Coalition for Racial & Ethnic Equity in Development (CREED)

Learning Hub: Component One - Policies and Systems Learning Event

Virtual Teams Event for CREED Member Signatories Organizations held July 11, 2022, from 3 to 4 pm EDT

EVENT DESCRIPTION

As part of CREED's efforts to build racial and ethnic equity (REE) in international development, this event launches our Learning Series with a focus on Component One (Policies and Systems) of the CREED REE Pledge. While there is much documentation publicly available about building diversity and inclusion, strategies for developing REE approaches at the organizational level are at early stages. In this event, we heard from the CREED Learning Hub Component One team about their aspirations and considerations in building a measurable REE policy. Specifically, the panelists discussed the purpose of building REE and the rationale for creating an REE policy, and dialogued about how to create an REE policy.

Key Takeaways from the Event Discussions

Twenty-seven CREED member signatory organizations represented by sixty-seven people attended this event.

Introduction to the CREED Learning Events Series

Paul Weisenfeld (Executive Vice President, International Development, RTI International; CREED Core Team member; Panel Moderator)

- CREED is committed to joint action in racial and ethnic equity (REE), and developed the REE Pledge that aims to provide quantifiable strategies for achieving REE
- The Component 1 event, in line with efforts to build REE, offers strategies for developing approaches at the organizational level to build a measurable REE policy
- The purpose of the event is to share learning, inspire, and create a culture of open dialogue amongst the CREED signatories
- Panelists include senior leadership and REI/DEI management from: IBTCI, Palladium, Plan International USA

Indira Ahluwalia (President, Kaur Strategies, Founder/Chair, CREED)

- The REE pledge components were designed to help operationalize the pledge and build a practical and measurable REE policy
- There exists a distance between commitment and action, and as we try bridge that gap, there will inevitably be discomfort. We must get comfortable with being uncomfortable and being open to advancing our REE goals with active listening and action.
- We want to draw from the work already done on different facets of equity to inform our efforts to advance REE.

Panel Discussion

The panelists discussed their commitment, approaches, and accountability in considering how to develop their organization's REE policy.

Commitment: Why are organizations making this commitment to REE in their organizations?
Speakers: Leadership from each organization

Ricardo Michel (Senior Managing Partner, Palladium - CREED founding member, signatory, and core team)

- Palladium has had prior, longstanding commitment to DEI, George Floyd sharpened focus to specifically the racial equity component.
- It's not just about representation, it's about voice and agency, and embedding it into the DNA of the organization
- It's about understanding what people need in order for them to have an impact – REE can be a "superpower"
- Our success depends on our understanding of the needs of others – by building organizations that reflect racial and ethnic equity, we are improving the quality and relevance of our work.

Ajay Kalotra (President and CEO, IBTCI - CREED founding member and signatory)

- Founded in 1987 by father, and committed to equity from the beginning
- Respect is key, particularly to beneficiaries as is buy in and participation from colleagues at all levels of the company, especially from leadership.
- CREED spoke to our value system, and developing REE is an important component of it
- REE work is good for the business and good for the heart as diversity makes for stronger organizations

Mustafa Kudrati (President and CEO, Plan International USA - CREED founding member and signatory)

- DEI is not only what we do, but also who we are as a girls' rights organization.
- It is important to learn to work with and through difference so we can go beyond representation and hopefully connect internally to match our external work and values.
- More important for this industry because we are about changing lives
- Commitment with like-minded organizations is essential

Approaches: What are the key considerations for building an REE policy across the spectrum of global international development organizations?
Speakers: HR/DEI functional person from each organization

Afiya Bey (Senior Manager, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, Palladium)

- Palladium's DEI and REE journey is centered on our sustainable business framework. It is an ongoing, consistent, and iterative process.
- Our role in CREED allows us to be intentional in our REE approach. We intend to be guided by REE pledge components 2 (staffing), 3 (culture), 4 (accountability) and 5 (communications) in how we develop our REE policy (component 1).
- We acknowledge that we have room to grow, and that REE sometimes is lost in the DEI conversation.

