



USBC & THE FIRST FOOD FIELD

AWAKE TO WOKE TO WORK



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Most importantly, the evaluation team would like to sincerely thank the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for funding these efforts and paving the way to creating equity within the First Food field.

USBC Diversity Values Statement

The U.S. Breastfeeding Committee commits to inclusion, diversity, and equity as core values, embracing meaningful participation by diverse stakeholders and actively soliciting varied viewpoints. The USBC actively works to deconstruct barriers to full participation in the USBC based on identity.

The USBC definition of diversity includes position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, family status, gender identity, formal education, life experience, religion, communication styles, geographic location, and work-related skill sets and expertise. The organization grounds its work in inclusion, diversity, and equity to facilitate the achievement of its mission and vision.

Leading by example, as the national coalition empowered to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding in the United States, the USBC models inclusion, diversity, and equity for member coalitions and all populations they serve.

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Executive Summary

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) aimed to assess the baseline status of USBC-affiliated First Food field stakeholders in implementing, integrating, and embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into organizational programs and services. Stakeholders were actively engaged throughout each stage of this mixed-methods evaluation. The analyses informed specific recommendations for USBC and affiliated-member organizations.

The Evaluation Questions

1. How do coalitions and organizations in the lactation field define DEI?
2. How is DEI integrated into their infrastructures and efforts?
3. What DEI-related challenges and/or successes have they experienced?
4. What are the attitudes, behaviors, and levels of readiness related to DEI initiatives?
5. What do they need to support their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts?

Who Participated?

Two hundred and fifty-eight individuals representing 68 USBC member organizations.

Key Findings

Member Organizations...

- appropriately define *diversity* and *inclusion*, but some lack a clear understanding of *equity*
- have clear goals about *diversity*, but *equity* and *inclusion* goals do not align with the definitions of these constructs
- integrate DEI into strategic partnerships, community investment, and learning
- have experienced programmatic and training successes that integrate DEI principles, but still face a host of internal and external challenges when engaging in DEI efforts
- demonstrate commitment to DEI and are planning or implementing strategies to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments
- need funding and staff to facilitate DEI efforts
- want the USBC to provide technical assistance and to serve as a model for DEI initiatives

Recommendations

1. Develop strategies and toolkits for coalitions and organizations that meet them where they are on the DEI journey according to their level of readiness.
2. Convene lactation learning communities to promote knowledge-sharing DEI strategies and lessons learned among similar types of organizations and coalitions.
3. Provide DEI trainings from external experts to challenge institutional biases.



BACKGROUND

Disparities in Lactation

The health benefits of breastfeeding are well-documented. However, disparities in initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates and access to lactation support persist between populations.

For example, 73.6% of non-Hispanic Black infants, and 76.6% American Indian/Alaskan Native infants are ever breastfed compared to their White (85.5%), Asian (90.3%), and Hispanic (87.4%) counterparts.^{1,2} We can look to historical trauma for root causes that continue to drive breastfeeding disparities along racial and ethnic lines. Biases and stigma around breastfeeding among Black parents can, in part, be attributed to the forceful use of Black enslaved women's breasts to provide milk for infants that were not their own (i.e., wet nursing).^{3,4} Low rates of breastfeeding among Native American parents can, in part, be attributed to the history of forceful separation of Native children from their families to disconnect them from their cultural teaching and traditions⁵.

Homophobia and transphobia in medical care also contribute to disparities. Transgender parents, who have unique lactation experiences, often experience barriers to healthcare, such as discrimination, stigma, and rejection of services.^{6,7}

It is important for lactation support organizations that work with underserved populations to understand the historical and intersectional factors that impact breastfeeding (i.e., healthcare access, education, economics, racism, workplace, and gender inequalities) and adjust their infrastructure, culture, and work accordingly to avoid perpetuating or exacerbating breastfeeding disparities.⁸

Organizational Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Organizations that provide lactation support can address the needs of the individuals they serve by integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into their organizational infrastructure and practices. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts have been increasing across many fields as the call to dismantle systemic racism, discrimination, oppression, and biases has been brought to the forefront in recent years⁹. Although these efforts are not new, conversations surrounding the culture and climate within organizations are evolving.

Recent studies show that when organizations integrate DEI strategies, employees and constituents experience psychological safety.¹⁰ They feel their opinions are important, they are valued, they can challenge inequitable ideas, policies, and practices without fear of retribution, and they can create spaces to advocate for underrepresented and marginalized groups. Furthermore, employees in a psychologically safe work environment have increased productivity and high job satisfaction which correlates directly to an increase in returns and customer/client satisfaction.^{11,12,13,14} This suggests that prioritizing and integrating DEI strategies is positive for an organization's staff, volunteers, and those they serve.

[Equity in the Center](#), a leader in the field working to build a racially equitable society emphasizes the importance of organizations engaging in DEI work. They assert that organizations are key to developing an equitable culture. They suggest that organizations that fully experience the Race Equity Cycle™ proactively offset structural racism and race inequities within their organizations and the communities they serve.¹⁵

While their work specifically focuses on *racial* equity, the insights, strategies, and best practices that Equity in the Center provides for reaching racial equity are beneficial for attaining diversity, equity, and inclusion more broadly.

Why DEI Matters in Breastfeeding Work

Emerging research suggests that DEI implementation efforts not only address health disparities but also improve the quality of life of historically underserved groups who are most impacted by disparities.¹⁶ By applying this effort to the field of lactation, not only can DEI work influence maternal and infant outcomes, but it may also provide a space for restorative and transformative opportunities for birth and lactation workers. Collective efforts, intersectional frameworks, increased visibility of diverse experiences, ongoing systematic assessments, and the decolonization of systems, research, and practice are needed to achieve equity in breastfeeding outcomes.

Recognizing the Need to Understand the DEI Journey

The USBC is a national member organization with twenty-five years of experience coordinating policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives aimed at improving breastfeeding and equalizing access to lactation-supportive environments. Since its inception, the USBC has served as the networking hub and convener of collaborative work to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding.

In 2012, the USBC received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to scale the Collective Impact model to the national level, providing a more advanced framework for the First Food field's collaborative work that infuses equity values at every stage. The USBC developed a collaboration

framework called the **Constellation Formation Pathway**, which tracks action-focused work teams along their process as they:

- convene,
- engage in a root cause analysis exploring systemic inequity issues,
- identify priority strategies that will break down these issues and create systems-level change, and
- articulate their working agreements, shared measurement, and evaluation responsibilities.

As a result of the equity work that began in 2012, in 2019, the USBC intentionally expanded its membership from 50 national organizations to include community, state, territorial, and tribal organizations with missions or programs related to breastfeeding. By 2020, USBC Membership included 98 organizations, and is currently (in 2024) approximately 160 organizational members representing diverse viewpoints and approaches to breastfeeding promotion, protection, and support. The USBC commits to diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values, embracing meaningful participation by diverse stakeholders, and actively soliciting varied viewpoints.

Leading by example, the USBC strives to model equity for member organizations and other stakeholders in the First Food field. This is done through ongoing reflection on internal processes and procedures through the USBC equity committee (called the CRASH committee – which stands for Culture, show Respect, Assess/Affirm differences, show Sensitivity and Self -Awareness, and do it all with Humility), externally through webinars, trainings, and resources sharing, and by applying racial equity principles at all stages of its collaborative efforts.

Although the USBC has been on a proactive and deeply intentional equity journey for a decade, a 2019 Membership Engagement Survey revealed that *support with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)* implementation was the third highest need identified by USBC member organizations. Members identified the first and second opportunities as also identified the need for networking opportunities and skill-building opportunities on facilitating collaborative efforts.

The request for DEI training support underscores that USBC member organizations have come to understand the critical need to address inequities, recognize that they need assistance in undertaking these efforts, and see the USBC as the leading resource for adoption and dissemination of equitable structural and cultural change interventions in the lactation field.

In response to the request for DEI support, the USBC applied for and was awarded funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to meet the goals listed in the chart below. This evaluation achieves Project Goal 1 and the findings and recommendations outlined in this report inform Project Goal 2.

USBC DEI Project Goals

- 1 Assess the baseline status of USBC-affiliated members in implementing and embedding DEI in their programs and services.
- 2 Identify a cohort of racial equity field leaders and develop learning modules to address implementation gaps identified in this evaluation report.
- 3 Strengthen staff capacity to provide direct training, workshop facilitation, and capacity-building assistance to USBC-affiliated members.

Defining DEI

While sometimes used interchangeably, the terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* are individually defined and conceptualized. For the evaluation and this report, we utilized the definitions below, which were provided by the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative.¹⁷



DIVERSITY

is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective.



EQUITY

is the promotion of justice, impartiality and fairness within procedures, processes, and distribution of resources.



INCLUSION

is ensuring that diverse individuals feel welcomed and can participate fully in decision-making processes and development opportunities.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation Team

The USBC contracted with Urban Metrics Consultants (UMC) to lead the evaluation. UMC specializes in evaluation and organizational development and offers a broad range of services, including data collection, management, analysis, and dissemination, program evaluation, and meeting facilitation. This project was conducted by an eight-person team, co-led by Drs. Kimberley Broomfield-Massey and Tiffany Young. Dr. Broomfield-Massey is an experienced evaluator with over twenty years specializing in participatory methods, quantitative and qualitative research, and facilitation. Dr. Young specializes in qualitative and mixed methods, with expertise in community engagement, collaborative evaluation approaches, and implementation science. Their combined experience uniquely qualified them to lead this diverse group of talented research professionals who supported all data analysis and reporting.



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Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation project was to assess the current baseline status of the USBC-affiliated First Food field stakeholders in implementing and embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in their organizational infrastructure, programs, and services. Between November 2021 and November 2022, through analysis and meaning-making sessions, the evaluation team identified **if and how** DEI principles were integrated into each coalition or organization's work. This report summarizes those findings, including gaps and recommendations.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Questions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How do coalitions and organizations in the lactation field define diversity, equity, and inclusion?2. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion integrated into coalitions and organizations' infrastructures and efforts?3. What diversity, equity, and inclusion-related challenges and/or successes have coalitions and organizations experienced?4. What are the attitudes, behaviors, and levels of readiness within the organizations and coalitions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives?5. What do coalitions and organizations need to support their diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts?

