



Pennsylvania Breastfeeding
Coalition // 2023

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Leadership Assessment Report



CHANGING SPACES LLC

Table of Contents

01	—	Executive Summary
03	—	Approach & Methodology
06	—	Principal Findings
12	—	SWOT Analysis
13	—	Recommendations
18	—	Acknowledgment
19	—	Appendix

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides valuable insights and recommendations for the Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition (PABC) for developing and advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Leadership within the organization. Changing Spaces LLC (CS) utilized the strategic goal, “Re-establish committee structure, communications, and develop branding for the coalition to ensure that it is a sustainable and effective organization aligned to meet its mission” to focus our inquiry and analysis. A key action item of PABC’s DEI efforts is “to create and sustain a culture of equity”, as outlined directly in their 2023-2024 strategic plan. Historically, individuals from Black and Brown communities have experienced challenges in feeling embraced and secure when engaging with this organization as members.

Based on a recommendation from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the PABC engaged CS to assess internal climate and structure, including leaderships and members’ commitment and understanding of DEI, their operations, the current state of leadership, DEI policies and processes, and overall culture. In Summer 2023, CS partnered with the PABC to conduct a three-month internal review and assessment, identifying strengths, challenges, areas of opportunities, and warning signs. The key objectives encompassed furnishing PABC with solution-driven suggestions and tangible resources aimed at prioritizing equity, inclusion, and antiracism within their operations. These resources include assessment and evaluation tools, along with training and educational materials.

Changing Spaces LLC used three themes to guide the overall assessment process:

- PABC’s organizational DEI policies and processes,
- Leadership practices,
- and culture.

Executive Summary

CS engaged a multifaceted approach to ensure comprehensive insights and recommendations. We commenced with

- a thorough examination of existing DEI related organizational data, policies, practices, and other documents,
- interviews with current leaders,
- an online assessment of current PABC membership,
- and review and research of state affiliated breastfeeding coalitions for benchmarking and comparison.

Recommendations include:

- Clarification and revision PABC's current DEI statement.
- A commitment to continuous assessment and evaluation of PABC equity and inclusion efforts.
- Improved website navigation.
- Clear language regarding leadership structure and investment in a strong external recruitment strategy for Steering Committee leadership.
- Integration of DEI and antiracism throughout PABC organizational strategy.
- Establishment of a mentorship program.
- Establishment of a proactive and diversified funding model, which includes investment in an administrative staff position.
- Prioritization of diverse recruitment of members and promotion of their work.
- Development of a system for internal and external feedback/suggestions.
- Holding an open dialogue meeting focused on mediation and healing.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY



01. Meeting Observation

CS attended various meetings to observe members in natural situations. This observational research was important for understanding relational dynamics within PABC. As part of the observation, some interaction with members was necessary, including building community by introducing the consultant to PABC members, asking questions, or responding to questions asked directly to consultant. There were continual reminders to PABC members, throughout the work, that the consultant would be present in meetings primarily in an observational capacity.



02. Document Review

CS conducted an examination of available DEI-related documents to gather comprehensive insights into PABC's diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies and procedures. The evaluation included an assessment of clarity, inclusiveness, and the alignment with PABC's articulated DEI objectives. Furthermore, apart from reviewing internal documents, with a specific emphasis on the website, we conducted external benchmarking to juxtapose PABC against peer organizations. This comparative analysis afforded valuable insights, shedding light on areas where PABC may demonstrate excellence or potentially encounter challenges in its DEI endeavors.

Approach & Methodology



03. Leadership Interviews

A series of 60-minute Zoom interviews, recorded for documentation purposes, were conducted to elicit nuanced qualitative insights from PABC's leadership. Participants were exclusively drawn from the ranks of current Committee Chairs, Leads, or individuals occupying designated leadership roles within PABC, and sent an email invitation to participate.

The inquiry primarily revolved around their experiences within the organization and their perception of its cultural fabric, with a specific focus on the lens of equity and inclusion. Additionally, CS sought to engage in a dialogue about the extent of organizational awareness regarding PABC's workings and to tap into their insights concerning the future trajectory of PABC.

Following the initial interviews, some participants agreed to an additional round of discussion, prompting further exploration and data collection. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, and live captioning was made available. Interviews were recorded, unless a participant specifically requested otherwise, to facilitate transcription, ensure accessibility, and aid in comprehensive note-taking.

Approach & Methodology



04. Membership Survey

All current members, including leadership, were encouraged to complete a thirty-four (34) question survey, administered through two online survey platforms (Google Form and Microsoft Form). CS utilized different platforms to increase accessibility, as some workspaces have restricted access to Google suite. We emailed the shared PABC member list (approximately 310 members) and respondents were originally given ten (10) days to complete. Periodic reminders were sent out via email. In response to a notification that some members may not have received the survey, we temporarily reopened the survey for four (4) additional days and requested PABC Committee Chairs send the survey links out directly to their committee members. The survey focused on the three concern areas for PABC (e.g., PABC's organizational DEI policies and processes, leadership practices, and culture). We received 37 responses, for a 12% response rate.