- We believe in establishing shared language within organization, and our community about REE
- Two potential tools for building a REE policy are: policy statements that reaffirm our commitment to REE, and racial impact assessments which is a useful equity review tool when creating/revising policies.
- The REE process itself needs to be inclusive and participatory.
- Our goals are to be adaptive, intentional, more focused, and work on grounding REE in our organizational values.

Audra Thurber (Senior Human Resources Generalist, Plan International USA)
- We developed our DEI policy and standards in June 2021 but started our DEI work in December 2019.
- Important to acknowledge that this is an adaptive and ongoing process. Also, important to acknowledge gaps in knowledge - ask for external help if you need! We brought in an external consultant with expertise to ensure DEI was embedded in our policies and procedures
- To include employees, we held workshops to establish what DEI means at Plan, and build a solid foundational knowledge together
- A DEI working group evolved into a fully-fledged DEI Council with volunteer members from each level of the organization, representing different ages, ethnicities, races, departments, education levels, and genders. We included leadership from the start and have an ET member on the council. We hold weekly updates with our Council Co-chairs and leadership.
- Example policy achievements – updating our bereavement and telework policies to be more inclusive
- We do not have a racial and ethnically diverse leadership, either in staff or on the board … yet!

Misty French (Senior Human Resources Manager, IBTCI)
- Resource allocation is key as well as accountability mechanisms such as reporting back to the board.
- Participation and buy-in from across the company are essential to creating an inclusive and participatory approach
- Policy is more than a written document. This is about creating sustainable and lasting change
- Prioritize the impact of proposed REE policies to enhance sustainability of changes
- Replicate process to build a REE policy from DEI policy
- Build small changes on an on-going basis to create larger changes over the long term on REE goal

Accountability: How do you make the REE policy measurable?
Speakers: Leadership from each organization

Mustafa Kudrati (Plan International USA)

- Accountability mechanisms: charge code for time spent on DEI, count the number of hours put into DEI, DEI report to the board. For example: Plan put 1,600 hours put into DEI.
- Small intentional steps in the right direction
- But how do we make our efforts EQUITABLE, not just equal?

Ricardo Michel (Palladium)

- International Dev Career Accelerator: for historically underrepresented undergrads to expose them to international development field and build a pipeline of diverse talent
- It is key to continually ask those who are impacted what is working - using surveys as one way to get feedback to understand how to make REE real, not just aspirational documentation
- Not accepting the "trying" as the triumph, but the success of our efforts
- Focus needs to be placed on how we institutionalize equity initiatives

Ajay Kalotra (IBTCI)

- We need to make this a reality, not just a goal. First step was policy, set quantitative goals, and take small accomplishable steps toward meeting them.
- We don't have a REE policy right now, but we are on our way there.
- Looking for potential for bias in everyday operations – all levels, at all sizes.

Closing Thoughts

- Approach all levels of organization to create an adaptive journey, with intention, focus and trust.
- We need to get comfortable having uncomfortable conversations, that where the work gets done
- We have to look at this as global citizens. Even if the "problem" isn't addressed by your organization, we have a shared responsibility to transform the industry
- Agency and voice are key themes
- Are we dedicating the resources to move toward REE?
- Bring employees along on the journey to be intentional about - check in with those who are impacted

---

Polls Conducted During the Event

Poll 1 (at the start of the event): Do you have an REE (Racial and Ethnic Equity) policy

- Yes (30%)
- No (70%)

Poll 2 (at the start of the event): Where would you start with embedding the REE policy in your organization?

- Strategy (28%)
- Leadership Composition (15%)
- Recruitment & Retention (23%)
- Procurement (2%)
- HR (29%)

Poll 3 (at the end of the event): Given the shared learning experience, do you intend to create an REE policy for your organization?

- Yes: 92%
- No: 8%

Poll 4 (at the end of the event): Once you have an REE policy, do you intend to report your REE metrics internally or externally?

- Internally: 26%
- Externally: 0%
- Both: 74%