Table 2: Evaluation Key Stakeholders

Key Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• USBC team members were integral in the development of the evaluation questions and data collection tools. They also did outreach to and recruitment of evaluation participants. The evaluation findings will have implications for the DEI resources and support the USBC provides to its membership.• Breastfeeding coalitions and USBC member organizations served as the evaluation participants and shared their experience integrating DEI principles in their work. The evaluation findings assess the ways the USBC members embed and operationalize DEI principles in their organizational internal and external efforts.• The communities and families whom the coalitions and organizations support are the ultimate beneficiaries of DEI practices and are also stakeholders, as the findings will influence and enhance organizations' efforts to address breastfeeding barriers and disparities.

Method

The sections below describe the methods associated with the DEI Evaluation and the Meaning-Making Sessions. The Meaning-Making Sessions were conducted after the data had been analyzed and were used to ensure that participants' experiences were accurately reflected in the data and to collect additional recommendations for the next phase of the USBC's DEI work.

Approach

To ensure the stakeholders' valuable input guided the evaluation process and addressed the evaluation questions for all aspects of the project, the evaluation team employed a *participant-oriented* approach to evaluation known as **collaborative evaluation**.

A collaborative evaluation methodically invites and involves stakeholders in evaluation planning and implementation processes. Employing active stakeholder engagement throughout the life cycle of an evaluation results in stronger evaluation designs, enhanced data collection and analysis, and findings that stakeholders understand and utilize.

Table 3: Evaluation Stakeholders integrated into the Evaluation Process

Stakeholders were integrated into the evaluation process in the following ways:

- USBC **team members** assisted with developing data collection instruments and recruiting participants.
- A small cohort of USBC **coalition and organization members** piloted the survey questions to assess content validity.
- USBC **coalition and organization members** participated in the interviews to provide insight into their DEI journeys.
- The evaluators facilitated “meaning-making sessions” where participating coalitions and organizations reflected and provided insights on the preliminary evaluation findings.

For the sake of parsimony, throughout this report when we refer to coalitions and organizations as a group, we will refer to this group as “**member organizations,**” or “**participating organizations.**” Representatives of coalitions and organizations will be referred to as “participants” and “respondents.”

Design

The evaluation team employed a convergent mixed methods design, allowing for a holistic understanding of how coalitions and organizations implement DEI principles. Because the purpose of this evaluation was to understand the nuanced context of DEI integration and processes, qualitative data (collected from interviews) was prioritized across the entire project.

The quantitative data (from surveys) provided descriptive context to support the qualitative data. The qualitative and quantitative data are integrated in this report to obtain a thorough perspective of the state of DEI in member organizations, member organizations' commitment to DEI principles, and member organizations' readiness to implement DEI practices.

USBC members engage in breastfeeding support and advocacy work differently, according to their organizational mission and structure, which may also impact how they engage in DEI work.

Table 4: Three Categories for Participant Organizations

For this evaluation, participating organizations were placed into groups that reflect the nuances of how USBC members engage in lactation work. The three categories are:

1. Coalitions

- a. *State/Territorial Coalitions* - State/territorial breastfeeding coalitions registered with the USBC.
- b. *Tribal* - Any breastfeeding coalition formed to serve a Native American/Indigenous tribe, tribal organization, or tribal community.
- c. *Local/Community Coalitions* - Any breastfeeding coalition focused on serving a city, town, county, metropolitan area, or intrastate region.
- d. *Cultural Coalitions* - Any breastfeeding coalition focused on serving a specific racial/ethnic or cultural group within the United States at a sub-national level.

2. Lactation organizations

- a. For-profit and non-profit organizations that solely focus on advancing breastfeeding.

3. Embedded lactation programs

- a. For-profit and non-profit organizations where advancing breastfeeding is among other foci the organization champions.

DEI Evaluation: Data Collection, Instruments, and Analysis

Sampling and Data Collection

The USBC recruited coalitions and organizations from its member database. Participation incentives included one free registration for the 2021 USBC annual conference or two seats at either the Foundations of Data Equity training provided by We All Count or Factuality: A Fact-Based Simulation of Inequality provided by Factuality®. **The evaluation team collected data from April 2021 through October 2021.**

The USBC asked each organization and coalition to provide a representative (e.g., leader, executive, manager, supervisor) to participate in a structured interview. In addition to the interview, the participants completed a survey and invited three additional participants from their organization to complete the survey. In addition to collecting the data, the evaluation team managed the data. To ensure anonymity, the evaluation team de-identified the data before conducting the analyses.

The evaluation team developed protocols and logs to systematize and guide the data collection process. The evaluation team sent links for the online survey to the participants via email. The interviews took place via video conference and took approximately 1 to 1.5 hours to complete. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service. The evaluation team reviewed the transcriptions for clarity and accuracy prior to analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Measures

Participants completed a survey developed by the USBC and the UMC evaluation team. The survey contained various demographic questions and three questionnaire scales adapted from existing measures. The three scales assessed organizational environment, commitment and attitudes towards DEI, and DEI policy readiness for change.

In the demographics section of the survey, participants reported background information about themselves (gender, age, race, and the number of years they've served in their organization) and the member organization they represented (organization type, annual budget, population served).

Table 5: Description of the Quantitative Scales

DEI Environment, Commitment & Readiness Questionnaires		
To Assess...	The evaluation team used...	Scale Name
1. whether the participant's organizational environment is conducive to DEI.	adapted questions from the <i>Employee Survey: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</i> . ¹⁸	Environmental Scale
2. organizational commitment and attitudes toward diversity.	selected questions from the <i>Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change</i> ¹⁹ measure.	Commitment and Attitudes Scale
3. organizational DEI policy readiness.	selected questions from the <i>Policy Readiness Tool</i> . ²⁰	Organizational Readiness for Change Scale

Qualitative Measures

The USBC and the evaluation team developed three interview guides that were organized similarly. However, select interview questions differed based on the organization category. All interviews focused on assessing participant organizations':

- ecosystem and structure,
- process and culture related to DEI,
- readiness for change related to conducting DEI work internally and externally, and
- perception of USBC's role and the assistance they can provide in assisting in the organization's DEI journey.

Mixed Method Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 28). Descriptive statistics (including means and frequencies) were generated for demographic data (race, age, etc.) to understand participants' backgrounds. Reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha) were generated to determine the reliability of all three questionnaire scales. Cronbach's alpha values can range from 0 to 1, with higher values ($\geq .70$) indicating that all questions in the scale reliably measure the same general construct²¹. The reliability statistic was acceptable for all scales used in this evaluation.

Table 6: Reliability of the Quantitative Scales

Scale	Chronbach's alpha value
Environmental Scale	0.92
Commitment and Attitudes Scale	0.95
Organizational Readiness for Change Scale	0.68

Composite scores were computed for each scale using the average of the scale items. In some cases, mean comparisons were made based on demographic differences (e.g., organization category).

Qualitative Analysis

The evaluation team used thematic analysis to abstract patterns from the data and garner insights and concepts related to coalitions and organizations' DEI journey. MAXQDA (v.23), a qualitative data software, was used to manage and analyze the transcripts. In addition, the team conducted a three-way content analysis to ascertain the nuanced ways in which coalitions, lactation organizations, and embedded breastfeeding programs DEI journeys were similar and different.

Codebook development

A six-person team developed a codebook with deductive and inductive codes, manifest and latent codes, and logistic codes, based on the interview responses. To test the codebook, the team individually coded six transcripts and held multiple team discussions to explore the coding process and create, refine, and finalize codes, as well as create code definitions and exclusion criteria.

Coding

After finalizing the codebook, evaluation team members coded interview transcripts in MAXQDA separately, and then met in teams of two to discuss coding, address discrepancies, and find consensus accordingly. The entire team met later in a large meeting with the lead qualitative researcher to review coding and further address any discrepancies. Once group consensus was reached, a final version of the transcripts was sent to the qualitative lead and saved in the master file for thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis

The qualitative lead and co-lead engaged in an in-depth thematic analysis process that included categorizing the patterns in the data and comparing the categories to develop themes. Once themes were developed, the leaders reported their progress and findings to the larger group to obtain feedback and refine the core themes.

Content Analysis (three-way organizational split)

A content analysis was conducted to assess and compare the data between the three category types of coalitions, lactation organizations, and embedded lactation programs. Content analysis was chosen to quantify and analyze the relationship of content, paragraphs, and already established themes between the three types of organizations.

The data that served as the foundation of the themes from the primary analysis, was examined for key differences between codes by organization type. As differences in codes were identified, those codes were then quantitatively aggregated. A heat map was created to provide an image of the codes' frequency of occurrence. Specifically, the numbers within the boxes represent the instances a particular code was applied to segments (or statements) within the data. The deeper the color of the box, the more segments were assigned to the code within the organization type. The heat map reflects not only quantitative differences in coded segments but also differences in DEI integration and involvement between the three categories of organizations. Using the heat map, the evaluation team also summarized and highlighted core differences and similarities between the three organization categories. It is important to note that coalitions participated in the evaluation more than the other organization types; therefore, the number of codes may not be proportional across organization categories.

“Meaning-Making” Sessions: Sampling, Data Collection, & Analysis

Sampling and Data Collection

In October and November 2022, the team conducted meaning-making sessions with individuals who participated in the DEI Evaluation Project. The USBC emailed session invitations to all evaluation participants. The sessions were organized by organization categories, except the final session, in which participants from all remaining member organizations were invited to attend.

The evaluation team created a protocol that guided the facilitation of the meaning-making sessions. Each session lasted for two hours, and the evaluation team kept a log of participant names, their organization, and their contact information. During the session, the presentation included an overview of the evaluation methods and findings. After each evaluation question and its associated findings were shared, the participants were sent to a breakout room where a facilitator was waiting with guiding questions to generate reflections about the data. The facilitators used a [feelings wheel](#) from the Junto Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership to help participants gauge their feelings about the evaluation findings. After the breakouts, all participants returned to the main room, and the facilitator reported highlights from the breakout room conversations. The protocol included questions that were asked at each breakout session:

- Based on what was presented, what stood out to you?
- What did these findings evoke or provoke from you? At this moment, how do you feel about the findings? Use the feeling wheel to describe your feelings.
- What is missing or should be added to the findings?
- What do you think are the appropriate next steps?

Each meaning – making session and its breakouts were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcription service. The evaluation team reviewed the transcriptions for clarity and accuracy prior to analysis.

