



# Office of Equity

Office of Governor

JB Pritzker

Sekile M. Nzinga, PhD, MSW

Chief Equity Officer

**Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and  
Accessibility in Illinois State Government**

# Executive Order 2021-16

## DEIA Training

### Charge:

- ▶ “The Chief Equity Officer shall lead the State’s efforts to ensure that the State of Illinois is a leader in equity and inclusion with the goals of eliminating institutional and systemic barriers for the people of Illinois and creating opportunity and access for all of those it serves and employs.” **EO 2021-16**

# ADVANCING EQUITY IN ILLINOIS

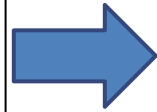
- ▶ **Vision:** That Illinois is a state free of social inequity with a healthy and thriving population with access to high quality services delivered by diverse, inclusive, equity-oriented, and accessible state governmental systems, agencies, institutions, and services
- ▶ **Strategic Priorities:**
  - ▶ To partner with the Office of the Governor, state leaders, stakeholders and community members to ensure that the State of Illinois is a model for justice, equity, opportunity, and access by working to eliminate institutional and systemic barriers for the people of Illinois.
  - ▶ To create a sustainable statewide infrastructure that normalizes and operationalizes equity, inclusion, opportunity, and access into every aspect of the state's workforce, systems, and services
  - ▶ To ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) standards of excellence are integrated into the strategic priorities of state agencies, institutions, boards, and commissions.

# Building ITE: Maintaining Momentum & Sustainability

## Reality 1:

### Illinois state government is:

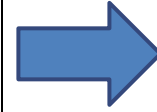
- Large
  - Semi-autonomous
- Always in flux with staffing transitions
- Subject to budgetary and resource constraints
  - Subject to legislative and policy mandates at the state and federal levels
  - Under constant pressure to meet the everyday needs of Illinois.



## Reality 2:

### Agency conditions to sustain current work & begin new initiatives:

- Motivation
- Coordination
- Ongoing Support
- Accountability



## Office of Equity's Response:

1. Developed Illinois Towards Equity using these realities and the One Virginia plan
2. Created a state government approach to DEI work focusing on:
  - Planning
  - Implementation
  - Assessment
  - Revision
3. Developed a state government DEIA work approach focused on being:
  - Equitable
  - Integrative
  - Sustainable
  - Data-informed
  - Nimble
4. Developed a state government approach to DEI work using:
  - Timebound methods of accountability

# Reality 3: DEIAJ in Political Context

## Current Context

- Paulette Granberry Russell, president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education is “concerned that DEI will follow the same path as [critical race theory, or CRT](#), and become a term that’s twisted and misrepresented for political purposes.”
- “It’s demonizing efforts, not only within higher education, but I think within this country to create a more equitable, just United States,” she said. “On some levels it’s misappropriating the work that is being done and using it as a basis for saying we’re discriminating against others. (Granberry Russell, 2023)”

## Evidence of backlash/hostile climate:

- Increase in retaliation against change agents conducting or advocating for DEIA work and training
- Increase in religious exemption requests against DEIA training and education, particularly LGBTQIA Trainings
- Increase in FOIA requests
- Increase in unfounded reports to US Department of Civil Rights for “discrimination”,
- “reverse racism”, “religious persecution”

