

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

**Building Gender Equity Together Facilitated Dialogues Initiative
(BGET)**

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

- *Leveraging the strengths of distinct stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them*
- *Leadership Education and Skill Development*

Description of Work:

In 2022, the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai's (ISMMS) Office of Gender Equity in Science and Medicine (OGESM) launched the Building Gender Equity Together Facilitated Dialogues Initiative (BGET) to bring community stakeholders across the institution together and crowdsource solutions that would advance gender equity. OGESM leadership are heavily engaged in community-based participatory research processes in their daily professional lives, and are committed to ensuring that those within the ISMMS community are able to be active participants in cultivating the next phases of OGESM's strategic work plan. The initiative, grounded in principles of appreciative inquiry, would bring together participants to actively shift thinking towards possibility and progress.

Phase One of this initiative provided skills-development training and support to Mount Sinai staff, students and faculty members selected to serve as BGET facilitators. (The selection and training of the facilitators was considered a critical component and is presented below.) In Phase Two of this initiative, BGET facilitators led dialogues with small groups of faculty, trainees and staff across Mount Sinai where, through networking and collaborative dialogue, participants generated solutions to improve gender equity across ISMMS. In Phase Three of BGET, facilitators and OGESM leadership will present solutions to ISMMS senior leaders and launch Gender Equity Action Teams (GrEAT) to bring these solutions into action.

In preparation for BGET, OGESM came together with leaders across ISMMS to a) ensure we built a discussion protocol that would ensure that participants designed feasible solutions and b) develop processes for institutional buy-in, enabling the prioritization of the solutions by our institution once the dialogues were concluded. Legal, Human Resources, the Dean of ISMMS and President for Academic Affairs for the Mount Sinai Health System were among many involved in the planning, development and execution of the BGET initiative.

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OGESM identified facilitators for BGET through a rigorous application and interview process. We sought facilitators who were curious, non-judgmental, eager for change, solution-focused, and valued multiple perspectives. In interviews, participants were asked to share their experience facilitating group discussions and reflect on their ability to hold empathy for those with opposing perspectives. Over 60 people applied, and we selected 18 facilitators.

With the Center for Transforming Culture (CTC), a consulting partner and leader in leadership development, we led an intensive 2-day training. This training focused on building the capacity to foster effective trust-building conversations with community members around gender equity issues. On day one of the training, participants learned best practices and skills that are effective in leading group dialogues using 360 empathy, a model that supports deep listening, trust and connection, and helps facilitators find creative solutions for tough problems collaboratively. Facilitators also learned CTC's Kaleidoscope Method which helps people from different perspectives hear each other better and move forward in the same direction with knowledge that the strategies to get to success will constantly be changing. Day two of the training, focused on reviewing key concepts, familiarizing facilitators with the agenda for the dialogues, and practicing facilitation skills through mock dialogues. As a result of Phase One of BGET, our intensive BGET training created a network of BGET facilitators across the institution who are equipped with strong facilitation skills with an emphasis on empathy, building trust, and developing solutions around important issues of equity.

In Phase Two, BGET facilitators led dialogues across ISMMS. In this phase, we built a community of staff, faculty and students that are committed to working with us to create an environment at Mount Sinai where all can thrive regardless of gender identity and expression. Through the facilitated dialogues, participants identified a range of solutions with broad implications for advancing gender equity and mitigating bias. Thus far, over 200 participants have registered for a dialogue, and nearly 150 session attendees from departments across ISMMS have joined a conversation.

An immediate impact of the BGET initiative was to break down silos, institutional barriers, by connecting individuals across the system who normally would not have had the opportunity to work together or build relationships. To evaluate the sessions, we conducted post-surveys with participants as a means of garnering feedback. To date, the most common theme identified in feedback has been appreciation for the opportunity to join with others whom participants may have not otherwise met and the discovery of common concerns. Additionally, the dialogues' change-oriented lens has been deeply valued, with one

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participant noting, “[There was] Wonderful cohesiveness and idea formation among group members. Positive and inspiring energy. A group that all are passionate about change.” Suggested solutions were in several domains, including workforce representation and equity; flexible and/or supportive work environments; and family friendly programming.

We are now in Phase Three of BGET and the next steps for this initiative are to share the community-generated solutions with ISMMS senior leaders and organize Gender Equity Action Teams (GrEAT) to move this work forward. Through another application process, we will identify change-driven leaders that can facilitate workgroups in developing and implementing SMART goals for micro-interventions based on the discussions with and commitment by leadership and evaluating their impact. We are building tools for evaluate the success of this third phase of BGET with the goal of expanding this framework across the institution.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://icahn.mssm.edu/about/gender-equity>

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