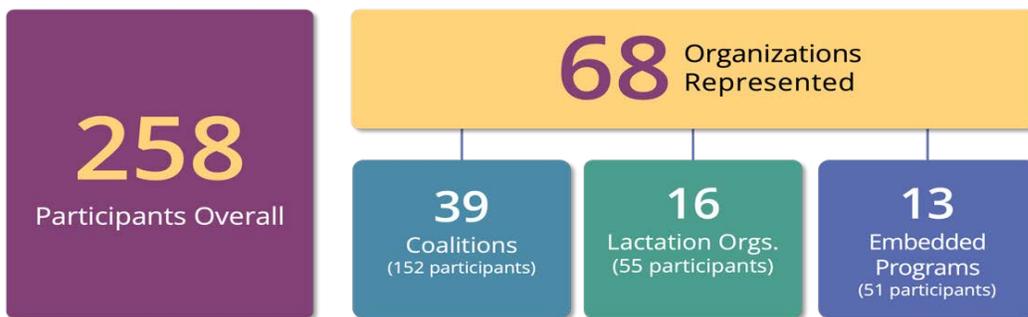
Thematic Analysis

The UMC evaluation team identified key themes from the data gathered at the meaning-making session using thematic analysis. Using MAXQDA software, initial categorical codes were developed for the analysis (e.g., feelings, highlights, and what was missing from evaluation results). Additionally, the team employed an open coding method where three coders identified important concepts and then defined categories by finding similarities between the codes. The codes from all team members were combined and analyzed by one team member. In addition to reviewing the data for abstractions and patterns, the data were triangulated using team meeting debriefings, facilitator notes, listening session audio, and coded segments to identify emerging observations and themes.



EVALUATION FINDINGS

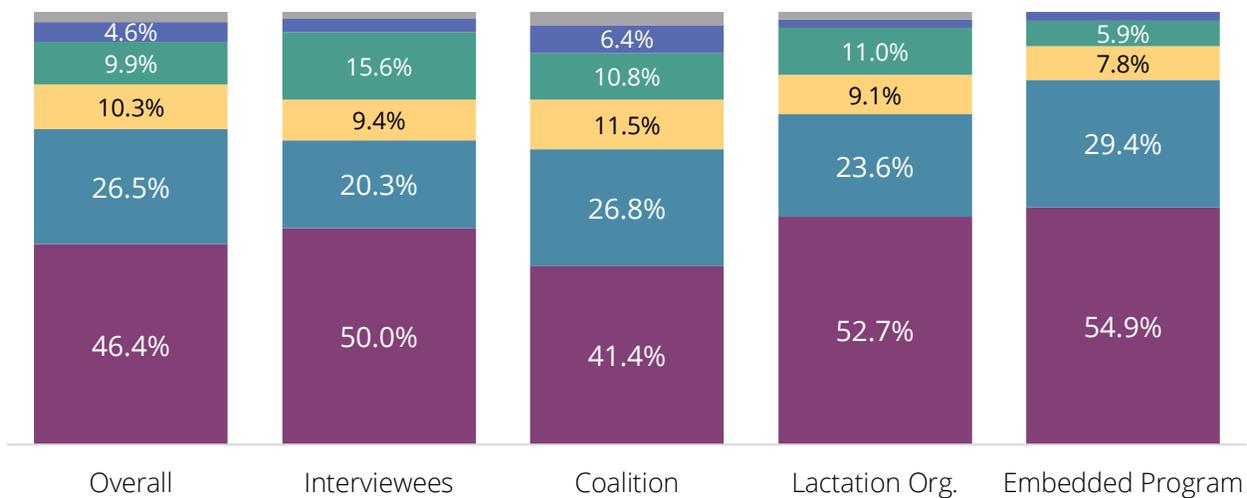
Demographics of Organizational and Individual Participants



Racial & Ethnic Identity

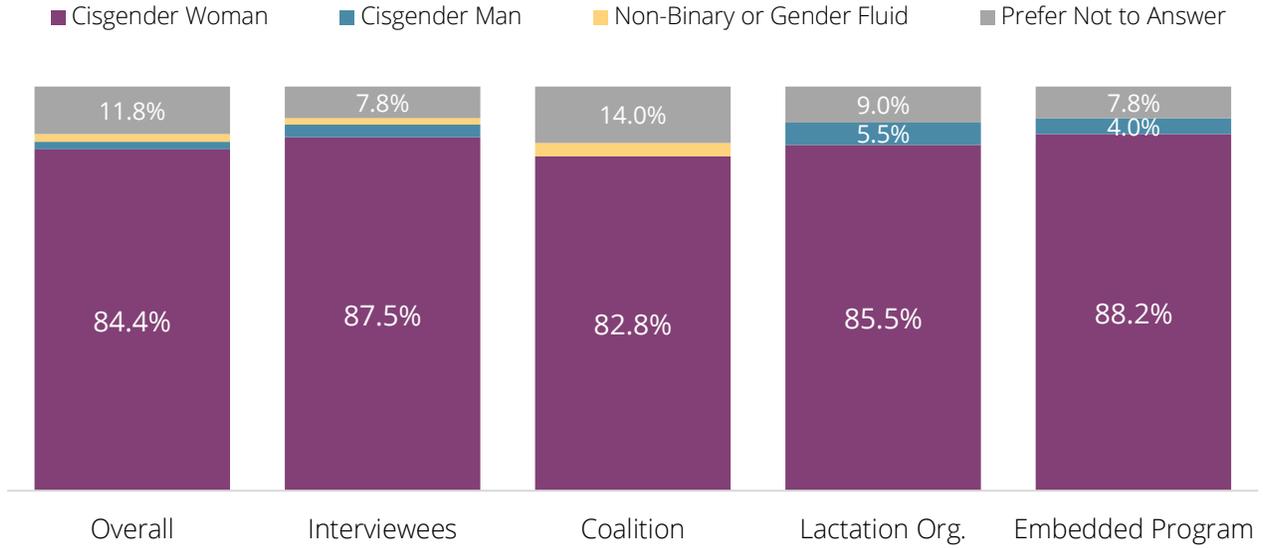
- Caucasian/White individuals comprised almost half (46.4%) of the overall sample.
- African American/Black individuals accounted for about a quarter (26.4%) of the sample.
- The racial/ethnic breakdown was relatively similar across all three organization types.

■ Caucasian ■ African American/Black ■ Hispanic/Latinx ■ Multi-Racial ■ Asian/Asian American ■ Another Race

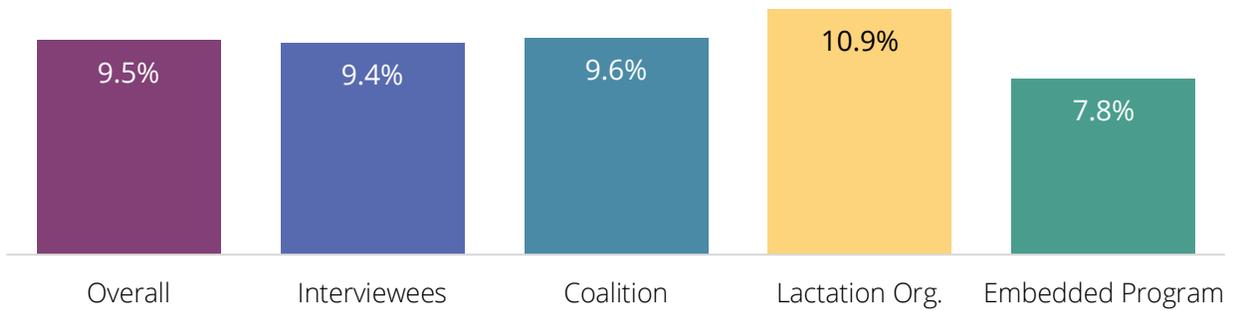


Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

- Most participants identified as cisgender women.
- Lactation organizations had the highest representation of cisgender men (5.5%).
- No men were represented among coalitions.
- Almost 10% of participants overall identified as LGBTQIA+.



Percent of Participants who Identify as LGBTQIA+



Education

On average, participants indicated a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education. Participants representing Embedded Programs indicated significantly higher levels of completed education, with over 30% of them holding doctoral or professional degrees.

Highest Level of Education Completed	Overall	Interviewees	Coalitions	Lactation Orgs.	Embedded Programs
High School/GED/Trade or Tech Certificate	1.5%	1.6%	2.5%	0%	0%
Some College (no degree)	5.3%	1.6%	7.0%	1.8%	3.9%
Associate Degree (AA, AS)	4.6%	3.1%	4.5%	7.3%	2.0%
Bachelor's Degree (BA, BS)	33.8%	34.4%	41.4%	30.9%	13.7%
Master's Degree (MA, MS, MBA)	40.7%	43.8%	37.6%	41.8%	49.0%
Doctoral/Professional Degree (Ph.D., MD, JD)	14.1%	15.6%	7.0%	18.2%	31.4%

Experience & Role

Overall, most participants (81.4%) had roles that include decision-making that would influence DEI work in their organization. Participants from embedded programs (60.8%) were **significantly less likely to be in these roles** than those in lactation organizations (76.4%) and coalitions (89.8%).

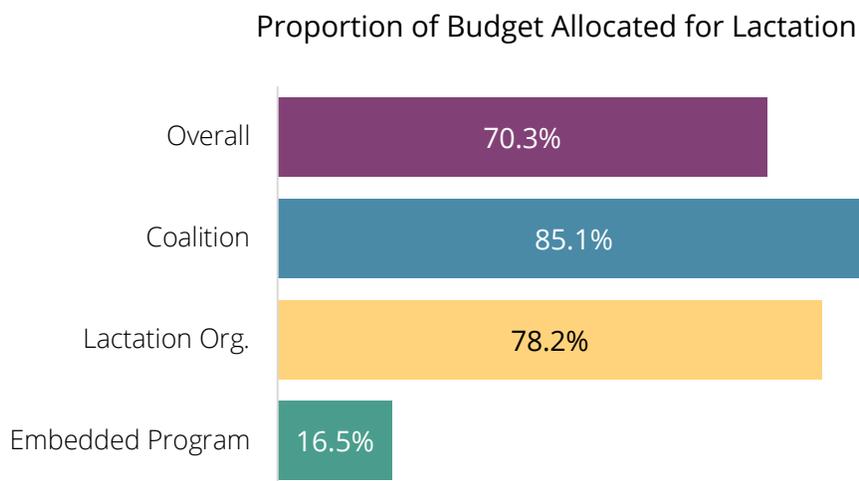
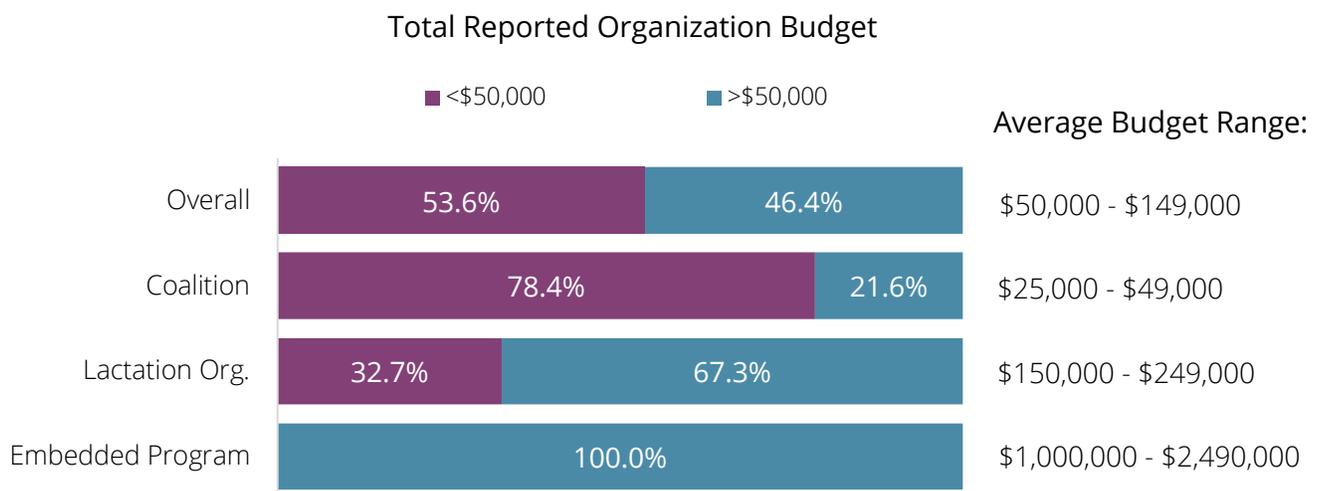
Half of the participants overall (49.8%) were relatively new to their organizations, reporting 0 to 5 years of experience volunteering or working. Participants from embedded programs reported **significantly higher number of years** volunteering or working with their respective organizations.

