

## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (the Foundation), in partnership with Manatt Health, released the Health Equity Action Plan,<sup>1</sup> which proposed a vision and framework for achieving a racially and ethnically equitable health care delivery system in Massachusetts. To advance the Action Plan and as a step towards more coordination and cross-system learning, the Foundation and Manatt Health have created the *Massachusetts Health Equity Initiative Inventory*—a collection of interventions and programs being implemented to address racial, ethnic, and linguistic inequities in Massachusetts’ health care delivery system.

In line with the Action Plan report, this Inventory focuses on initiatives aimed at addressing *racial and ethnic* inequities in the *health care delivery system* and is part of a larger system-wide initiative to eliminate health inequities for all. We recognize there are many other populations experiencing health inequities, including those who live below the poverty level, with disabilities, and in the LGBTQ+ community, among others. There are also people who are multiply marginalized and identify with more than one marginalized group. Over time, the Inventory can evolve to better reflect all underserved and underrepresented populations and the multiple, interrelated factors that drive health inequities.

The Inventory is a tool for organizations across the health care delivery system in Massachusetts. Organizations may be at various stages in their development of programs to advance health equity and looking to start or expand health equity programming. By providing an aggregate view of the current health equity landscape

**Health care delivery system** refers to the network of institutions, providers, resources, and processes that enable the delivery of health care services; this includes things like doctor’s offices, health centers, emergency rooms, hospitals, and behavioral health (including mental health and substance use disorder treatment).

*Social systems, such as education, housing, nutrition, and transportation, and related policies are outside of the direct purview of the health care delivery system but play a significant role in people’s health care access and outcomes.*

in Massachusetts, the Inventory can also help inform regional and statewide priorities—for example, by facilitating potential collaboration or lesson sharing among organizations with shared interest in implementing similar initiatives, identifying potential gaps in initiative types, and guiding and/or aligning grantmaking priorities.

## HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVE INVENTORY OVERVIEW

The Inventory contains 148 initiatives, each categorized under one of the six components of the Action Plan framework for achieving a racially and ethnically equitable health care delivery system in Massachusetts (see Figure 1). Advancing each component of the framework is critical to creating a health care delivery system that enables individuals to achieve optimal health irrespective of race, ethnicity, or language. Together, these components can help achieve the vision where all people in Massachusetts experience high-quality, accessible, and timely care from providers who understand and respect their culture.

FIGURE 1. HEALTH EQUITY ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK



<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Health Equity Action Plan, please visit: *Achieving a Racially and Ethnically Equitable Health Care Delivery System in Massachusetts: A Vision, Toolkit, and Proposed Action Plan.*

For each Action Plan framework component, an organization may be in the emerging, advancing, or scaling phase of their health equity programming. The Inventory can be a resource for organizations across these phases. For example, an organization in the emerging phase of work related to “community power mobilized” can use the Inventory to identify and learn from what others are doing to prioritize community engagement and shared decision making with the communities they serve. Similarly, those advancing or scaling can use the Inventory to identify what others are doing in a particular space and how that work compares to their own.

Users have two options to view and utilize the [Inventory](#): 1) the “raw” Inventory data set and 2) a “pivot table” which allows users to easily filter categories (see “How-To Guide - Pivot Table” tab in the Inventory file for more detail on how to use the pivot table). Across both views, users can sort initiatives by various categories, including:

- **Clinical area of focus:** maternal health, behavioral health (inclusive of mental health and substance use disorder), primary care, chronic disease management (including cardiometabolic diseases), and cancer.
- **Population of focus:** people of color,<sup>2</sup> those with English as a second language or non-English speaking populations, immigrant populations, youth, birthing families, low-income individuals, those on Medicare, those on Medicaid, and a category for all other populations.
- **Geographic region of focus:** Boston, Western, Metro West, Central, Northeast, Southeast, and statewide.
- **Funding source:** grant/philanthropy, service reimbursement, state budget, operating budget, and mix of funding.
- **Type of implementing entity:** coalition/association, community provider, federally qualified health center (FQHC), government entity, health plan, hospital or health system, and others.

Each initiative featured in the Inventory includes a brief description and publicly available information on outcomes, where available.

## METHODOLOGY

Initiatives were identified through a landscape scan and stakeholder input. To be included in the Inventory, initiatives had to be actively underway in Massachusetts, focused on reducing a health disparity or inequity and aligned with the Action Plan framework, conditions of focus, or populations of focus. The populations and conditions of focus were selected based on state priorities (e.g., Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts [AHEM]), areas of increased focus in the national landscape (e.g., reintroduction of the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act in

Congress and the youth mental health crisis), and areas where there are historic and prominent disparities.

The Inventory does not capture all initiatives or organizations that are focused on advancing health equity in Massachusetts. It does not include health equity related legislation or advocacy efforts. The Inventory is not a roster of organizations that are explicitly focused on providing access to care for underserved populations (e.g., community health centers and safety net hospitals), but rather a list of specific initiatives they and others have underway.

To refine the Inventory, members of the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, staff from the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, and Health Equity Compact members reviewed findings from the landscape scan and shared additional information and initiatives not otherwise captured.

## CONCLUSION

The Massachusetts Health Equity Initiative Inventory was developed as a tool for organizations across the health care delivery system to advance their health equity work. State agencies, policymakers, and funders may also find value in the Inventory to support advancing their health equity work (e.g., to inform grantmaking and programming priorities). As identified in the research, myriad organizations are leading health equity initiatives spanning clinical areas and populations of focus to help achieve the Action Plan’s vision of all people in Massachusetts experiencing high-quality, accessible, and timely care from providers who understand and respect their culture.

If you would like to submit an initiative or update information related to an existing initiative, you can do so via this [form](#). As more organizations adopt and update their health equity initiatives, the Foundation will periodically update the Inventory and will keep the most up-to-date version on its website. The Foundation’s goal for this Inventory is to help organizations stay informed of the latest innovations and activities underway to achieve an equitable health care delivery system for all Massachusetts residents.

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2 There is no uniformly used definition of the term people of color. While some publications define people of color as any non-White population, a recent *Health Affairs* article defines people of color as “a term used to refer to African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and Native Hawaiians/other Pacific Islanders.” Braveman, P. A., Arkin, E., Proctor, D., Kauh, T., & Holm, N. (2022). Systemic and structural racism: Definitions, examples, health damages, and approaches to dismantling. *Health Affairs*, 41(2). Available at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35130057/>.