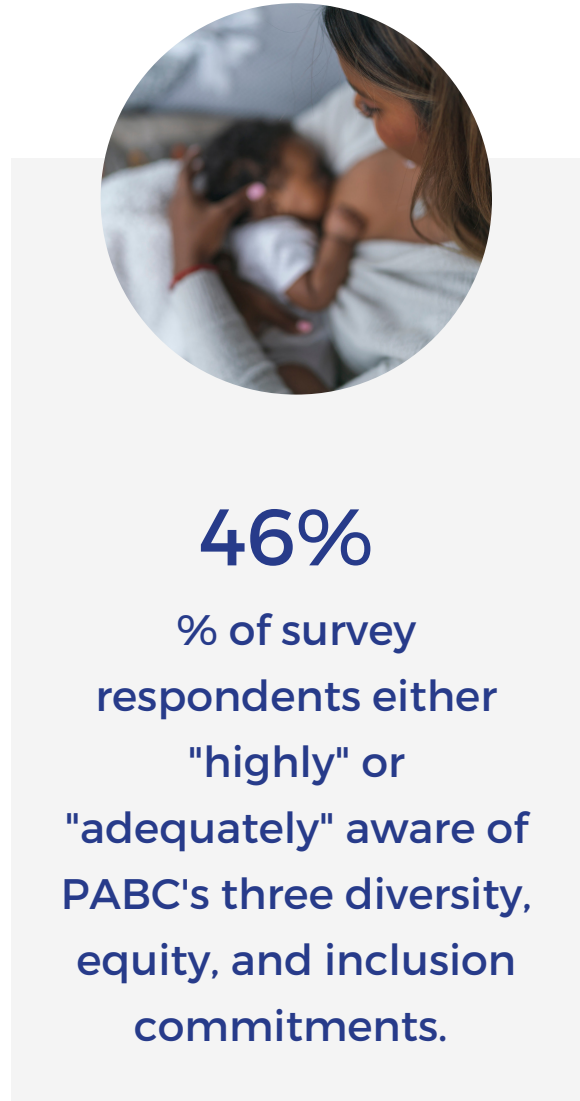
PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

Is PABC fulfilling its strategic goal action item “to create and sustain a culture of equity”? Keeping this question and the overall strategic goal top of mind, CS identified several strong points, opportunities, challenges, and areas of risk. Using the aggregated data, we offer the following analysis.

DEI Policies and Processes

There is no current or prior education and training related to DEI or leadership for members offered through the PABC. However, there is an extensive list of resources available through the Equity Committee’s resource webpage. It is unclear how many members access this resource. The data from survey and interviews suggests that members have not yet utilized this tool to its greatest capability.

In reviewing documents and data, CS noted gaps between what members knew organizationally and information available via the website. Currently, only 46% of survey respondents are either “highly” or “adequately” aware of PABC’s three diversity, equity and inclusion commitments. These commitments come from the Equity Committee action plan and exist on the PABC’s website main page. In addition, a significant portion of respondents (54%) either expressed uncertainty or disagreed with the presence of



well-established and documented Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies within PABC.

Currently, there are noted operational discrepancies, which have created relational disconnects, bias incidents, and organizational silos. Historically, there was pushback from members related to the establishment of the Equity Committee. Members have noted feeling unsure of whether they can engage with the committee, rejected when trying to engage, or that there is a lack of advocates for the committee. The Equity Committee has faced dwindling numbers as Black and Brown members, in particular, have left due to bias incidents and lack of diversity at the decision-making levels.

Using the policy paper as an example, the governance structure is often unclear to members and leaders. Internal and external relationships between grantee and grantor indicate a dysfunctional power dynamic built on lack of trust and communication. PBAC members have voiced both confusion and frustration due to feeling lack of control over work. Due to current and prior funding models in place, with committees receiving grants for projects, the oversight structure is not clearly or cleanly defined, which has led to bias incidents, miscommunication, and project disruptions.

Governance and Leadership Practices

The previous nomination process of Steering Committee Chairs and Committee Chairs were not held through an open election ballot. This mainly informal process, which lacked intention but did seek to include members in the voting of leadership, created a process of exclusion and limited the potential pipeline of leaders. Fall 2023, under current leadership, will see the first iteration of an open election process. Prior years saw members scramble to fill empty leadership seats through a more whoever-will-take-it approach. This is not sustainable. Indicative of this, the majority of respondents (43%) are unsure if the election process is equitable. At the same time, 65% believe PABC actively seeks to recruit leadership from diverse backgrounds.