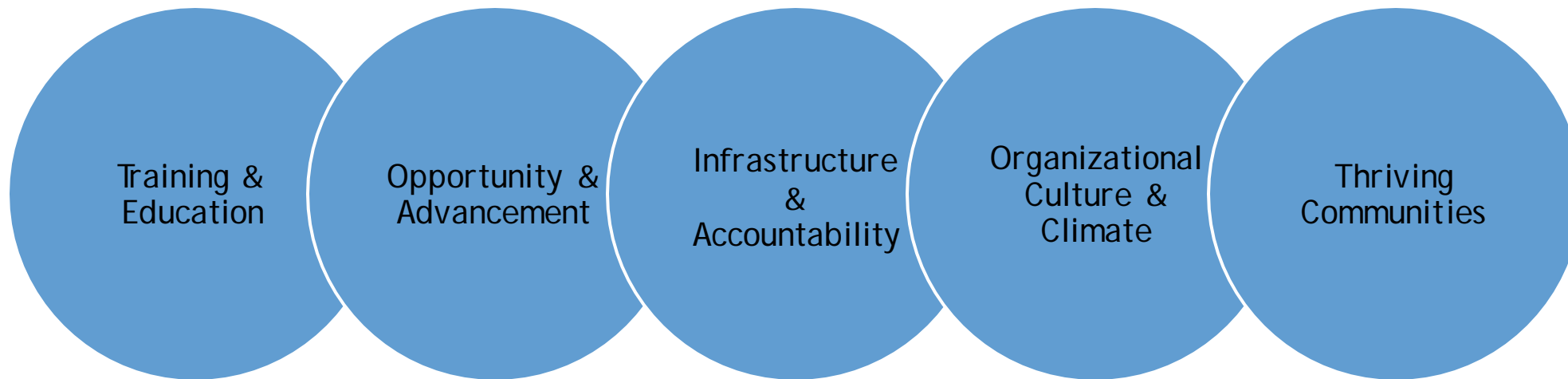
# Illinois Towards Equity Key Components

- ▶ Theory of Change-Intersectional Approach to Advancing Equity and a Social Determinants of Health Framework
- ▶ Operationalizes 5 action oriented domains for targeted and impactful planning
- ▶ Presents pathways for individual growth and organizational growth
- ▶ Provides a planning toolkit for crafting 3 internal (organizational) and 3 external (public facing) goals
- ▶ Goal development using the SMARTIE framework (Specific, measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time bound, Inclusive and Equity oriented)
- ▶ Names agency leadership/Governor's cabinet members as the accountability designees not DEIA leads
- ▶ Provides monitoring and reporting systems on dedicated MS Teams channels (Deputy Governors have access)
- ▶ Coordinated and integrated to other plans and mandates

## Other sustaining factors:

- ▶ Office of Equity offers ongoing support and DEIA in state government best practices
- ▶ Agency budget proposals include equity line items
- ▶ Equity Officers for each state agency in FY24 Budget Proposal
- ▶ All state employees and appointees required to take DEIA training and beginning 2023 LGBTQIA training.
- ▶ All managers and supervisors required to take Inclusive Leader Training
- ▶ Preferred manager and supervisor qualifications: include DEIA competencies

# Illinois Towards Equity Action Domains



# Governor's Office DEIA Training Overview

- ▶ Compliance Trainings
  - ▶ 2021 Ethics Training
  - ▶ 2022 Discrimination & Harassment Training
- ▶ Equity Trainings under [Executive Order 2021-16](#), Section 4
  - ▶ All state employees & appointees
    - ▶ 2023 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA) Training
    - ▶ 2023 LGBTQIA Training
  - ▶ Managers & Supervisors
    - ▶ 2023 Inclusive Leader Training

# Opportunity: Expand ITE and Trainings to Higher Education

## Rationale:

- ▶ Unifies Illinois state agencies and state institutional (replicating the One Virginia strategy)
- ▶ Honors ongoing DEIA work in Higher Ed but provides a nimble organizing/coordinating framework for cross institutional learning and collaboration
- ▶ Creates a targeted equity planning process
- ▶ Provides strength in numbers
- ▶ Ensures inequities are not being reproduced if only some universities/colleges have the resources to implement DEIA initiative (Key equity strategy: resource sharing & equitable distribution vs. competition)

# Thank you!

Sekile Nzinga, MSW, PhD

Chief Equity Officer

Deputy Chief of Staff for Equity

Office of the Governor | JB Pritzker

[Sekile.Nzinga@illinois.gov](mailto:Sekile.Nzinga@illinois.gov)