

The business case for health equity

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Summary



The strategy session titled "The Business Case for Health Equity" at the 2025 Downeast Digital Health Equity Innovation Forum explored the economic and strategic imperative of addressing health disparities. The session highlighted the staggering costs associated with health inequities, projecting a rise from \$320 billion today to \$1 trillion by 2040 if unaddressed. Participants emphasized the necessity of integrating health equity into business strategies, not only as a moral imperative but as a critical economic opportunity. The discussion underscored the importance of precise language and stakeholder-specific approaches in framing the business case for health equity, recognizing that the value and costs associated with health initiatives vary significantly across different sectors and stakeholders. The session also explored the potential for health equity to drive market growth and competitive advantage, particularly through the development of consumer trust and loyalty. The role of regulatory compliance and the integration of data and AI-driven efficiencies were identified as pivotal in transforming business models to support health equity. The dialogue concluded with a call to redefine health equity as a core business strategy, emphasizing the need for immediate and long-term ROI to sustain and scale health equity initiatives.

Key Insights

- ✓ The economic impact of health inequities is profound, with significant financial implications for both individuals and the broader economy. Health inequities, particularly in high-cost conditions, are projected to escalate from \$320 billion today to a staggering \$1 trillion by 2040 if unaddressed. This translates to an additional burden of \$12,000 per family, underscoring the urgent need for action. Addressing these disparities can unlock substantial economic value, potentially adding nearly \$3 trillion to the nation's GDP by 2040. This requires a multi-stakeholder approach, involving employers, healthcare providers, and policymakers, to redefine business models and leverage technology and data-driven strategies.
- ✓ Consumer trust is increasingly recognized as a pivotal business value, particularly in the context of health equity and economic sustainability. The strategy session highlighted that developing consumer trust and loyalty is not just an ethical imperative but a strategic business case. Trust directly influences consumer behavior, impacting revenue streams and operational efficiencies. By investing in trust-building measures, businesses can unlock significant economic value, including cost savings from reduced disparities and enhanced consumer loyalty. This approach not only supports sustainable business models but also aligns with regulatory compliance and market growth strategies, ultimately contributing to long-term economic value creation.

Key Insights – Continued

- ✔ Data plays a pivotal role in advancing health equity by providing a foundation for understanding and addressing disparities in health outcomes. The strategy session highlighted the importance of leveraging data to build robust business models that can drive sustainable solutions to health inequities. By analyzing data on health disparities, stakeholders can identify market gaps and opportunities for intervention, particularly in areas like maternal health and aging in place. These insights can inform the development of targeted interventions that not only improve health outcomes but also offer financial returns by reducing avoidable healthcare costs and enhancing workforce productivity.
- ✔ The session highlighted the complexity of creating a sustainable business model for maternal health that not only addresses immediate healthcare costs but also considers long-term societal benefits. Participants noted that while there is a clear societal value in improving maternal health outcomes, the financial returns for investors and healthcare providers are less straightforward. The session emphasized the need for innovative business models that integrate comprehensive prenatal and postnatal care, including behavioral health support, to prevent costly complications. The challenge remains in demonstrating a compelling ROI to attract investment while ensuring equitable access to care for all populations.

Best Practices

- ✔ Developing consumer-centric models is crucial for addressing the evolving needs of diverse populations and ensuring sustainable business growth. By focusing on consumer trust and loyalty, businesses can create a strong economic case for their models. This involves understanding the unique needs of different demographic groups and tailoring solutions to meet these needs effectively. By integrating consumer feedback and leveraging data analytics, companies can refine their offerings to better serve their target markets, ultimately leading to increased market share and competitive advantage.
- ✔ Leveraging Community Health Workers (CHWs) presents a strategic opportunity to address health disparities and enhance healthcare delivery, particularly in underserved communities. CHWs can bridge the gap between healthcare systems and communities by providing culturally competent care and education, which is crucial for improving health outcomes. Their role is instrumental in increasing healthcare accessibility, especially for marginalized populations, by offering services such as health education, chronic disease management, and preventive care. The integration of CHWs into healthcare systems can also foster trust and engagement within communities, leading to better adherence to medical advice and treatment plans.
- ✔ Enhancing cross-sector collaboration is crucial for addressing complex issues such as health equity and economic disparities. By fostering partnerships between government, healthcare providers, businesses, and community organizations, we can create a more integrated approach to problem-solving. This collaboration allows for the pooling of resources, sharing of data, and alignment of goals, which can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions.

Conclusion

- 📄 In conclusion, the strategy session on "The Business Case for Health Equity" provided a comprehensive analysis of the economic and strategic imperatives for addressing health disparities. The discussions highlighted the significant financial burden of inaction and the potential for substantial economic benefits through targeted health equity initiatives. By aligning business models with health equity goals, organizations can not only achieve cost savings and revenue growth but also foster consumer trust and loyalty. The session underscored the importance of leveraging data and technology to drive efficiencies and enhance value creation. Ultimately, the session called for a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders to transform healthcare systems and achieve sustainable health equity outcomes.

**Top
Topics**

Health
Equity Costs

Economic
Impact

Stakeholder
Engagement

Cost
Savings
Strategies

Regulatory
Compliance

Market
Growth

Data and AI
Efficiency

Consumer
Trust

Business Model
Transformation

Collaborative
Approaches