76%

Percentage of survey respondents that believe leadership are committed to racial equity and inclusion

The structure and timing of meetings (whole coalition, Steering Committee, and individual committee meetings) is a continued challenge. Meetings have, particularly in the past, been very focused on legality and overall lacked a facilitator to guide the process. The PABC's membership base is geographically spread across the state of Pennsylvania. In addition, members have personal careers, and therefore work schedules, and membership is an additional responsibility within work/life balance. Historically, full coalition meetings were held quarterly. One interviewer noted, "this limited past opportunities for movement and growth". Committee member meetings occurred in-between. Meeting timelines were too spaced apart to get work done within governance structure. As a new model, full coalition meetings now take place every other month. This is a recent change under the current leadership. Some members have noted a decline in attendance in various meeting formats, while others note an increase. This leads to a question of why a discrepancy.



Through conversations with various PABC leadership, there is a recognition that they have made some errors in judgement related to handling prior bias-related incidents. There is a noted lack of diversity in leadership ranks and there is no training or mentorship present. There is also noticeable lack of pipeline and continuity for leadership.

The current elements of the organizations are in contention with each other due to challenges or risks at each structural level (e.g., environmental, strategic, work and technology, people, formal, and informal).

To highlight a few:

- Strategy: There are no formal strategies to generate income. This has limited PABC's ability to hire a staff member, maintain a steady flow of grants for projects, and provide funding to expand organizational strategy and reach. As one member notes, "I know we are a non-profit, but money is required to create a presence in the community".

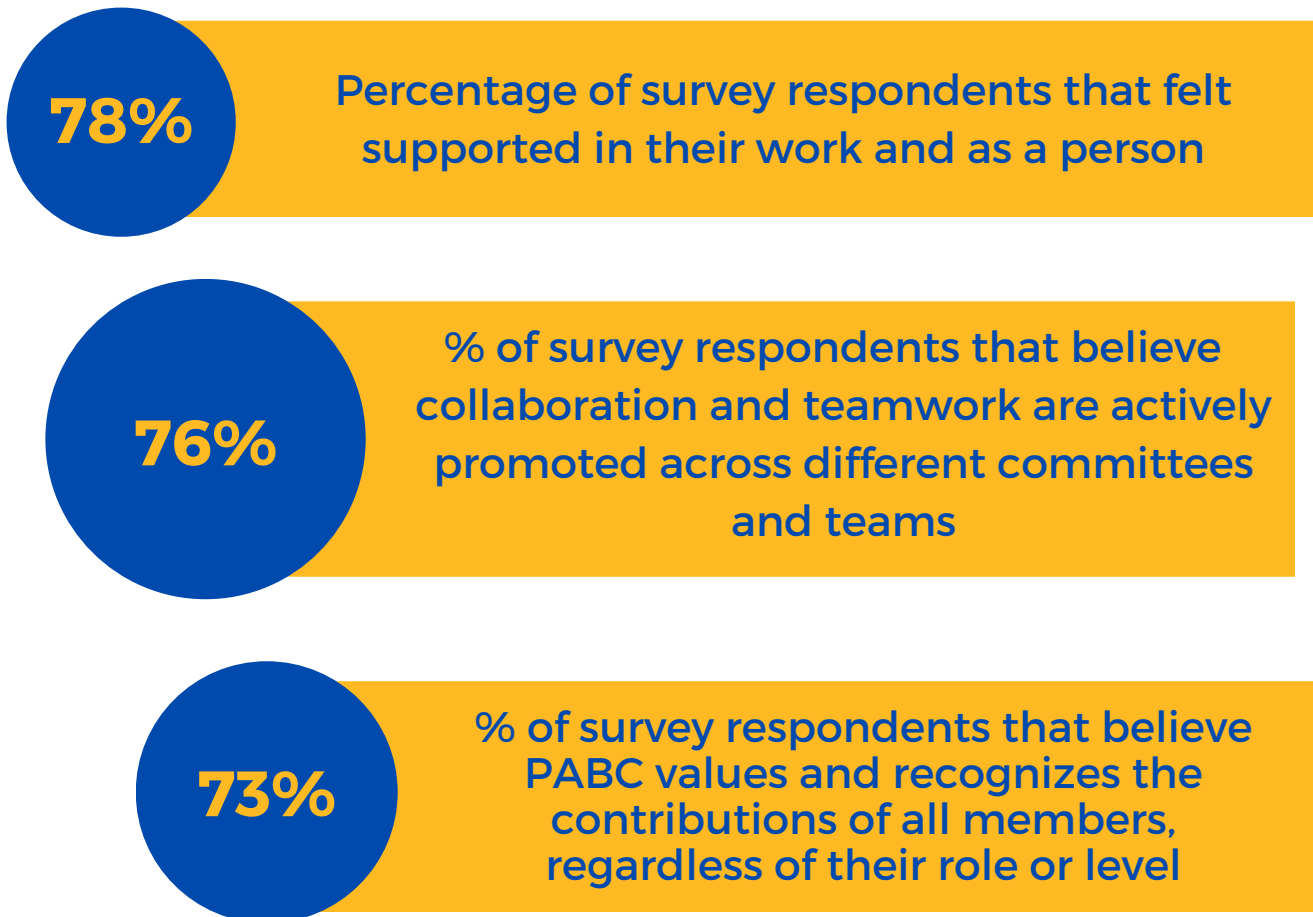
59% of survey respondents believe leadership involve a diverse range of perspectives when making significant decisions, considering the potential impact on different groups.

