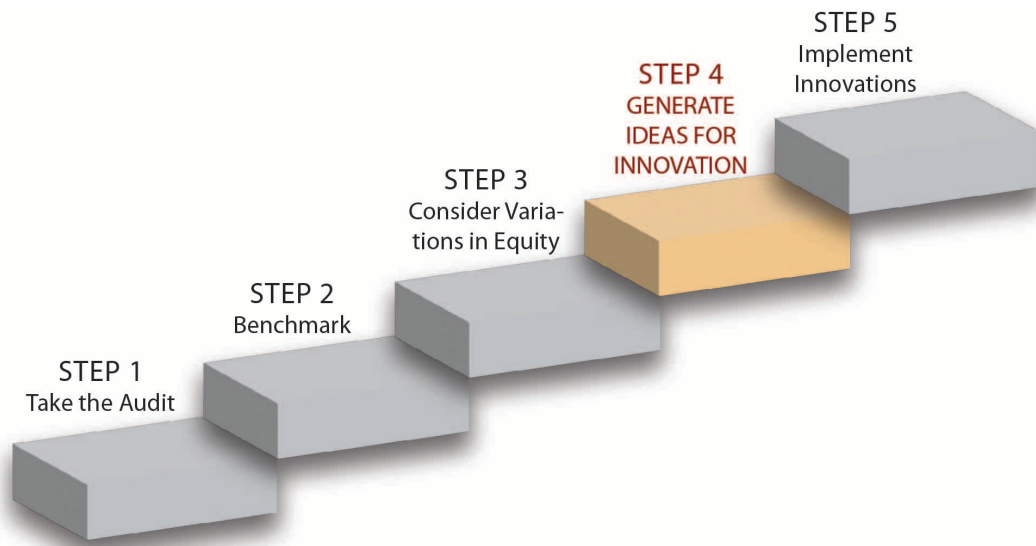

Figure 10: Step 4 of the Separation System Toolkit

4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The process of design thinking values the diverse perspectives which can emerge from group conversations and debates. (See "Overview of the Separation System Toolkit.")

In consultation with your Equity Initiative Committee, the Leader(s) of your Equity Initiative should decide how to best engage different groups of employees in discussions about innovations that can strengthen the equity of your organization's Separation System.

Option 1: Your organization could invite the members of your DEI Committee to participate in one (or more) brainstorming activity.

Option 2: You might convene discussion groups (for example, brown bag lunches, focus groups, etc.) with employees who are affiliated with specific demographic and social identity groups to discuss innovations in your Separation System that could address some of their priorities and preferences.

Option 3: Your Equity Initiative Leader(s) could create a "suggestion box" to invite ideas from employees throughout the organization.

Separation System

4.2 Step 4 Tasks (Section 1 and Section 2)

Section 1: Tasks to Assess the Equity of Your Separation System

As noted in the Overview of this Toolkit, Work Equity recognizes that your organization has at its disposal seven mechanisms that have the potential to address some of the root causes of inequities embedded in your organization's employment systems. We refer to these mechanisms as Levers for Change. (Please see the "Overview of the Separation System Toolkit" for the discussion of the Levers for Change.)

Each of the nine questions in the audit of the Separation System (Step 1) addresses one of the seven Levers for Change:

1. Policies (Question #1)
2. Practices (Question #2 and #3)
3. Planning/Evaluation (Question #4)
4. Assignment of Roles and Accountabilities (Question #5)
5. Workplace Culture (Question #6)
6. Workplace Climate (NA)
7. Communication (Question #7)

Task 1: Rank Levers for Change from the Audit Items

> Directions:
>
> The Leader(s) of your Equity Initiative should put the average scores of your organization's responses to the Audit questions for separation that you calculated in Step 1.
>
> First, in Worksheet #7 (next page) enter the scores into Column A for each of the Levers for Change (that is, the scores for each of the items computed for Worksheet #3). Then complete Column B, ranking each of the Levers for Change by comparing the scores for each Lever.

Separation System Toolkit Worksheet #7
Ranking the Scores for the Levers for Change in the Separation System

	Column A: What was your organization's score for each lever for change? **(from Worksheet 3)** Put these scores in the open boxes below.	Column B: How strong is each lever for change? Rank order them for weakest to strongest. 1 = weakest lever (lowest mean score) 7 = strongest lever (highest mean score)
Policy Lever for Change		
1. To what extent does your organization have written policies which ensure that decisions such as furloughs, lay-offs, and terminations are fair, without regard to employees' demographic or social identities?		
Practice Levers for Change		
2. To what extent has your organization adopted practices that enable employees who have been terminated to request an inquiry about the decision?		
3. To what extent has your organization adopted practices, such as exit interviews, that give employees opportunities to discuss possible concerns about connections between their separation and inequities		
Average Score of Two Items Above Use the average of questions 2 and 3 when you rank the Levers for Change in Column B		
Planning and Evaluation Lever for Change		
4. To what extent does your organization routinely conduct audits to gain insight about the equity of separations?		
Assignment of Roles and Accountabilities Lever for Change		
5. To what extent does your organization routinely conduct audits to gain insight about the equity of separations?		