Number of Years Volunteering or Working	Overall	Interviewees	Coalitions	Lactation Orgs.	Embedded Programs
0 – 5 years	49.8%	32.8%	52.9%	52.7%	37.3%
6 – 10 years	27.4%	34.4%	26.8%	29.1%	27.5%
11 – 15 years	11.8%	17.2%	12.7%	10.9%	9.8%
Over 15 years	11.0%	15.6%	7.6%	7.3%	25.5%

Organization Budget & Lactation Allocation

The overall participant organization budget and the proportion of the budget allocated to lactation differed significantly based on the organization type.

- Participants from embedded lactation programs reported a significantly higher average budget range than lactation organizations and coalitions.
- On average, coalition participants reported that a significantly higher proportion of their organizational budget was allocated toward lactation protection, promotion, and support.



Summary of Themes

The table below summarizes the evaluation questions and themes that emerged from the analysis. The following pages provide more context for each theme, along with data from the quantitative analysis and quotes from interviewees. The type of member is noted for each quote. For a reminder of the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative diversity, equity, and inclusion definitions used for this evaluation, please refer to page 8.

1. How do members define diversity, equity, and inclusion?

They appropriately define *diversity* and *inclusion*, but some lack a clear understanding of *equity*

2. How are diversity, equity, and inclusion integrated into members' infrastructures and efforts?

Member Organizations...

- believe the DEI journey is an evolving process
- integrate DEI in both internal and external processes
- have equity and inclusion goals that do not align with the construct definitions
- integrate DEI into strategic partnerships, community investment, and learning

3. What DEI-related challenges and/or successes have members experienced?

Member Organizations...

- highlight programmatic and training successes that integrated DEI principles
- face a host of internal and external challenges when engaging in DEI efforts
- are at various levels of benchmarking their goals
- have a primary focus on racial diversity with limited mention of equity and inclusion

4. What are members' attitudes, behaviors, and levels of readiness related to DEI initiatives?

Member Organizations...

- show commitment to DEI by forming key partnerships, transforming boards and programs, and supporting staff, volunteers, and consultants
- are planning or implementing strategies to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments
- acknowledge having informal or no procedures for addressing prejudices and injustices
- are "conditioning" themselves for DEI practices and initiatives

5. What do members need to support their DEI efforts?

Member Organizations...

- need funding and staff to facilitate DEI efforts
- request USBC provide DEI and grant procurement technical assistance
- want USBC to serve as a role model and illustrate their DEI journey

Evaluation Question 1

How do members in the lactation field define diversity, equity, & inclusion?

Theme 1: Most participants appropriately defined diversity and inclusion, but some did not demonstrate a clear understanding of equity.

- Many member organizations are in the process of developing definitions. Participants often provided examples of diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organization in lieu of definitions.

“We don't have a full diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, but we're working towards that. I mean, that was something that our lactation equity committee said that they would work up. So, we're working towards that. So again, it's an awareness, a focus on it at the beginning of every meeting and sort of hopefully tying up the meeting there too, to say, *what did we do today that fosters our diversity, equity, and inclusion goals?*”–Coalition

“We define it by making sure that there is a multitude of people represented, may be in color, and in thought, and making sure [our] stakeholders feel properly represented.”–Coalition

Diversity

- All participants provided definitions of diversity that aligned with the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative definition of diversity used in this evaluation.

“So, I think organizationally, there's an appreciation that differences in thought, background, and experiences is overall important and beneficial. Our team centers racial equity, so when we talk about diversity, we often are talking about diversity by race and ethnicity, but we also center diversity by age, sexual orientation, gender identity, and many different identities, especially those that tend to be marginalized.”–Embedded Program

“I think it can be both in terms of individuals that we are either serving or are a part of our team that are coming from different communities, whether that's a community of color or a LGBTQIA community. So, in terms of diversity, we are looking at all gender expressions as well as color, race, and ethnicity.”–Lactation Org.

Inclusion

- Inclusion, in many cases, was properly defined according to the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative definition. The phrase participants frequently used to define inclusion was “having a seat at the table”.
- In cases where inclusion was not properly defined, it was often confused with diversity.

“Not just a seat at the table, but being comfortable at the table, and being able to hold power at the table and being able to speak for themselves and for others. It's not just inviting people to the table; it's helping people to build their own tables.”–Coalition

“Inclusion, once again, trying to make sure that there's a good representation for people in their different thoughts or being, so that they feel that they're not alone, so that they have, again, that representation in the coalition.”–Coalition

Equity

- Equity was the least properly defined principle. When defining equity, participants often neglected to mention the structural and systemic aspects of the principle.
- There were examples of participants using the principles interchangeably. A few participants acknowledged their belief that all three principles have a similar meaning.

“Equity, to us, means meeting everyone's needs whatever their needs are.”–Lactation Org.

“I don't know if we've ever really talked about inclusion very much. I mean, it's not that it's not an important topic, but I do think that, if I kind of think about our current leadership, I'm not sure there is a clear understanding of the difference between diversity, equity, and inclusion... I'm not surprised. I think that's going to be pretty typical. But I have a different understanding of inclusion because I've done some significant work with USBC. But I think as a coalition, they may think of inclusion as pretty similar to diversity.”–Coalition

Evaluation Question 2

How are diversity, equity, and inclusion integrated into infrastructure and efforts?

Theme 2a: The diversity, equity, and inclusion journey is an evolving process.

- Participants used the word *journey* to describe the status of their DEI efforts.
- The DEI journey is described as an evolving process where some members are newcomers to DEI work, while others are more established.
- The DEI journey was often mentioned when discussing goals.

“Since we're still trying to get our footing, I'm definitely happy with the progress that we've made. Two years ago, we probably wouldn't have ever even thought about putting our pronouns at the end of our names or even forming an equity committee.”–Coalition

“...I'm glad to say that I think I'm in trusted spaces with some of my white colleagues, where we've had to have some hard conversations in terms of, yes, we're trying to decentralize whiteness, but at the same time not to make it disappear.”–Coalition

Theme 2b: DEI integration is dynamic and occurs in both internal and external processes across organizations and coalitions.

- Participants describe DEI efforts occurring across their organizations in both internal and external structures of their organization.
- Some of the organizations commented that DEI was integrated into the DNA of the organization and its mission, core values, and governance structures and exuded through their internal communication and interactions with one another.

“We want everyone to have [the] access and ability to breastfeed. It's really the core of why we exist. What we do to execute and support that is through research, our clinical guidance, our protocols, our networking, our research opportunities to promote the equity piece of this. We think everyone should have access to it, no matter [their] race, religion, et cetera. So, I think that's kind of ingrained in who we are and inside our DNA as an organization.”–Lactation Org.

“Definitely all of our subcommittees and teams. Any planning teams. We have a few special projects that are grant funded, so anybody working on those projects. It's a diverse group. The Board of Directors is more diverse than it's ever been. It's not totally representative, but there is more representation, culturally, of the state than there used to be.”–Coalition

- Participants described their DEI efforts as being integrated in external structures such as their scholarship programs, training, curriculum, imagery, and partnerships.
- DEI was integrated into the programs and services that aim to serve breastfeeding professionals, communities, and families.
- DEI was integrated into imagery across various print, video, and digital platforms.
- Lastly, DEI included collaborating with partners that served diverse communities to enhance and extend their DEI and breastfeeding efforts.

Themes 2c: Organizations and coalitions are clear about their diversity goals. However, their equity and inclusion goals did not align with the construct definitions.

- Most aspirational goals were diversity-focused. Diversity goals primarily included increasing diversity among leadership, governing boards, and membership.
- When discussing equity goals, in many cases, participants discussed the equal representation of groups who are being served by or representing their organizations.
- Inclusion goals are mentioned the least, and when mentioned, they were a restatement of the diversity and equity goals.

"I personally would love for the executive director to be BIPOC...and my goal, personally, would be that the face of the coalition, the vision caster, is really somebody who is more representative of the diversity of our state."–Coalition

Participants from organizations that collect data from their members mention that data is important in establishing and driving their organizational goals. Many organizations did not provide details on how data impacted their diversity, equity, or inclusion goals. For example, when asked how their organization utilizes data to ensure equity goals are integrated into their organization, a participant commented,

"I think it's going to be basically the same answer as for diversity. How can you make fair decisions without some data because we're going to want to do certain things? We understand that we may not be able to boil the ocean. But let's use some data and help drive the decisions."–Lactation Org.

Theme 2d: Organizations integrate DEI through strategic partnerships, engaging in community investment, and learning from community experts to address maternal and child health disparities and barriers in the lactation field.

- Organizations and coalitions are strategizing ways to accomplish their goals, going beyond planning and making execution a priority.
- Organizations and coalitions have learned to go directly to the community they are intending to serve.
- Organizations are building community partnerships that honor the work and expertise being done by trusted community members and partners.