- Work and technology: PABC has various documents (bylaws, policies and protocols, individual committee action plans, and strategic plan) which provide either legal framework or general guidance for operations. When CS consulted with members, some were familiar with terminology and organizational information, while others focused on the complexity of managing both legality and moving forward with tasks. Only 57% of survey respondents believe policies and bylaws are consistently communicated and easily accessible to all members.
- Formal: No current administrative staff to assist with human resource, administrative, or archival functions. This has been highlighted in meetings and conversations as a key area of need, with current focus on volunteer support. This has created a large operational load.

Community and Culture

Interestingly, 89% of respondents agree that they have an understanding of systems of oppression, including how they impact the work related to breastfeeding. However, this same group believes that only 59% of PABC members have the same understanding. This disconnect is clearly felt in conversations with PABC members who have expressed frustration, felt disconnected from the community, expressed moments of feeling lack of psychological safety in meetings, and an overall lack of equity and inclusion. To further build on this cultural disconnect, only 24% do not feel comfortable speaking up when dealing when interactions of inequity, racism, bias, and/or bigotry. 24% also have directly experienced microaggressions, racial bias, and/or culturally insensitive incidents from other PABC members. The number increases to 38% when we include respondents who are unsure if they have been on the receiving end.

PABC appears to have a strong culture of collaboration and works to value the contribution of its members. The survey responses support this narrative and there is a clear consistent core group of members which keep PABC running. However, it is not long-term functionality sustainable to rely on a small unit of volunteers to contribute.



A more diverse and inclusive community of members and leaders is an immediate need for PABC. Over 97% of survey respondents identify as women, 30% identify as RNs, and 51% identify as lactation consultants. We do see a geographic spread across Pennsylvania. In interviews, a common theme is a lack of diversity, but a commitment to do better. Only 24% of survey respondents where either unsure or felt that members were not committed to racial equity and inclusion.

**“where differences are recognized, appreciated, and celebrated”
-PABC member**

Another theme, in many interviews, was situations of bias not being properly handled. PABC has membership clearly invested in improving its community and culture, as members engagement with this project indicate. There is clear work still to be done. Individuals from historically marginalized communities have communicated to CS that they do not always feel part of the whole community, and members from historically privileged communities admit that they notice exclusion and have even participated in bias incidents themselves. Members from marginalized communities have also chosen not to participate, not finding a space of community. For example, one member notes, “my immigrant colleague, a CLC and director of a program, did not feel welcomed by PABC and as a result her maternity care organization did not engage with PABC.” When such events occur, there cannot be radio silence from members and leaders, but that appears to be the current culture. This perpetuates an environment of hurt and violence through continued silence, instead of support and accountability.

SWOT ANALYSIS

S

Strengths

- Extensive repository of DEI-focused breastfeeding resources on website
- Dedicated core group of members
- Equity goal already in place within strategy
- Geographic diversity of membership

W

Weaknesses

- Homogeneous membership base
- Lack of processes
- Operational discrepancies

O

Opportunities

- Increase in meeting frequency
- Membership calls for unification
- Policies and documents to build organizational structure

T

Threats

- Marginalized members/community do not feel welcome or safe
- Lack of leadership pipeline
- Poor funding stream
- Reliance on small group of volunteers

RECOMMENDATIONS

DEI Policies and Processes

Clarify and revise PABC's current DEI statement.

