Case Study: Office of the President

In 2023, the Office of the President was one of the first groups at the University of Victoria to try out the new Equity Action Plan (EAP) Implementation Framework. The framework and accompanying toolkit are designed to support unit-level action of the EAP. Using toolkit resources, this unit completed the Get Started phase and has started actioning their first EAP activity.

The office

The Office of the President supports the university's collective vision and priorities by facilitating collaborative action and providing strategic direction. Among other responsibilities, this team made up of 5 people works to fulfill governance responsibilities, coordinate institutional plans and celebrate the achievements of students, staff, faculty and alumni.

Get started

Given the small size of the Office of the President, the whole office chose to participate in the work necessary to determine how their unit could best advance the EAP. James Pepler, Senior Project and Engagement Advisor, designed a series of meetings and polls to lead the team through the Get Started phase of the Implementation Framework:

	Focus
Meeting 1	Introduced the EAP goals and discussed them using the questions provided in the Your Unit within the EAP tool. Reviewed all the EAP actions one at a time discussing alignment with existing unit priorities.
Poll 1	Sorted all the selected actions into three categories: project-based actions, culture-based actions and Office of the President's specific actions. Then used an anonymous poll to narrow to the top 2-3 actions from each category.
Meeting 2	Used the suggested activities and prompts in the Ideating and Prioritizing Activities tool to develop activity ideas for each action on their refined list.
Poll 2	Separated ideas into two categories: highly collaborative and President Office-based. Then used an anonymous poll to bring one from each of those categories to the forefront.
Meeting 3	Another round of prioritizing activities this time using the Activity Priority Matrix (in the Ideating and Prioritizing Activities tool) to sort activity ideas.

First activity

After generating and prioritizing their activity ideas, the Office of the President team jumped straight into planning their first activity. The team used another poll to decide to start on an activity idea focused on supporting affinity groups on campus (Relationality and Belonging, Action 10).

With the support of EQHR staff, this office began their activity planning by using the Setting Impact Goals tool included within the Plan phase of the toolkit. This tool explains how articulating an activity's intended impact can be helpful as teams plan their activities and prepare for meaningful assessment. For the Office of the President's first activity this impact goal is: Be empowered and educated to authentically support affinity groups in a way they want to be supported.

Now with more focus, the team has begun working to collect information on existing staff and faculty affinity groups at UVic and to ask the campus community what kinds of support they'd like to see in place for affinity groups.

Advice from the Office of the President

When asked if there was advice that he would pass on to others thinking of leading this process in their units, James shared:

- **Keep the conversation open** – It's important to give those doing this work the space to talk about their own journeys connected to equity, diversity and inclusion. Since motivations for engaging in this work can be very personal for some, these conversations can't be rushed.
- **Find ways to focus and organize** – Throughout the Get Started Phase, the Office of the President team struggled with wanting to do too much. However, the team came up with categories to sort the actions they'd identified as relevant to their unit. This allowed them to ensure their final list of prioritized activities would correspond with a diversity of actions. Advanced planning for meetings and using polls in between meetings helped distill their focus.
- **Jump into action** – By building on the momentum created through the Get Started phase, this team was able to start their first activity right after establishing their priorities. This contributed to the team's sense of success and desire to take meaningful action.

Questions?

The Equity Action Team can assist with coaching and troubleshooting, email us at equityaction@uvic.ca.