“When I started on the board, I started partnering with women I already knew that were doing the work. That was the first thing, is educating the current board and saying, ‘Hey, there are people already out here doing this work’. And really, we should be lifting their organizations because they've been doing this work. We don't need to reinvent the wheel.”–Coalition

- Resources are being directed to communities that have long been overlooked.
- Some organizations and coalitions are using funds to provide scholarships and resources for lactation certifications and professional advancement for diverse individuals.
- Some entities have increased diversity through informal and formal opportunities for mentorship.

“We know that a single mother who's striving to become a lactation consultant would not have time to sit in on all of our 16 hours of education. So, we started webinar learning. And so, we make sure that everyone has access to the recordings for four months after the course so that they can listen in on their own time. So, recognizing that not everyone, especially, it's been very clear during the pandemic that many individuals don't have childcare. They don't have access to childcare, or the childcare is spotty, or they can't afford it because they've lost their job, or they can't go to work because they have older kids at home or whatever it is. We've tried to make sure that they can still access the recordings for quite a while. So, we do that for all of our education.”–Lactation Org.

- Many participants highlighted the power and significance of the partnerships they have formed.
 - Organizations partnered with entities such as local, state, and federal government, communities, and professional organizations and associations.
- Some participants discussed the ways they navigate these spaces. For some, this included taking on a teaching role while others reported taking a pause and listening.

“Having really good solid strategic partnerships in the community has been very helpful. We're partnering with the [local] community coalition and [cultural] coalition. There are a few other partnerships that we've been developing that have been, I think, very instructive for us in being a good partner and listening better and working on their priorities before working on our own priorities and understanding that these are actually shared priorities”–Coalition

Evaluation Question 3

What diversity, equity, and inclusion related challenges and/or successes have member coalitions and organizations experienced?

Theme 3a: Respondents highlighted programmatic and training successes that integrated DEI principles.

“They are working with the local hospital to provide scholarships for women of color to receive breastfeeding training. They also worked with the [state] maternal and child health program with funding, too, and that also deals with diversity, equity, and inclusion as well.”–Coalition

“One of my favorite parts about the program is that we offer our own funding opportunities. So, we fund community organizations across the state...who knows their communities better than community-level organizations and people that are working directly with clients and families?”–Embedded Program

“We did a LGBTQI training, an antisemitic training and anti-racist training. And when we have our annual retreats, we usually try to have a training as a part of that...it's usually staff driven. What does the staff as a collective body (or the affinity groups) want to learn. If the affinity groups are speaking up and saying, *‘the staff may not have said this, but we feel like there needs to be a training on x’*, which I actually think that's how the other LGBTQIA training came about. It was the staff saying we needed to have more of a conversation.”–Embedded Program

Themes 3b: Organizations and coalitions face a host of internal and external challenges when engaging in DEI efforts.

- Organizations and coalitions face internal leadership, institutional, and bureaucratic challenges that impact their ability to engage in DEI efforts.

“I don't know if we've ever really talked about inclusion very much. I mean, it's not that it's not an important topic, but if I kind of think about our current leadership, I'm not sure there is a clear understanding of the difference between diversity, equity, and inclusion.”–Coalition

“To increase diversity, we have to go beyond just getting money for people to attend classes and take the exam. That's important, and we're doing that. And we need to give them access to clinical hours that are needed to sit for the exam. And right now, the gatekeepers for those clinical hours are white-led institutions and their medical institutions with their own set of barriers.”–Coalition

- Other challenges respondents mentioned included the need for more funding, training/ technical assistance, and staff resources.

“100% funding. Funding is one of the biggest barriers to move this work forward. For example, working with a local DEI consultant that can come in and provide some strategies or input on how to operationalize DEI. Becoming a nonprofit because we have zero funding. A lot of the funding out there requires you to be a nonprofit.”–Coalition

“More resources on how to do this work. More support. We are looking for a speaker that will speak to systemic racism in breastfeeding, and I Google and there's a bunch of speakers, and I've been trying to reach out to them, but it's basically me and Google.”–Coalition

Theme 3c: Organizations and coalitions are at various stages of benchmarking their goals and want to be more intentional about benchmarking their DEI goals

- In many instances, organizations and coalitions were not benchmarking their goals.
- Some mentioned capturing demographic data but did not explain the connection to DEI goals.
- In a few cases, participants mentioned collecting DEI-related data, but the data has not been analyzed. Below are examples of organizations at different stages of data collection.

“The data is a huge part of developing our strategic plan and our annual work plans. So, we do tons of data analysis of every single bit of local data that we can possibly get.”–Coalition

“Data collection is built into our registration process. That's something new that we've rolled out. We use an online platform for our registration and learning process and so all of that data is just automatically collected from everyone who registers. Analysis happens through, I'm not sure who's doing that, because there's been some shifts in personnel.”–Lactation Org

“The [goals] really aren't benchmarked. It's like we just make a note of it. It's like, okay, we have these partnerships, and we're vocal. The founder, the president of the organization, does a great job of speaking out and trying to ensure that we have a presence in different populations, different environments. But again, due to COVID, it's kind of been shut down. So, we don't benchmark it, we just try to make sure that we're present.”–Coalition

Theme 3d: Organizations and coalitions primarily focus on racial diversity with limited mention of equity and inclusion.

- Diversity in internal structures has been highlighted among many interviewees as a steppingstone for diverse representation internally; however, more needs to be done beyond governance structure, leadership, and staff.
- Many interviewees stated that there is more work to be done to increase diversity. They discussed intersectional experiences such as class, race, language, age, and religion and how there could be more improvement in representing and including experiences beyond race and ethnicity.

“But it's mostly Christian or atheist among the Black and white members. I mean, we've got work to do when it comes to disability, when it comes to gender, because remember I said, everybody's Cisgender. Some of our folks identify as bisexual, but nobody identifies as trans or gay...we're not diverse there. Disability, I mean, we have some folks with chronic disease and some folks with hearing [impairments].”–Coalition

Evaluation Question 4

What are the attitudes, behaviors, and levels of readiness within the organizations and coalitions related to DEI initiatives?

Theme 4a: Organizations and coalitions value DEI and show their commitment by forming key partnerships, transforming their boards and programs, and supporting staff, volunteers, and consultants.

- Participant organizations believe DEI is important to enhancing their organizational impact among the constituents and communities they serve.
- They are illustrating their commitment to DEI by:
 - transforming their boards and programming to be more diverse and inclusive of ideas;
 - ensuring staff, volunteers, and consultants are compensated, supported, and heard; and
 - developing partnerships to help support their DEI efforts.
- In cases where organizations are not actively engaging in these efforts, they intend to work toward these activities.

“Right now, we're in the process of doing a community-based advisory group that we're able to bounce back either strategies, ideas, and they will also be compensated for their time and their participation. So, I think we use, again, the shared leadership in our team, a collaborative approach. So, we're always including each other for different perspectives and ideas.”

–Embedded Program

Theme 4b: In general, organizations and coalitions are planning or implementing strategies to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive working environment for leaders and staff.

- Many participating organizations are in the process of creating equitable and inclusive work environments by ensuring staff, volunteers, and consultants are properly compensated, supported, and heard.
- They are ensuring that BIPOC staff are not carrying the weight of the DEI work and that the work is shared equally across their staff.

“It is really interesting to see the amount of investment of time in our onboarding process, so on making people feel super, super welcome, which is really nice, and we've started to, I think, do much more... I mean, this is again, a superficial definition of inclusion, but some more accessibility-centered things. So, for virtual meetings captioning, our team does language translation. I think there's been a much better recent commitment to accessibility.”

–Embedded Program

Environmental Survey

Participants rated ten statements on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to assess the state of DEI in their organization or coalition. Higher scores indicate an environment that more fully integrates DEI principles.

- The composite score for all participants was **4.37**¹
- Participants representing Embedded Programs (**3.97**) rated their DEI environment significantly lower than those in Coalitions (**4.49**) and Lactation Organizations (**4.36**).

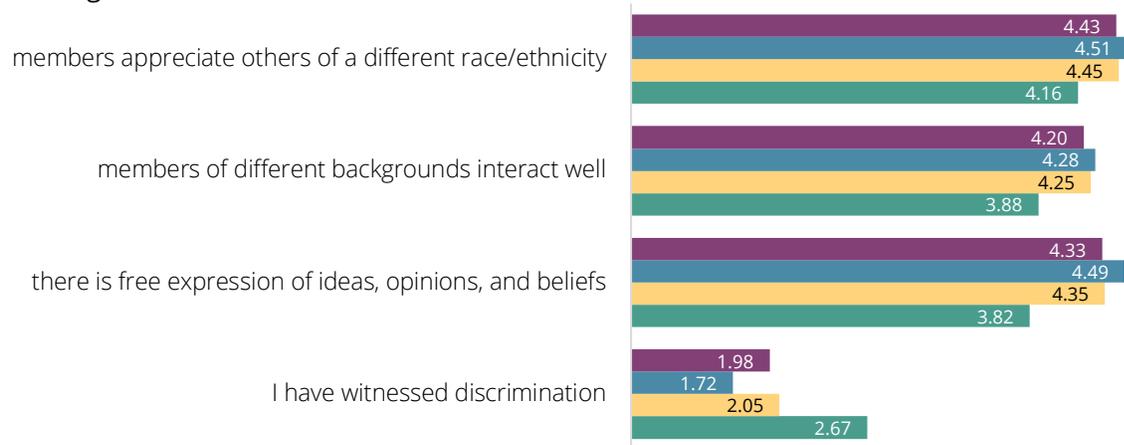
■ Overall ■ Coalition ■ Lactation Org. ■ Embedded Program

The Leadership of this Organization/Coalition...



¹ The final statement in the Environmental Survey questionnaire, 'I have witnessed discrimination', was reverse coded to properly calculate the composite score. However, for ease of interpretation, the graph displays the original scores for this statement, such that lower scores indicate disagreement.