- PABC's current DEI statement is not currently the work of the full organization, but focused on the Equity Committee. While offering commitments geared towards the external stakeholders, the current iteration does not provide a mission or vision to ground the objectives. How can this statement support the Equity Committee's action plan, while putting the onus of equity and antiracism work on everyone at PABC.
- We suggest a DEI and antiracism vision, mission, and statement of philosophy to provide accountability and structure, build and help sustain a culture of belonging, and indicate a deeper commitment to the work of change.
- According to PABC member's such work would help build "consensus about what equity means in lactation, what experiences we're (the PABC) is creating" and "shared accountability across the organization".
- Language should include clear and defined terminology and shared organizational principles of anti-racism and DEI
- Refer to other peer organizations and organizations which you strive for in terms of future advancement

Suggested Resource(s):

- [Diversity, Inclusion and Equity: Action Toolkit for Organizations](#)
- [Racial Equity Mission Statements](#)

Commit to continuous assessment and evaluation of your equity and inclusion efforts.

- We recommend that PABC launch an anonymous internal DEI survey to continue engaging with this process on an annual basis. This will gather data about member experiences and perceptions regarding DEI at PABC and assist leadership in responding appropriately through training, dialogue, leadership changes, and policy and practice revisions.

Recommendations

- Continue evaluating how and why White-dominate culture is taking up space in PABC and what strategies are needed to create change and belonging.

Suggested Resource(s):

- [Equity Diversity Inclusion: Action Toolkit for Organizations](#)

Improve website navigation.

- Focus on inclusive design elements, to add accessibility.
- Consider highlighting the resources from the Equity Committee in a more central location

Suggested Resource(s):

- [Inclusive Design](#)

Develop a clear organizational chart and a process guided by culturally responsive communication practices.

- Create a visual and formal representation of your organizational structure, through an organizational chart. This will assist in reconstructing the flow of your organization and helping you identify gaps which have created an environment of poor communication, exclusion, and poor diversity.
- Create a communication strategy which not only is culturally engaging and responsive to the communities involved, but also aligns with internal and external organizational cultures, styles, and policies.
- Build trust with grantor by setting mutual expectations regarding communication practices and insist on commitments to challenging white supremacist power dynamics.

Governance and Leadership Practices

Clear language regarding leadership structure and investment in a strong external recruitment strategy for Steering Committee leadership.

Recommendations

- A diverse Steering Committee is not just a matter of equity; it's a strategic imperative for PABC's organization's sustained success. A variety of perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences among committee members will enhance decision-making, stimulate innovation, and foster a deeper understanding of the diverse communities PABC serves. Moreover, diverse leaders are better equipped to navigate complex challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities in advocacy work across the national landscape. Inclusivity at the highest governance level is not only a reflection of PABC's commitment to social responsibility but also a critical driver of its competitiveness and resilience in a rapidly evolving world.
- Consider changing name from Steering Committee to Board of Directors/Trustees to externally recruit talented individuals who would better understand qualifications based on title
- Consider posting a diversity-focused search listing on various websites (volunteermatch.org, LinkedIn, boardsource.org) with the intention to attract passionate individuals who can volunteer to join PABC's steering committee

Integrate DEI and antiracism throughout your organizational strategy.

- Require all Steering Committee/Board members to take Equity, Inclusion and Antiracism trainings as part of onboarding and continued professional development during tenure.
- Require all Committee chairs to take Equity, Inclusion and Antiracism trainings as part of onboarding and continued professional development during tenure.
- The (PABC) was not growing and not meeting the needs of members even prior to the introduction of the Equity Committee. As one member noted, leaders are "not sure how to make a welcoming space when they have never asked what people want".
- Request members take Equity, Inclusion and Antiracism trainings as part of onboarding and continued professional development.
- Devote one day, in-person, to antiracism, DEI, and leadership training with members as part of meeting schedule in the year.

Recommendations

Suggested Resource(s):

- [Identity, Power, and Privilege](#) (For Committee Leaders)
- [Trading Glass Ceilings for Glass Cliffs](#) (supporting Committee Members of color)
- [Making \(Or Taking\) Space: Initial Themes on Nonprofit Transitions from White to BIPOC Leaders](#) (For Committee Leaders)
- [How to Begin Equity Work in Your Organization with Little or No Money](#)
- [Learning to Speak Up for Equity in the Workplace](#)

Establish a mentorship program.

- A reoccurring theme across interviews was a need for mentorship and guidance for both internal and external peers.
- Mentorship, particularly of current or past chairs to incoming chairs, will be essential for the knowledge transfer process as well as ensuring a functional transition process.
- Consider tapping into peer organizations. The process should be collaborative.

Establish a proactive and diversified funding model, which includes investment in an administrative staff position.

- Consider a fundraiser to assist budgetary concerns.
- Consider hiring a grant writer as part of future strategic priorities.

Community and Culture

Prioritize diverse recruitment of members and promotion of their work.

Suggested Resource(s):

- [Black Women in Nonprofits Matter](#)

Recommendations

Develop a system for internal and external feedback/suggestions.

