

# 4 In 10 HR Pros Say DEI Progress Is a Measurable Objective for Their Leaders

HRDive | Carolyn Crist | August 25, 2023

Only a third of companies surveyed had a diversity, equity and inclusion budget, and less than half had a designated DEI leader.



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About 41% of HR professionals say that DEI progress is a measurable objective for their organization's leadership team, according to an Aug. 23 report from Salary.com.

Although DEI programs are making gains in more than half of organizations surveyed, only a third have a DEI budget and less than half have a leader designated to DEI. There were also mixed responses about who the DEI leader should report to and how to keep top leaders accountable.

"Given the Supreme Court's recent ruling on affirmative action, some retrenchment around DEI can be expected," Lenna Turner, head of DEI for Salary.com, said in a statement.

“Yet, this survey makes clear that most HR practitioners appreciate that DEI principles can positively impact innovation, employee morale, customer satisfaction and the bottom line,” she said.

In a survey of 621 HR professionals across 20 industries, many respondents noted the positive business outcomes that DEI initiatives can accomplish, such as better employee engagement and greater access to talent.

Among the 40% of organizations with accountability for DEI success, HR practitioners noted several top measurable goals — increasing DEI education, accessing pay equity and achieving diverse employee representation. They also pointed to the importance of creating a diversified pipeline and creating a DEI committee or advisory board.

About a third of respondents said their organization has conducted a diversity audit, and most said they’re using technology to boost DEI initiatives by enhancing the recruiting process, creating job descriptions and focusing on pay equity. In addition, more than a third of HR pros said they’re building a diverse recruitment pipeline through partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, minority professional organizations and MBA associations.

HR pros cited several challenges to advancing their DEI efforts, particularly a lack of time and resources. They also noted a lack of access to a sufficient budget, employee participation and leadership accountability and buy-in.

“As often happens with transformative change, corporate actions are lagging their intentions,” Turner said. “But there are also many corporate leaders who are boldly leading the way, and I am confident that other organizations will follow. To be competitive, they will have no choice.”

For many DEI professionals, a lack of ownership among business leaders remains a major barrier to DEI progress. They often feel the need to coach leaders on the importance of DEI and how it contributes to business success.

In fact, C-suite endorsement of DEI efforts has decreased during the past two years, according to a recent DDI report, and the number of companies that don’t offer DEI programs has increased.

That’s why measurable objectives could be beneficial — holding leaders accountable for DEI could help combat diversity fatigue. At the Diversity Fatigue Summit in May, experts said that data and analytics, which are then tied to performance reviews, compensation and trainings, can contribute to meaningful progress.