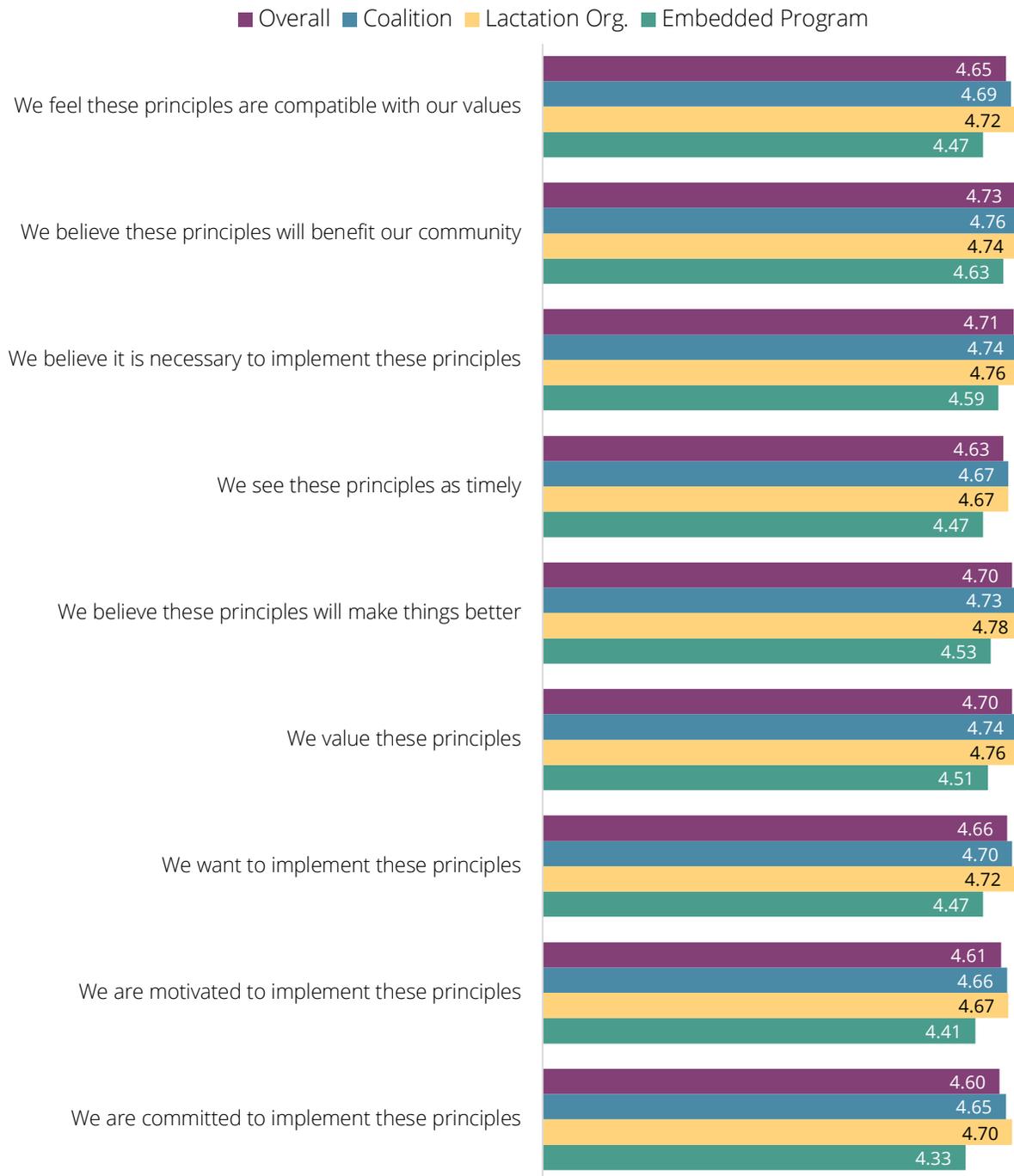
In this Organization/Coalition...



Commitment and Attitudes Survey

Participants rated nine statements on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to assess their organization/coalition's commitment to DEI principles. Higher scores indicate a greater commitment to DEI principles.

- The composite score for all participants was **4.66**.
- Participants from Embedded Programs (**4.49**) reported significantly lower levels of commitment than Coalitions (**4.70**) and Lactation Organizations (**4.72**).



Theme 4c: Many organizations and coalitions acknowledge having informal or no procedures for addressing prejudices and injustices within their organizations.

Participants were asked what systems and/or processes are in place to challenge or address prejudice and injustice in their organization. The majority stated that they did not have formal policies and procedures but spoke of having an open-door policy and that staff could talk to a leader within the organization to resolve any issues. Other participants mentioned that their organization did not have any policies or procedures in place because their organization had never experienced issues related to prejudice and injustices.

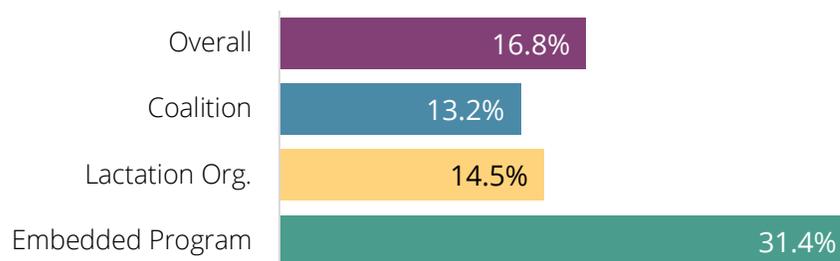
"We don't have anything formal in place. We're receptive if anyone were to call us out on anything, we would be very receptive to that, and responsive to it. That hasn't happened, but if that feedback were to reach us through email or social media, or word of mouth, or anything, we would be very committed to responding to it and addressing it."—Coalition

"So, we have a grievance policy that people can follow. Then we have an open-door policy where people can come with their concerns, and we are working towards a kind of restorative justice framework."—Coalition

Witnessing Discrimination

- Almost one-third of participants in Embedded Programs reported they had witnessed discrimination in their organization.
- A significantly higher percentage of participants in Embedded Programs reported they had witnessed discrimination in their organizations than in Coalitions or Lactation Organizations.

Percent of Participants who Have Witnessed Discrimination



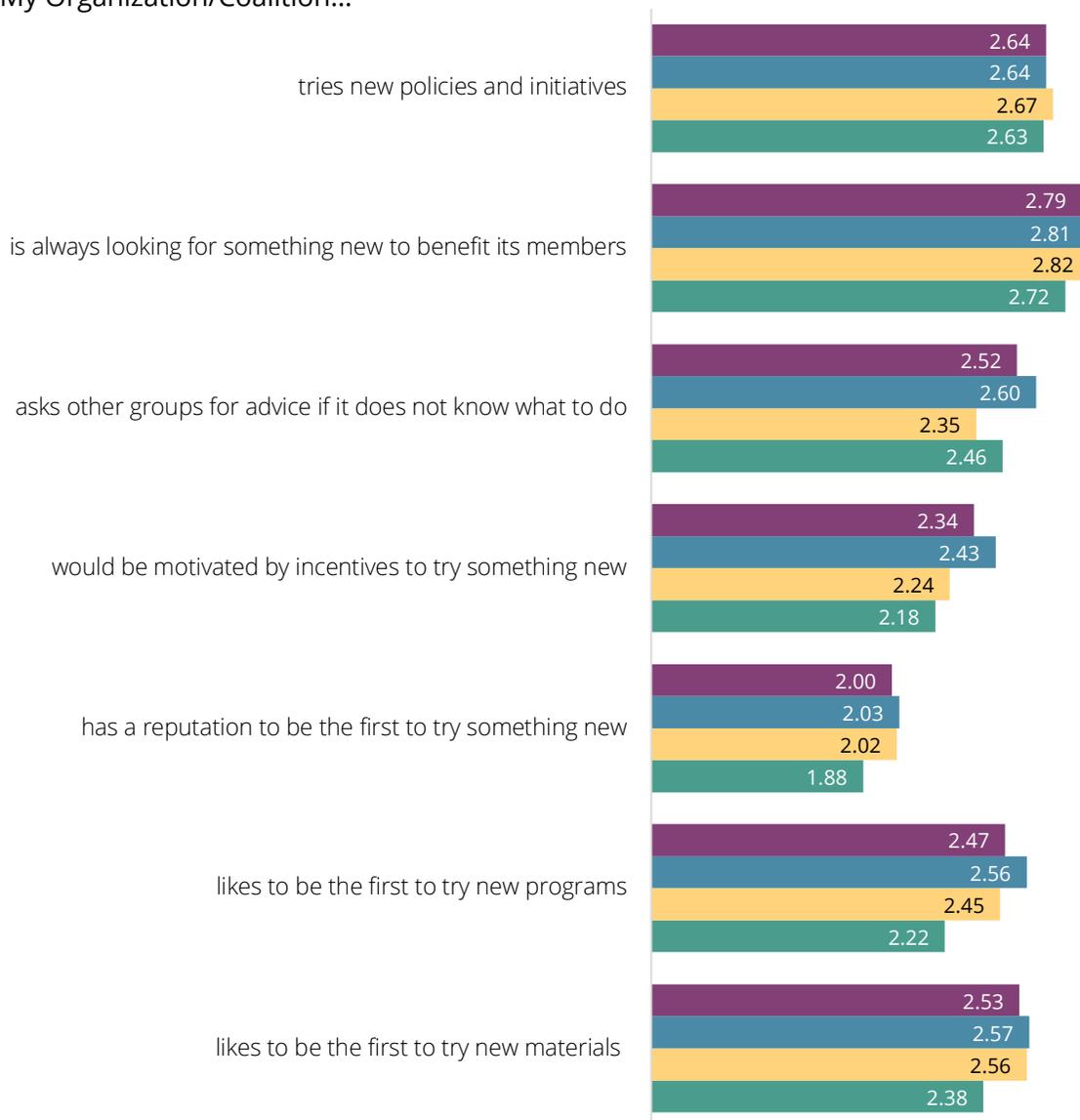
Organizational Readiness for Change Survey

Participants rated seven statements to assess how their organization/coalition implements change. Higher scores (on a scale of 1 to 3) indicate greater readiness to change.

- The composite score for all participants was **2.47**.
- Participants in Embedded Programs (**2.35**) had a significantly lower readiness score than those in Coalitions (**2.52**) and Lactation Organizations (**2.44**).

■ Overall ■ Coalition ■ Lactation Org. ■ Embedded Program

My Organization/Coalition...



Theme 4d: Coalitions and organizations are preparing their organization for DEI practices and initiatives.

As illustrated by the Organizational Readiness for Change survey results, interviewees asserted some openness and readiness toward implementing DEI practices. Most responses of optimism were paired with limitations and challenges. They often restated where DEI is integrated within their organization and **consistently referred to DEI work as a journey**, in which people are at different stages. Some may be further behind or farther ahead on the DEI journey, but all are walking on the path.

“It’s uncharted waters, but we have to be prepared to sink or swim.”–Coalition

“I think our team, both higher up and in the middle, would be very open and receptive to this. I think there's just a lack of clarity on who could lead the charge. What would it entail? Where do we start? I think the person who's tasked with looking into corporate social responsibility also now has two other jobs. I think it's a human resource issue, but I don't think there's anybody who is skeptical of the benefits at all.”–Lactation Org.