- Consider maintaining an anonymous feedback/suggestion form where members and stakeholders can provide suggestions, detail experiences related to bias incidents by a PABC member, and participate in the progress of the organization.

Hold an open dialogue meeting focused on mediation and healing.

- Bring in an external mediator, who has experience with antiracism, to help mediate the process.
- Work to create a space for brave dialogue, while recognizing the power imbalances that exist which can create safety concerns for members from marginalized communities.
- Leaders must be upfront that there is lack of trust, reasons that have created this social and relational climate, and intentions for how they would like to help change the culture.

Suggested Resource(s):

- COMPARING DEBATE, DISCUSSION AND DIALOGUE*
- *Holding Change*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all those who contributed to the creation of this report. Your dedication, insights, and support have been invaluable throughout the research and writing process. I am grateful for the collaborative spirit that made this report possible.

Special thanks go to Alison Keating for her role guiding me as the organizational contact. Your input significantly enhanced the quality and depth of this document.

I also extend my gratitude to the Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition, The Pennsylvania Department of Health, and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatric for providing the resources and environment necessary for this research. Thank you for approaching me for this project and seeing the possibilities in our collaboration together.

Lastly, I want to thank all the readers for their interest in this report. Your engagement and feedback are essential as we continue to strive for excellence in our work, and an antiracist, equitable, and inclusive culture at the PABC.

**Thank you for being a part of this journey
and telling your stories.**

Contact

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Appendix

1. Figure 1a. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies
2. Figure 1b. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies
3. Figure 1c. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies
4. Figure 2a. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices
5. Figure 2b. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices
6. Figure 2c. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices
7. Figure 3a. Member Survey: Culture
8. Figure 3b. Member Survey: Culture
9. Figure 3c. Member Survey: Culture
10. Figure 3d. Member Survey: Culture
11. Figure 3f. Member Survey: Culture
12. Figure 3g. Member Survey: Culture
13. Figure 3h. Member Survey: Culture
14. Figure 3i. Member Survey: Culture