Separation System

Worksheet #7 (continued)

	Column A: What was your organization's score for each lever for change? **(from Worksheet 3)** Put these scores in the open boxes below.	Column B: How strong is each lever for change? Rank order them for weakest to strongest. 1 = weakest lever (lowest mean score) 7 = strongest lever (highest mean score)
Workplace Culture Lever for Change		
6. To what extent do the actions of your organizational leaders indicate that they believe that there is a connection between the organization's DEI initiatives and the fairness of systems established for separation?		
Workplace Climate Lever for Change		
Please note: There were no measures of "workplace climate" in the Audit related to the Separation System.		
Communication Lever for Change		
7. To what extent does your organization provide employees with equitable access to information pertaining to their separation?		

The members of your Equity Initiative Committee can consider the rankings of the Levers for Change in your Separation System and identify opportunities to build on those that are already **strong** (that is, those that are **ranked the highest**). Summarize the observations below.

_____

_____

The members of your Equity Initiative Committee can identify ways to strength those Levers for Change that are currently **weak** (that is, those that are **ranked the lowest**). Summarize the observations below.

_____

_____

Separation System

Considering Unions

For those organizations that have successfully entered into collective bargaining with unions, some or are all of their workforce will be governed by the terms of the resulting contract. According to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the following subjects are required by law and the NLRB to be included in the contract. These include: wages, overtime, bonuses, grievance procedures, safety and work practices, as well as procedures for discharge, layoff, recall, or discipline. Any attempt to audit the equity of employment systems such as Compensation and Benefits, Performance (including appeals), and Separation in a unionized workplace need to take into account the terms of the union contract. some or are all of their workforce will be governed by the terms of the resulting contract. According to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the following subjects are required by law and the NLRB to be included in the contract. These include: wages, overtime, bonuses, grievance procedures, safety and work practices, as well as procedures for discharge, layoff, recall, or discipline. Any attempt to audit the equity of employment systems such as Compensation and Benefits, Recruitment and Hiring, Performance Assessment (including appeals), and Separation in a unionized workplace need to take into account the terms of the union contract.

Task 2: Highlight Ideas for Innovation in the Separation System

Separation System Toolkit Worksheet #8
Your Ideas for Innovation in Levers for Change in the Separation System

Directions:

The members of your Equity Initiative Committee can use the worksheet below to specify possible innovations that can address root causes of inequities.

	Levers for Change	Your Ideas for Innovation	Organizational "Stakeholders" (including decision makers) in this Innovation
	Separation Policies		
	Separation Practices	Please Note: Task 3, below, elaborates on practice innovations because they can have a "multiplier effect," opening the doors for changes in other parts of the Separation System. You might want to save your ideas for Practice Innovation until you have completed Task 3.	
	Planning and Assessment (e.g., data collection) Related to Separation		
	Assignment of Roles and Accountabilities for the Equity of Separation		
	Workplace Culture Related to Separation		
	Workplace Climate of Inclusion Related to Separation		
	Communication Related to Separation		

Section 2: Separation Practice Innovations

Task 3: Consider Ideas for Practice Innovation in Separation

> Directions:
>
> Your organization may want to adopt a design thinking process to imagine possible innovations in separation.
>
> > *Design thinking is a process that can help your Equity Initiative Committee to move from insight to action by brainstorming ideas for your organization to pilot. You can leverage design thinking to create customized equity solutions for your organization.*
>
> The members of your Equity Initiative Committee can use Worksheet #9 to guide conversations about selected best practices innovations.

Separation System Toolkit Worksheet #9
Options for Practice Innovation

	Is this option available? Yes or No	If this option is not available, could it be adopted by your organization? Yes or No	If this option is available to some but not all employees, could it be offered to groups of employees who currently cannot access this option? **Specify which employee groups.**
SEPARATIONS INITIATED BY EMPLOYEES			
Does your organization request a written letter of resignation?			
Does the company expect supervisors or HR to schedule exit interviews to discuss the employees' work experiences, including experiences related to organizational equity and the employees' perceptions of inclusion?			
Does the company expect supervisors to inform team members of a colleagues anticipated departure from the organization?			
Does the organization celebrate the contributions made by departing employees before they leave the organization?			
SEPARATIONS INITIATED BY THE EMPLOYERS			
Does the organization assign responsibilities for communicating (in writing, in person) information about anticipated lay-offs, including the criteria used to identify employees who will be affected?			
Does the organization clarify a process for employees to use if they have questions about an impending lay-off?			
Does the organization assign responsibilities for communicating (in writing, in person) an impending termination of employment, including information about concerns about unsatisfactory performance?			
Does the organization clarify a process for employees to use if they have questions about a termination?			

