

# The role of the chief health equity officer

## Speakers



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## Summary



The strategy session on "The Role of the Chief Health Equity Officer" at the 2025 Downeast Digital Health Equity Innovation Forum explored the evolving responsibilities and strategic importance of this role within a wide range of organizations. Participants emphasized the necessity for Chief Health Equity Officers (CHEOs) to ensure that health equity is an organizational priority, requiring visibility and commitment from top leadership. The session highlighted the importance of setting clear, specific, and achievable goals with measurable outcomes, supported by adequate resources. It was noted that the role of a CHEO is not one-size-fits-all and requires a blend of business acumen, influence, and the ability to inspire and engage across all levels of an organization. The discussion also delved into the integration of digital innovation in health equity strategies, advocating for the CHEO's involvement in digital strategy development to ensure equitable implementation. The session concluded with a focus on the strategic alignment of health equity goals with broader organizational objectives, emphasizing the need for continuous engagement and influence to embed health equity into the core operations of organizations.

## Key Insights

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Defining the role of a Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO) is crucial for advancing health equity within organizations. The role, although increasingly recognized, remains poorly defined and varies significantly across different sectors. A successful CHEO must ensure that health equity is an organizational priority with visibility and commitment from the C-suite. This involves setting clear, specific, and achievable goals with measurable outcomes, supported by adequate resources. The CHEO must possess strong business acumen, and be able to lead by influence, engaging and inspiring a broad array of stakeholders.
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C-Suite support is paramount for the success of roles like the Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO) in advancing organizational goals. The strategy session highlighted that ensuring health equity as an organizational priority requires visibility and commitment from the C-Suite. This involves the CEO and other senior leaders actively understanding and supporting the definition and objectives of health equity within the organization.
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Data-Driven Health Equity Strategies are pivotal in transforming organizational approaches to health disparities. The role of a Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO) is crucial in embedding health equity into the core mission of organizations. This involves ensuring that health equity is a priority with C-suite visibility and commitment, setting clear, specific, and achievable goals with measurable outcomes, and having the resources to support them.
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Digital innovation plays a pivotal role in advancing health equity by integrating data-driven strategies and fostering organizational alignment. The Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO) is instrumental in leveraging digital tools to enhance data collection and analysis, which in turn informs strategic decisions that align with broader organizational goals. The CHEO should also be a key leader involved in assessing and deploying digital innovations in effective and equitable ways.

## Best Practices

- ✔ **Aligning health equity with business goals** requires a strategic approach that integrates health equity as a core organizational priority with clear, measurable objectives. To achieve this, it is essential to ensure that health equity is visible and prioritized at the C-suite level, with commitment from senior leadership. This involves setting specific, achievable goals that are supported by adequate resources and measurable outcomes.
- ✔ **Developing stakeholder engagement strategies** is crucial for advancing organizational goals, particularly in roles such as the Chief Health Equity Officer (CHEO). To effectively engage stakeholders, it is essential to establish a comprehensive stakeholder matrix that identifies key individuals and groups within and outside the organization. This matrix should guide the development of tailored communication strategies that align with the priorities and interests of each stakeholder group.
- ✔ **To enhance data utilization for equity**, organizations should prioritize the integration of health equity into their core strategic objectives, ensuring that it is not merely a performative gesture but a fundamental component of their mission. This involves setting clear, specific, and measurable goals that align with broader organizational objectives, supported by adequate resources and C-suite commitment.

## Conclusion



In conclusion, the strategy session on the role of the Chief Health Equity Officer highlighted the critical need for these leaders to integrate health equity into the strategic framework of organizations. The discussions underscored the importance of aligning health equity initiatives with organizational goals and ensuring that these efforts are supported by data-driven strategies and measurable outcomes. The role of the CHEO is multifaceted, requiring a blend of business acumen, strategic influence, and the ability to navigate complex organizational dynamics. As organizations continue to grapple with the challenges of health equity, the session emphasized the need for CHEOs to be innovative, adaptable, and proactive in their approach, leveraging digital tools and fostering collaboration across all levels of the organization. Ultimately, the success of health equity initiatives hinges on the ability of CHEOs to inspire and lead change, ensuring that health equity becomes an integral part of the organizational mission and culture.

## Top Topics

Chief Health  
Equity  
Officer

Organizational  
Priority

C-suite  
Commitment

Achievable  
Goals

Data-driven  
Strategies

Digital  
Innovation

Return on  
Investment

Social  
Capital

Stakeholder  
Engagement

Strategic  
Influence