

LIBERATORY BLUEPRINT: Executive Brief

Transforming Organizations Through Liberatory Power and Deep Equity Practice

Lead.Learn.Liberate and Brave Sis Project
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THE EQUITY IMPERATIVE

Beyond Performative Diversity

Many organizations invest significantly in diversity and inclusion initiatives, yet see limited meaningful change. Training sessions are attended, statements are released, but the fundamental dynamics of power and decision-making remain unchanged.

The Liberatory Blueprint offers a different approach—one that moves beyond surface-level efforts to address the root causes of inequity within organizations. True equity requires reimagining how power operates, who makes decisions, and how the voices of those most impacted by organizational policies are centered in transformation.

This brief synthesizes core principles and frameworks without revealing proprietary implementation methodologies. It serves as an introduction to liberatory organizational design for leaders ready to move beyond performative diversity work.

Key Questions We Address:

- How does power actually operate in your organization?
- What would it mean to transform rather than transfer authority?
- How do you create environments where all stakeholders can thrive?

FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLINES

Three Interconnected Approaches

The Liberatory Blueprint is built on three interdisciplinary foundations, adapted from the National Equity Project's Leading for Equity Framework:

1. Human-Centered Design

Centering the experiences and voices of those most impacted by organizational decisions. This means moving beyond tokenism to genuinely co-creating solutions with stakeholders across all levels of power.

Core principle: Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.

2. Complex Systems Theory

Understanding organizations as dynamic, networked systems rather than simple hierarchies. Change in one area ripples throughout the system, requiring holistic thinking and adaptive strategies.

Core principle: Organizations are living ecosystems, not machines.

3. Deep Equity Practice

Engaging with historical context, examining how systems of oppression manifest within organizational structures, and actively working to shift power dynamics.

Core principle: Equity work requires sustained engagement with uncomfortable truths.

UNDERSTANDING POWER

Three Types of Power in Organizations

Effective equity work requires understanding how power operates at multiple levels:

Traditional Power (Visible)

- Hierarchical authority and reporting structures
- Budget control and resource allocation
- Formal decision-making processes
- Policies and official procedures

This is the power reflected on organizational charts and in formal documentation.

Invisible Power (Essential)

- Informal networks and relationships
- Unwritten rules and cultural norms
- Unconscious bias and assumptions
- Historical patterns and precedents

This power shapes organizational culture and often determines outcomes more than formal structures.

Liberatory Power (Transformative)

- Collective agency and shared decision-making
- Transparency and accountability
- Mutual learning and growth
- Transformation rather than transfer of authority

This power doesn't simply redistribute existing authority—it reimagines what power can mean and how it functions.

DEFINING YOUR CHANGE VECTOR

Where Does Your Organization Aim to Create Impact?

Before implementing any equity initiative, clarity about your sphere of influence is essential. Organizations typically operate at one or more of these levels:

Individual Level

Focusing on personal growth, self-awareness, and individual capacity building. This includes developing leaders' understanding of their own relationship to power and privilege.

Interpersonal Level

Building skills for cross-cultural communication, addressing microaggressions, and fostering authentic relationships across difference.

Organizational/Institutional Level

Transforming systems, policies, practices, and resource allocation within your organization. This is where structural change happens.

Sector/Industry Level

Influencing standards, norms, and practices across your field or industry. This requires strategic partnerships and collective action.

Global/Societal Level

Contributing to large-scale social change movements and addressing systemic oppression beyond your immediate sphere.

Why This Matters:

Your change vector determines everything that follows—the strategies you employ, the metrics you track, the partnerships you build, and the timeline for transformation.

THE THREE-PHASE APPROACH: A Roadmap for Transformation

Phase 1: Building Foundations

The first phase establishes shared understanding and baseline knowledge:

- **Crucial Questions, Not Consensus**

Building agreement on the questions to explore together, rather than forcing premature consensus on answers.

- **Baseline Data Collection**

Gathering qualitative and quantitative data about current organizational reality—not to judge, but to understand.

- **Language Clarification**

Developing shared definitions: What does "equity" mean in your context? How about "belonging," "justice," or "liberation"?

Phase 2: Deep Investigation

This phase involves rigorous examination of organizational systems:

- **Listening Sessions**

Creating brave spaces for honest dialogue across organizational hierarchy.

- **Equity Audits**

Systematic review of decision-making processes, policies, leadership accountability, organizational culture, and resource allocation.

- **Pattern Recognition**

Identifying where inequity shows up—not just in outcomes, but in processes and assumptions.

STRATEGIC ACTION & OUTCOMES

Phase 3: Moving from Analysis to Change

Strategic Action Planning

Once investigation is complete, the work shifts to designing and implementing concrete changes:

- **Situational Analysis**

Synthesizing findings to understand root causes, not just symptoms.

- **Prioritized Recommendations**

Identifying both "quick wins" for momentum and long-term structural changes.

- **Action Plans with Accountability**

Defining specific ownership, measurable outcomes, learning mechanisms, and sustainability strategies.

Expected Organizational Outcomes

Organizations engaged in this work report:

- Enhanced cross-cultural communication and reduced microaggressions
- Greater sense of belonging among historically marginalized staff
- More expansive understanding of how power operates
- Increased transparency in decision-making
- Stronger alignment between stated values and actual practices
- Improved retention of diverse talent
- More innovative solutions arising from inclusive processes

SUPPORT STRUCTURES & INTERVENTIONS OFFERED:

The Blueprint offers flexible engagement based on organizational needs:

Education & Development

- Individual and group coursework on equity fundamentals
- Leadership development focused on liberatory practices
- ERG (Employee Resource Group) support and coaching
- Facilitation skills training for internal equity champions

Organizational Assessment

- Comprehensive equity audits conducted by external experts
- Climate surveys and qualitative research
- Policy and practice reviews
- Power mapping and stakeholder analysis

Strategic Interventions

- Addressing leadership resistance to change
- Navigating departmental equity gaps
- Responding to systemic failures or crises

- Mediating stakeholder conflicts
- Designing inclusive decision-making processes

Critical Success Factors

Transformative equity work requires:

- Leadership commitment beyond performative statements
- Resources allocated appropriately (time, budget, personnel)
- Willingness to engage with discomfort
- Long-term perspective (this is not a quick fix)
- Accountability mechanisms with real consequences

MOVING FORWARD: From Blueprint to Reality—Equity as Transformation, Not Transaction

The Liberatory Blueprint recognizes that meaningful equity work is:

- Complex - There are no simple solutions to deeply embedded systemic issues
- Iterative - Progress is not linear; expect setbacks and course corrections
- Relational - Trust and authentic relationships are the foundation
- Contextual - What works in one organization may not work in another

This is not a "one-size-fits-all" program. It's a framework that must be adapted to your organization's unique history, culture, challenges, and aspirations.

The Core Invitation

The Liberatory Blueprint invites organizations to:

- Move beyond performative diversity efforts
- Examine and transform how power operates
- Center the voices of those most impacted
- Commit to sustained, uncomfortable work
- Build genuinely liberatory practices

Next Steps

This brief provides an overview of principles and frameworks. The full implementation includes proprietary tools, facilitation guides, and customized strategies developed through partnership.

For organizations ready to begin this journey, the first step is honest assessment: Where are you now? Where do you want to be? What are you willing to change to get there?