Separation System

Task 4: Prioritize Your Ideas for Separation Practice Innovation

Directions:

The members of your Equity Initiative Committee can use the worksheet below to list their top ideas for separation practice innovation.

The Leader(s) of your Equity Initiative can develop an "elevator speech" that can be used to present your recommendations to top managers, decision-makers, and other key stakeholders.

Separation System Toolkit Worksheet #10
Your Ideas for Separation Practice Innovation

Ideas for Possible Innovation	Implementation Factors
Idea # 1: Summary of Key Components	• Purpose (Goals/Objectives) Draft Statement _____ • Expected (Measurable) Outcomes Draft Statement _____ • Pre-implementation Preparation (e.g., informational materials, training, etc.) Draft Statement _____ • Announcement/Enrollment Draft Statement _____ • Steps 1, 2, 3, etc. of Implementation Draft Statement _____ • Estimates of Time and Resources Needed for Implementation Draft Statement _____
Idea # 2: Summary of Key Components	• Purpose (Goals/Objectives) Draft Statement _____ • Expected (Measurable) Outcomes Draft Statement _____ • Pre-implementation Preparation (e.g., informational materials, training, etc.) Draft Statement _____ • Announcement/Enrollment Draft Statement _____ • Steps 1, 2, 3, etc. of Implementation Draft Statement _____ • Estimates of Time and Resources Needed for Implementation Draft Statement _____

Separation System

Separation System Toolkit Worksheet #10 (continued)

Ideas for Possible Innovation	Implementation Factors
Idea # 3: Summary of Key Components	• Purpose (Goals/Objectives) Draft Statement _____ • Expected (Measurable) Outcomes Draft Statement _____ • Pre-implementation Preparation (e.g., informational materials, training, etc.) Draft Statement _____ • Announcement/Enrollment Draft Statement _____ • Steps 1, 2, 3, etc. of Implementation Draft Statement _____ • Estimates of Time and Resources Needed for Implementation Draft Statement _____

Task 5: Present Idea(s) to Leaders, Decision-Makers, and Other Stakeholders

Share your ideas for innovation with people/groups that might be stakeholders and decision-makers separation, as well as people who will determine whether the innovation can be pilot tested.

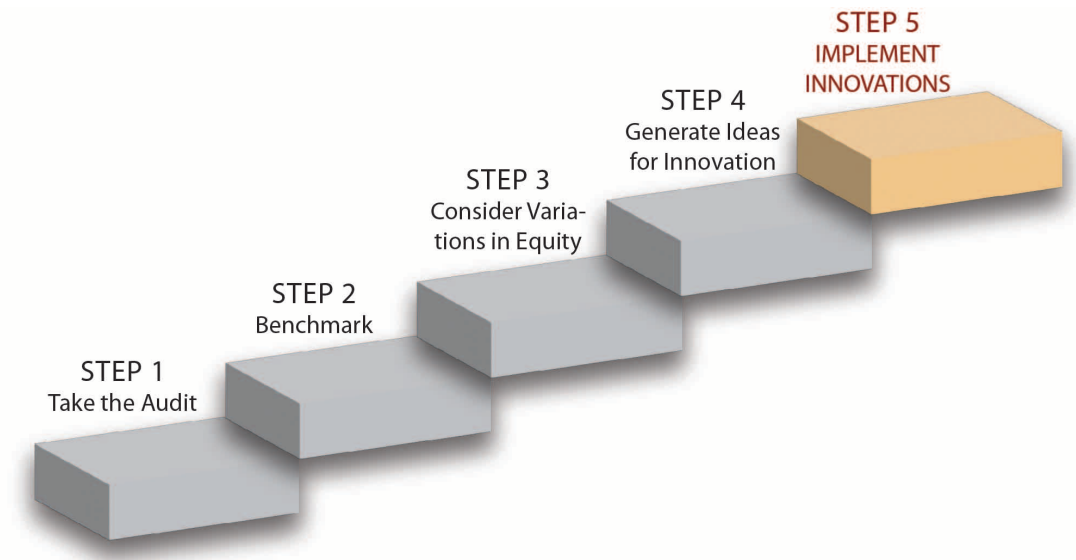☞ Go to Step 5 of the Separation System Toolkit: Implement Pilot of Innovations

Figure 11: Step 5 of the Separation System Toolkit