

Aiming for Equity: Assessing Pfizer's Ongoing Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Friday, August 6, 2021



As one of the world's most prominent biopharmaceutical companies, Pfizer recognizes a responsibility, not just to pioneering medical and scientific breakthroughs, but also to building teams of scientists, doctors, and professionals that represent and model a diverse workforce.

In 2020, [Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla](#) laid out a series of goals to demonstrate the company's dedication to Equity, one of [Pfizer's four core values](#), by increasing diversity and inclusion. These goals focus on improving Pfizer's internal culture, helping to provide equitable access to the company's vaccines and medicines, and committing to the corporate responsibility of promoting Equity around the world.

In the spirit of accountability, let's look at the promises that were made -- and what progress has been made in keeping them.

Equity through parity

In 2019, Pfizer [announced a commitment](#) to increasing opportunity parity, including fairness in promotions and horizontal movement across demographic groups. In 2020, minority representation at the VP level was at 19 percent. Pfizer set a 2025 goal of 32 percent for minorities, including ambitious 12 percent increases for both Black and Hispanic employees at the VP level and above.

In less than a year, Pfizer reached 24 percent, including a nearly 2 percent uptick in African American representation alone. Female VP+ demographics have similarly grown; with a 2025 goal of 47 percent parity for global women, Pfizer has seen that percentage climb 5.1 percent since that commitment, up 2.8 percent in 2021 alone to 40.9 percent.

In the shorter term, Pfizer aimed to increase representation of women and minorities by 2 percent by the end of 2020, which was achieved, as well as 12 percent improvements in African American/Black representation, which was also met, and Latino/Hispanic representation, which fell just short at 10 percent.

But the work doesn't stop when goals are achieved; it's equally important to create a culture and an infrastructure of organic diversity and representation to have a truly inclusive and representative organization. To that end, in June of 2021, Pfizer hired Ramcress Jean-Louis to be Pfizer's Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer.

"At Pfizer, every person deserves to be appreciated and valued," Jean-Louis says. "We must embody Equity in all our actions and in everything that we do. We embrace and intend to amplify the voices of all of our colleagues from all backgrounds, life experiences, perspectives, ages, gender, disability, status, and sexual orientation."

Internal programs for Equity

Several Pfizer programs help to advance these ideals. In May 2021, Pfizer launched the [Breakthrough Fellowship Program and Breakthrough R&D Rotational Program](#), two first-of-their-kind educational programs designed to increase Pfizer's pipeline of diverse scientific talent.

Throughout the last few years, Bourla has been increasingly vocal about inclusion and social justice, both internally and externally. Guided by his leadership, Pfizer has worked to educate Pfizer employees on those issues, including company-wide training to address racism and conscious and unconscious bias, workshops such as "Becoming an Inclusive Leader" that train managers and encourage communication throughout the organization.

The “In Kind” program supports and encourages managers to have courageous, empathetic, and productive conversations about equity, race, and bias. Additional pilot workshops for people managers and HR partners are scheduled for August 2021. In October 2021, Pfizer’s Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Summit will facilitate a global conversation on race. And by the end of 2021, every colleague will have had the opportunity to engage in a workshop and discussion.

Colleague Resource Groups

Other diversity programs help to drive an inclusive culture every day. Colleague Resource Groups (CRGs) provide relevant speakers and workshops, creating affirming and supportive virtual spaces for employees who belong to underrepresented groups and their allies. Pfizer boasts seven groups in the U.S.: Global Back Community, Global Asian Alliance, Latino Community, OPEN (LGBTQIA+), POWER (Women), Veterans in Pfizer, and disAbility and Caregivers Network. Across Europe, Pfizer’s Diversity and Exclusion Council, Europe (DICE) has established 27 CRGs which have reached over 7,000 employees in 14 countries since 2017.