Evaluation Question 5

What do coalitions and organizations need to support their DEI efforts?

Theme 5a: Organizations and coalitions need funding and staff support to facilitate DEI efforts.

- Participants stated that procuring and leveraging funding is a vital aspect of advancing their DEI efforts.
- Many participants mentioned that lack of funding caused staff shortages and reduced staff professional development opportunities that are key to intentionally integrating DEI into their organization's infrastructure and work in a substantive manner.

"I feel like the funding. Our funding is meant to create programs that are going to impact the community in an equitable way. And part of it, too, is we're trying to build up our resources, our unrestricted resources as well. So, we're looking at ways to fundraise and donations and all of those types of fundings to support the work with an equity lens."–Coalition

"I would say, a resource would be more funding, so that we could have some workshops and learn, come together. The leadership would need to have some more training on this to even understand what this means, and how to do better."–Lactation Org.

Theme 5b: Organizations and coalitions request USBC provide DEI and grant procurement technical assistance.

- Participants stated that the USBC could help alleviate some of their funding challenges by providing guidance on grant procurement and management.
- Additionally, they proposed that the USBC advocate for funds from national partners to be funneled to organizations and coalitions.
- Participants proposed having a liaison to provide step-by-step DEI guidance that includes DEI tools and templates, as well as a space for the cross-pollination of ideas and strategies among peers.

"I also think, leveraging funding for coalitions... Maybe not be a funder but being an advocate for funding for coalitions would be great."–Coalition

"...we don't have anyone who has the skills for grant writing or the experience and the understanding of the Federal, particularly federal grant funding, processes, and requirements. So that would be really helpful."–Lactation Org.

"I think one thing that would be really helpful is for some coalitions to have specific technical assistance time from USBC staff to really work with us, hold a mirror up, really help us think through and strategize how to actualize DEI within our coalition."–Coalition

Theme 5c: Organizations and coalitions request that the USBC serve as a role model by illustrating their DEI journey.

- Participants recognize and appreciate the USBC's DEI transformation.
- Participants requested that the USBC reflect on its DEI journey and share its challenges and lessons learned. They believe there is an opportunity for coalitions and organizations to learn from and use USBC's blueprint, action, strategies, and verbiage to guide their own DEI journeys.

"They (USBC) have already been a model for how to try and make a change. I don't know if people are as aware of how USBC has transformed itself over time. And I don't think that they've really written about it for external purposes, so how they made the decision that they were not aligned, and how they focused on making a change. If you haven't been involved with USBC, you wouldn't know how different it looks today."–Coalition

Three-way Analysis

Results

The UMC evaluation team conducted a content, three-way analysis to understand the nuanced ways in which coalitions, lactation organizations, and embedded lactation programs' DEI journeys were similar and/or different. In the following sections, the content analysis results are organized by organization type.

Coalitions

The codes applied most often among coalitions were **limitations, community involvement, and goals**. Specifically, 'limitations' was the most frequently used code among coalitions, as participants described constraints to implementing DEI programming. The limitations code was frequently paired with 'resources'. Participants consistently mentioned personnel, funding, and training barriers to adequately collect data that would guide their DEI efforts and garner additional funding. For example, participants stated they often operate with the help of volunteers and very few paid staff and lack thorough, in-depth data training opportunities.

Community Involvement is related to descriptions of the connections and partnerships coalitions made with community members and organizations. Interviewees discussed how these partnerships provided them with new resources to help build trust with disregarded communities, gain input on making programming more relevant and accessible, and receive education and training from organizations that have been engaging in DEI activities. Those connections and partnerships are important as they create opportunities to provide programming and practices that are culturally sensitive, aware, and responsive.

'DEI goals' was also frequently used among coalitions. The goals mentioned most often were specific to **organization adaptation and restructuring leadership**. Coalitions discussed how they aim to intentionally increase representation in leadership to ensure that all communities are being served, particularly those that are typically underrepresented. Some coalitions have ongoing conversations among leadership around changing membership guidelines to ensure they are more inclusive.

Embedded Lactation Programs and Lactation Organizations

Embedded Lactation Programs

While coalitions mentioned limitations in personnel, funding, and resources as barriers to DEI implementation, limitations for embedded programs included **organizational leadership not being supportive of changes and lack of diversity in their executive leadership and boards**. Interviewees in embedded programs felt that lack of diversity among leadership directly affected leadership's willingness to engage fully in DEI work and make the necessary changes to achieve goals around DEI.

When asked about actions and strategies that contribute to DEI goals, individuals representing embedded programs discussed the importance of internal recruitment to bring those of diverse backgrounds into leadership and board roles in their organizations.

Lactation Organizations

As displayed in the heat map below, lactation organizations had the highest number of codes for DEI integration across most areas: culture, programming, and governance structure. Lactation organizations discussed the importance of integrating and embedding DEI among staff and organization leaders. Lactation organizations were working to change culture **through diversifying staff and governance structures beyond race.**

DEI Integration in Programs and Organizations

As relates to the code 'DEI Integration' – organizations with embedded programs and lactation organizations integrated DEI in their organizations' programs through internal and external channels. DEI was integrated internally through training and education, and externally by creating resources to highlight inequities and disseminating them through social media campaigns. This was in stark contrast to coalitions, that integrated DEI through partnerships and community capacity building.

Readiness for DEI Intervention

There were organizational differences in the code 'Readiness for DEI Intervention.' Coalitions had the highest number of codes associated with 'Readiness for DEI intervention'. Among coalitions, this code was often paired with 'limitations.' For example, while many coalitions stated that DEI was integrated in their organization's foundational pillars (such as their mission, purpose, vision, services, and programming), they failed to note specific or concrete DEI goals outlined in their strategic plans. This was attributed to limited staff and leadership capacity. Conversely, most embedded lactation programs and lactation organizations did not mention barriers to readiness for DEI. Overall, most embedded lactation programs and lactation organizations discussed being **open and ready for DEI.**

Below is a heat map that represents the differences in how each of the organization types described their DEI journey. This table presents the number of times each code was mentioned in the interviews. These findings should be interpreted with caution because coalitions were overrepresented in the evaluation; therefore, the number of codes may not represent proportional differences across organization categories.

Three-way Qualitative Code Heat Map			
Codes	Lactation Organizations	Coalitions	Embedded Lactation Programs
Limitations to Implementing DEI Strategies	38	220	15
DEI Journey	30	74	14
Data Benchmarking	85	138	62
Program Adaptation	4	58	5
Resources to Implement DEI Strategies	74	198	48
Readiness for DEI strategies	7	38	6
DEI Integration-Governance Structure	36	19	15
DEI Integration- Culture	41	25	13
DEI Integration-Programs	78	31	43
DEI Integration-Partnerships	51	69	18
DEI Goals	54	196	69
Community Involvement in DEI	8	191	2

Low code frequency  High code frequency

“Meaning-Making” Sessions

Results

In alignment with the bi-directional sharing nature of a collaborative evaluation, it was important that the USBC shared initial evaluation findings with participants to garner their reflections on the findings, ensure their experiences and voices were accurately reflected and interpreted, and obtain additional recommendations on the next steps for USBC’s DEI efforts. The table below reflects the number of participants and types of member organizations represented during the “meaning-making” sessions. Twenty-four individuals from the USBC membership organizations and coalitions (35% participation rate) attended the sessions. In addition to the low number of attendees, most of the attendees were persons of color. Throughout the sessions, participants consistently juxtaposed their lived experiences with evaluation results, which illustrated the validity of the evaluation findings.

Session	Organization Type	Number of Attendees
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

 Coalition
  Organization
  = 1 attendee

Participants expressed negative feelings regarding the state of DEI in organizations.

Facilitators used a [feelings wheel](#) from the Junto Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership to help participants gauge their feelings about study results. **Frustration, disappointment, and powerless** were feelings chosen consistently across breakout session groups. These feelings primarily arose when discussing results pertaining to participants inaccurately defining “equity” and member organizations’ minimal or lack of DEI implementation.

Participants also stated they were not surprised at the evaluation results, considering the majority of USBC member organizations lack diverse representation and innovative ideas around DEI in the lactation space.

“It wasn't a surprise to see a lot of USBC connected organizations looking like ours... because when it comes to DEI issues, if you all look the same it centers the problem around that. Isn't it?”

Despite feelings of frustration and disappointment, participants are feeling **hopeful and encouraged** that strides are being made to incorporate DEI in the First Food field.

Participants believe “diversity is more than color”

Participants in the listening sessions discussed the need to expand diversity efforts beyond color. One participant stated that people tend to lean towards race and ethnicity as the primary definition for diversity. Socioeconomic status, education, disability, and gender are often left out of the diversity conversations. Overall, the consensus was that member organizations have not figured out how to include other groups and aspects into a predominately woman-centered space.

“I totally love the idea that our common goal is to successfully feed babies, no matter what. And I think we don't say that enough. I think we need to continue to say that regardless of what economic background, geography, that's our goal.”

Participants feel authentic, intentional, results-driven integration of DEI is lacking

Although the study results reflected participant responses, the “meaning-making” session participants felt that most organizations were simply “checking boxes” when implementing DEI internally and externally. Participants questioned whether organizations engage in DEI efforts because of a genuine desire to create meaningful change in the field or simply out of a sense of obligation, resulting in a superficial approach to DEI. This was based on their personal experiences.

“One of the frustrations that I've experienced is really the check the box phenomenon. We're going to have these speakers, we're going to have these panels, and we're going to have these scholarships to check the DEI boxes.”

Participants agreed that if an organization cannot correctly define the constructs of diversity, equity, and inclusion, it will be difficult for the organization to combat individual and institutional racism and ultimately bring about sustained change. Understanding the core definitions will be the first step in creating an inclusive environment. Participants also stated that to bring about change, DEI work must be intentional, ongoing, uncomfortable, and challenging.

“I think that it's good that certain people are realizing that it is a journey and that you do have to take first steps... I'm just hoping that people will decide to be a little bit more uncomfortable and deal with the next steps.”

Three subthemes around intentionality emerged from the meaning-making sessions:

1. words do not reflect actions
2. lack of intention
3. lack of results even when organizations are intentional

Words do not reflect actions: Throughout the breakout sessions, participants discussed the disconnect between readiness and implementation. One participant questioned the accuracy of the data and whether participants' reports of DEI work in their organizations were true.