As an example of the work that the CRGs do, the disAbility CRG’s Board of Directors established a refreshed strategy including ambitious goals aimed at advancing inclusion, development, and career success of colleagues with disabilities and their caregivers. The effort is already paying off. In 2021, for the second year in a row, Pfizer earned a score of 100 percent on the [Disability Equality Index® \(DEI\)](#), a joint initiative of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and Disability:IN that uses a comprehensive benchmarking tool to measure disability workplace inclusion against competitors.

Equity in the community

In addition to growing internal diversity and inclusion initiatives, Pfizer has worked to make a broader impact. Since 2020, Pfizer has donated more than \$2 million to communities of color suffering disproportionately from the COVID-19 pandemic, and added \$3 million additional funds to address specific health care disparities in African American community and social justice work.

A focus on increasing the diversity of business partners has yielded equally great results. Pfizer is an active participant in external organizations and trade events, which promote opportunities to connect buyers with diverse suppliers. More than \$150,000 in scholarships has been provided for diverse businesses to attend various leadership training and mentorship programs, and every year more than \$500 million is spent with over 2500 diverse U.S. businesses in a variety of industries.

Pfizer’s commitment to increasing supplier diversity goes beyond our relationships with manufacturing and clinical suppliers and extends to our partnerships with advertising and other media businesses. Pfizer is committed to strengthening its relationships to diverse-owned media businesses and identifying opportunities that align with Pfizer’s brand and marketing strategy and goals. In fact, Pfizer’s Global Procurement organization has assigned dedicated resources that focus exclusively on identifying new diverse suppliers and managing existing supplier relationships.

In 2020, Pfizer added 44 diverse/small businesses to the supply chain and partnered with 450+ diverse supplies. These moves have bolstered the diversity in partnerships and led to increased improvements in manufacturing and expanding supply chain network in order to meet global demand. Among the benefits of these improvements has been Pfizer's ability to reach an expected 3 billion doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021 (1 billion of which will go to low and lower-middle-income countries).

Thanks in part to those improvements in the supply chain, in the first half of 2021, Pfizer's medicines and vaccines reached 58 million patients through access and affordability programs. That progress was noted in the 2021 edition of the Access to Medicine Foundation's biennial Access to Medicine Index. The ATMI ranks the 20 major pharmaceutical companies by their ability to make their pharmaceutical drugs more available, affordable, accessible, and acceptable in low- to middle-income countries. In the 2021 report, Pfizer jumped from 11th place (in 2018) to 4th, the greatest improvement out of all 20 ranked companies in 2020. This is especially notable as the data evaluated for the report had a cut-off of June 2020 and does not factor in the COVID-19 vaccine or late 2020's robust response to the pandemic.

Equity in clinical trials

In the search for a vaccine, the COVID-19 pandemic put a particular spotlight on diversity in clinical trials. Aiming for clinical trial recruitment demographics to match those of countries where the trials are taking place, a vigorous, in-depth [analysis of Pfizer's U.S. clinical trials](#) initiated between 2011 and 2020 was published in April 2021 and included 213 clinical trials studying cancer, rare diseases, vaccines, inflammatory and autoimmune diseases, and neurological conditions.

"This is an industry first and we are proud to lead the way," says Rod MacKenzie, Pfizer's Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer. "We published these data to be transparent about our baseline, so we can track progress as we work to improve diversity in clinical trials." ?

Participant levels above census were achieved in more than 50 percent of Pfizer trials for Black or African American participants, Hispanic or Latino participants, and white participants. Participation was also above census for Asian participants, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander participants, and American Indian and Alaska Native participants in 16 percent, 14.2 percent, and 8.5 percent of trials, respectively.

While a lot of progress has been made since June 2020, Pfizer's commitment to fostering Equity is ongoing throughout the company and remains a priority. "One of the things that makes me the proudest about being CEO of Pfizer is our company's – and our colleagues' – commitment to our Equity value. We don't just talk about the importance of Equity; we put our words into action. We will continue to focus on ensuring Pfizer's workforce best represents the diversity of the patients we serve around the world."

Originally published, Friday, August 6, 2021