Lack of intention: Overall, participants agreed there is an immediate need for DEI work. Some participants mentioned that many DEI plans and efforts feel like "lip service." These participants felt that member organizations were simply saying they include underrepresented groups and organizations in conversations and at the proverbial "table," but it was hard to believe these individuals had true input. Participants also felt that respondents' reports of lack of funding and limited resources were "excuses" for why organizations were not doing true DEI work:

"And I was annoyed by that because I feel like we had so many free trainings, free webinars if you really, really wanted to implement, I think there's a way that you can implement it without having to just rely on funding. Funding can help of course, but I think that shouldn't be a reason not to implement it."

Lack of results even when organizations are being intentional: Some participants in the meaning-making sessions felt their organization had good intentions and ideas but needed guidance on how to implement DEI initiatives and strategies. Leaders of coalitions confirmed that limited funding, limited staff capacity, lack of data collection, and limited meeting times as barriers to DEI implementation. Because of those barriers there is a question of how to move from intentionality to implementation.

Appreciation for the Evaluation

Throughout the meaning-making sessions, participants expressed an appreciation for the overall evaluation. Participants felt that the evaluation was an essential first step to fostering a more equitable and inclusive space within the lactation community. Participants described the findings from the evaluation as a "beginning and ending" at the same time because they represent the opportunity to continue to do the work, grounded in the data. Many participants left the sessions excited, hopeful, and supported.

"I feel reflective and also just appreciative. I really appreciated hearing what everyone had to share today. So, thank you for this space."

Next Steps

At the end of the meaning-making sessions, participants were eager for more information and motivated to continue the work. They mentioned organizational needs related to the study results which included:

1. Learning how to conduct lactation-related research
2. Learning how to translate data and findings into actionable insights
3. Creating a shared understanding among stakeholders
4. Having access to DEI implementation examples and tools
5. Establishing a diverse and inclusive workforce to leadership pipeline
6. Accessing grant writing training
7. Incentivizing actionable and results-based DEI implementation

A photograph showing several hands of different skin tones working together to assemble white puzzle pieces on a wooden table. The scene is brightly lit, and the focus is on the hands and the puzzle pieces. A purple banner with the word 'CONCLUSION' in white capital letters is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. Breastfeeding Committee contracted with Urban Metrics Consultants to conduct a mixed methods evaluation to assess *if and how* member organizations are implementing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion actions and strategies. Findings from this evaluation show that some DEI efforts are happening, but they are primarily at the initial stages. Findings indicate that organizations have integrated DEI efforts into their internal and external processes, but there is a primary focus on racial diversity with limited efforts on equity and inclusion. The data illustrates that most interview participants defined diversity appropriately and had goals that aligned, which was not the case for their equity and inclusion goals. Community partnerships were highlighted as an essential asset to DEI efforts. Participants reported success in integrating DEI into their organizational programmatic and training components. However, some participants stated that lack of funding, limited staff capacity, knowledge gaps, and leadership and policy issues were challenges that impeded DEI implementation. Overall, the findings were mixed, indicating that awareness and openness are high, but more needs to be done to support and encourage efforts that lead to sustained progress. This evaluation was a critical first step in understanding DEI implementation in the lactation field.

Discerning diversity, equity, and inclusion as separate concepts is an important first step in implementing DEI initiatives. Findings from the evaluation indicated that diversity and inclusion were correctly defined by participants, but most organizations incorrectly defined equity. There were also cases in which the three terms were used interchangeably or defined as one concept. For progress to be made in the lactation field, it will be imperative for organizations to understand each individual concept. Thus, organizations can develop initiatives that align with each concept and strategically work to dismantle barriers to the implementation of DEI work. These findings indicate the need for an intentional educational effort to facilitate a common understanding of the separate concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the lactation field.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts were integrated within and outside of the organizations and coalitions. Organizations deemed DEI as an evolving process as member organizations are currently at various points in their DEI journeys. Some organizations have begun to integrate diversity within their member organization's infrastructure, while others have intentionally mentioned and integrated diversity, equity, and inclusion in their mission statements and programming. Many organizations stated they have also set concrete diversity goals, which include increasing diversity among their

membership, staff, and governing board. However, goals for equity and inclusion were not aligned with their definitions, as this reflects the misunderstanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion as distinct terms. These findings emphasize the need for training on how to develop diversity, equity, and inclusion goals to accelerate substantive progress within organizations.

One major highlight in the evaluation findings was the importance of community partnerships. The reciprocal relationships between the organizations and the community were meaningful as all have the common goal of increasing infant feeding efforts. Learning from these partnerships, USBC member organizations can begin to create their own mutually beneficial partnerships with diverse communities and organizations in efforts to learn effective practices while providing compensation (e.g., bartering, fee for service). In addition, this knowledge exchange can also occur among lactation organizations and coalitions. Because organizations and coalitions are at varying points in their DEI journey, the USBC can create opportunities for peer sharing where member organizations can connect to share effective methods that advance shared interests and expand the overall knowledge and capacity of the field. These knowledge exchanges will be necessary to ultimately decrease breastfeeding disparities.

Coalitions and organizations identified both successes and challenges to DEI implementation and integration. Success among organizations included DEI implementation in programmatic components and training. Organizations have been able to offer equity, racial diversity, and LGBTQI training to their staff, governing boards, and members. Organizations were also able to provide programs and scholarships specifically for people of color pursuing lactation support certifications. These initiatives are steps toward closing the racial gap in breastfeeding rates. Coalitions and organizations mentioned many barriers to DEI implementation, but they differed by organization type. Where coalitions experienced challenges due to a lack of funding, limited staff capacity, and knowledge gaps, the embedded programs experienced more pushback from organization leaders and had a lack of diversity in their leadership. These findings indicate the need for organizational-level education on the value of integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizational structure and culture, how to raise funds, strategies for identifying and developing diverse leaders, and identification of low-cost/no-cost staff trainings.

Organizations and coalitions were also assessed on their levels of readiness related to implementing DEI initiatives. “DEI journey” was a popular phrase among participants as they described being open and ready for change. Although they referred to DEI as a process, they are aware that additional action steps are needed to create and implement effective DEI initiatives. The interviews made it apparent that there is a wealth of DEI knowledge among organizations in the lactation field. As mentioned earlier, it will be important to create space for the sharing of effective DEI practices.

Even with an openness and receptiveness to DEI efforts, there are some challenges, such as there being few formal systems and policies in place to challenge inequity, prejudice, discrimination, and inequities within their workplace. Some organizations stated the reason no policies were in place was because there were no known instances of discrimination or prejudice within their organizations. However, the quantitative data indicated there was a percentage of embedded program members who had witnessed discrimination within their organizations. During the meaning-making sessions, this called into question organizations' true openness for impactful DEI efforts for some participants. This was underscored by the attendance at the meaning-making sessions, which did not represent the full scope of interviewees. The shift in representation caused the people of color to question organizational commitment to the effective implementation of DEI efforts. This calls for guided efforts that help organizations become completely transparent and move towards collaborative action.

Findings from the evaluation suggested the need for continuous support from the USBC to increase DEI efforts among member organizations. Organizations indicated funding and staff capacity as substantial barriers to DEI implementation; thus, grant writing support and technical assistance were requested by member organizations. Participants see USBC as an exemplar in the lactation field, and the DEI transformation within the organization has not gone unnoticed. Thus, organizations are interested in the USBC's challenges, successes, and lessons learned to facilitate DEI practices within their own organizations. Findings indicate the field is open to the USBC continuing to be a leader and change agent in the DEI space.

In summary, this evaluation supports the notion that DEI efforts are an important step in igniting the structural and cultural, transformative change needed in organizations to dismantle breastfeeding disparities. This evaluation also underscores that organizations need intentional guidance and proper resources throughout their DEI journey. It is important for the USBC to help develop strategies and provide resources to support organizations in reaching their DEI goals because organizations that are diverse, equitable, and inclusive are better equipped to address challenges, attract top talent, and accommodate the needs of different clients.²² Hence, the lactation field expanding their focus on diversity, equity and inclusion will lead to a more robust and resilient field that is able to serve ALL individuals, recruit and retain innovative practitioners, and work collectively to promote, protect, and support lactation in the United States.

Limitations

There are some limitations to consider when interpreting the findings of this evaluation. First participation in the initial interview and listening sessions was voluntary; therefore, the experiences of all individuals at all USBC member organizations were not captured. However, the quantitative data from the larger sample of organizational members supplements the qualitative findings.

While the evaluation team took great measures to reduce bias (e.g., creating codebooks and holding several consensus meetings), they acknowledge that interpretation is subject to the researchers' positionality.

This evaluation was also subject to social desirability bias. This means that participants may have answered survey and interview questions in ways that would reflect favorable images of themselves or their organization. The evaluation team alleviated some social desirability by creating codes to indicate deviations from the topic and biased responses.

Finally, it is important to note that the data was likely influenced by the unprecedented circumstances occurring in the United States: the COVID-19 pandemic and the 'racial reckoning' that began in the spring and summer of 2020. Some interview participants discussed being reflective during that time. For example, one participant stated that the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent racial justice protests influenced how they thought about diversity, equity and inclusion and their level of intentionality related to organizational integration. However, support for DEI efforts has quickly waned since 2020.²³ This shift in the U.S. milieu may have impacted the representation at the meaning-making sessions.

Recommendations

The USBC can capitalize on the generally positive attitude and commitment of the organizations and coalitions. The following recommendations created by the evaluation team are not only important independently but depend on simultaneous implementation to enhance effectiveness.

- 1.** Provide strategies and toolkits for coalitions and organizations that meet them where they are on their DEI journey, according to their level of readiness. Key topics to cover include:
 - Rating the organization on integration of DEI efforts
 - Defining diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - DEI strategic planning
 - DEI goal setting
 - Building organizational capacity for DEI work
 - Creating DEI human resource & institutional policies
 - Adapting and developing DEI infused programming and services
 - Integrating community in the DEI work
 - Learning to celebrate DEI wins
 - No cost/low-cost recommendations and interventions
- 2.** Create lactation learning communities to promote knowledge-sharing DEI strategies, best practices, and lessons learned among similar types and across different types of organizations and coalitions
- 3.** Offer DEI trainings from external experts that focus on challenging institutional biases
- 4.** Host grant writing webinars
- 5.** Follow up with organizations and coalitions on broader external barriers
- 6.** Implement improvement technologies to aid the DEI journey.
- 7.** Create a common understanding of the new norms in the lactation field
 - Practice discussing subjects related to root causes of disparities and inequities, and identify how one's organization or coalition is perpetuating harm
 - Integrate and prioritize community voices and those who are underserved in the field

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