Figure 1a. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies

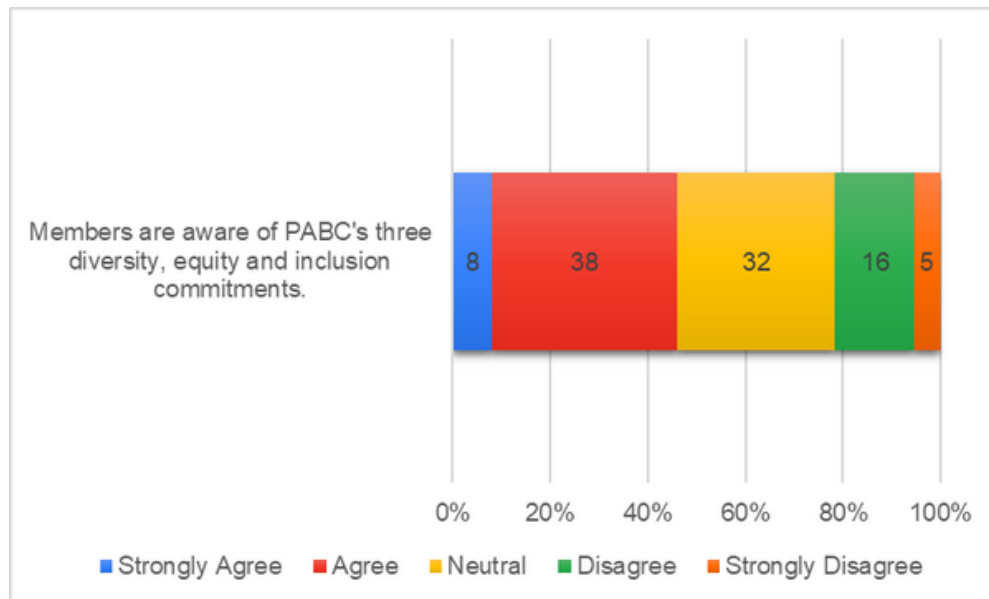


Figure 1b. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies

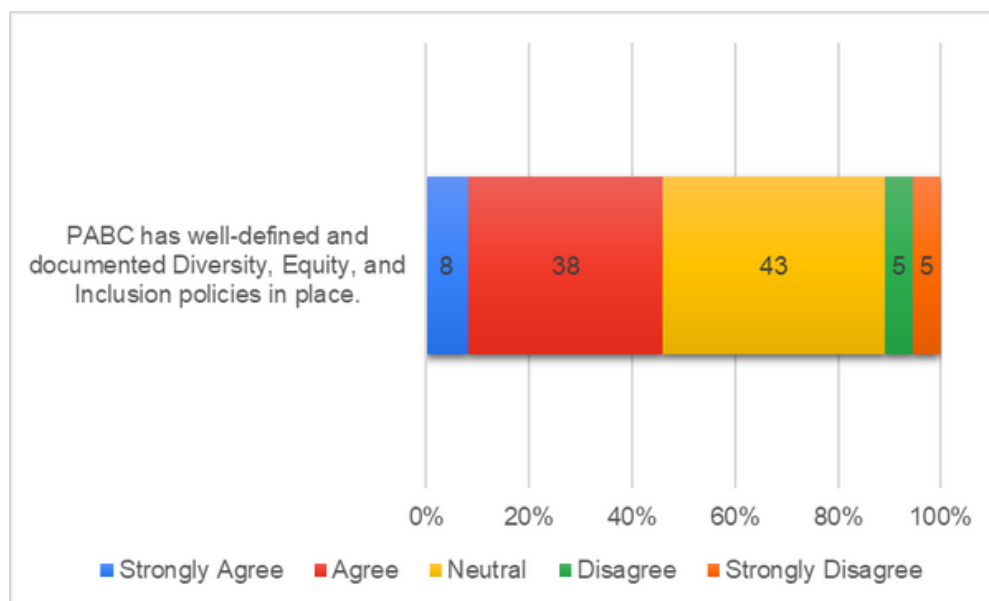


Figure 1c. Member Survey: Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies

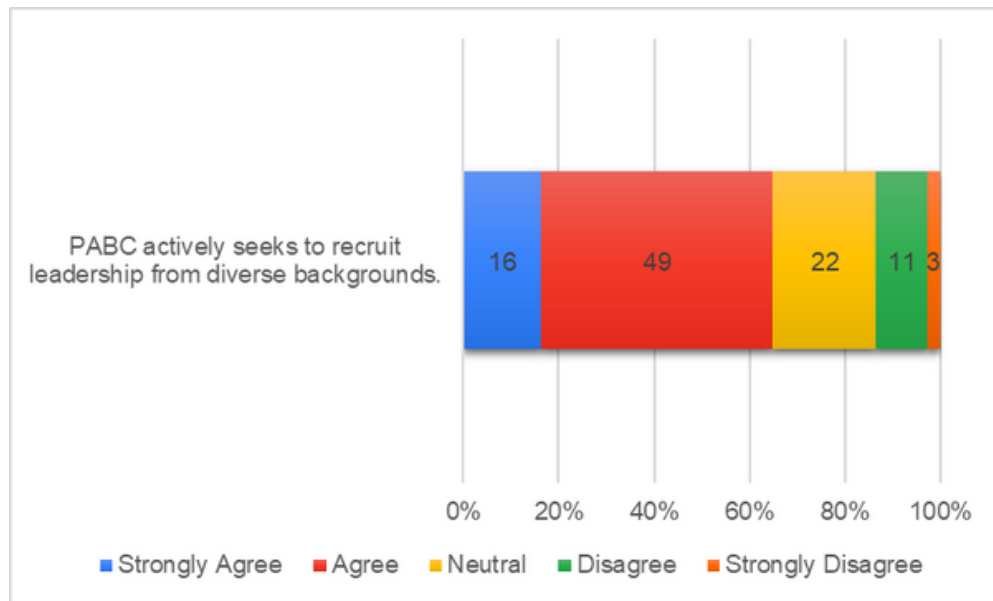


Figure 2a. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices

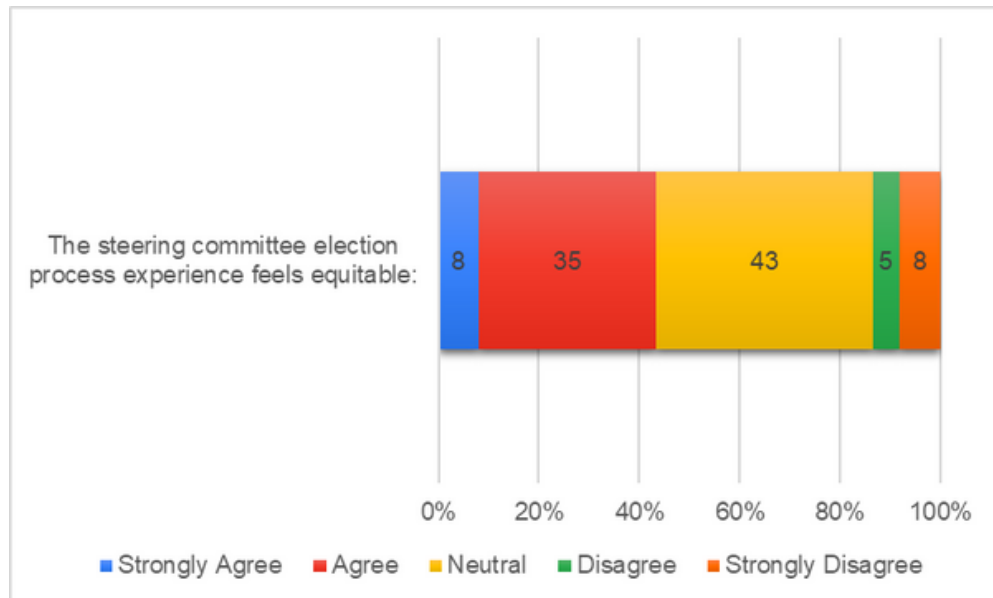


Figure 2b. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices

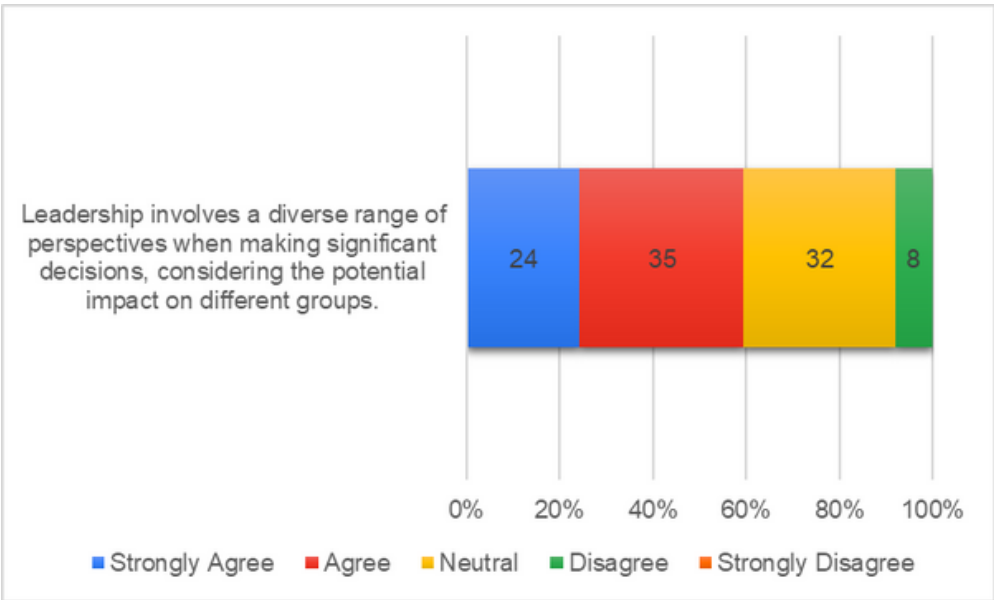


Figure 2c. Member Survey: Leadership and Membership Practices

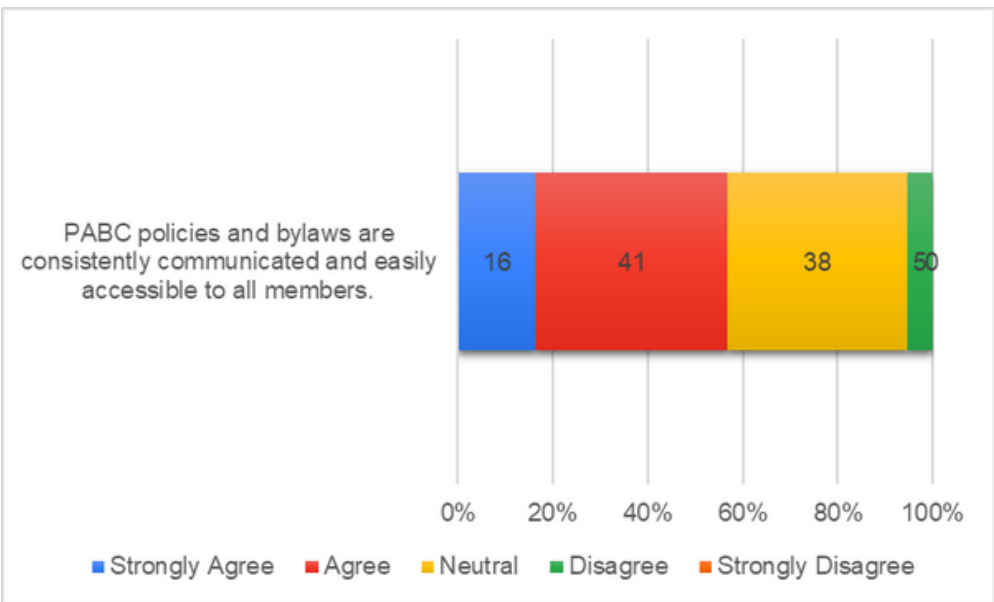


Figure 3a. Member Survey: Culture

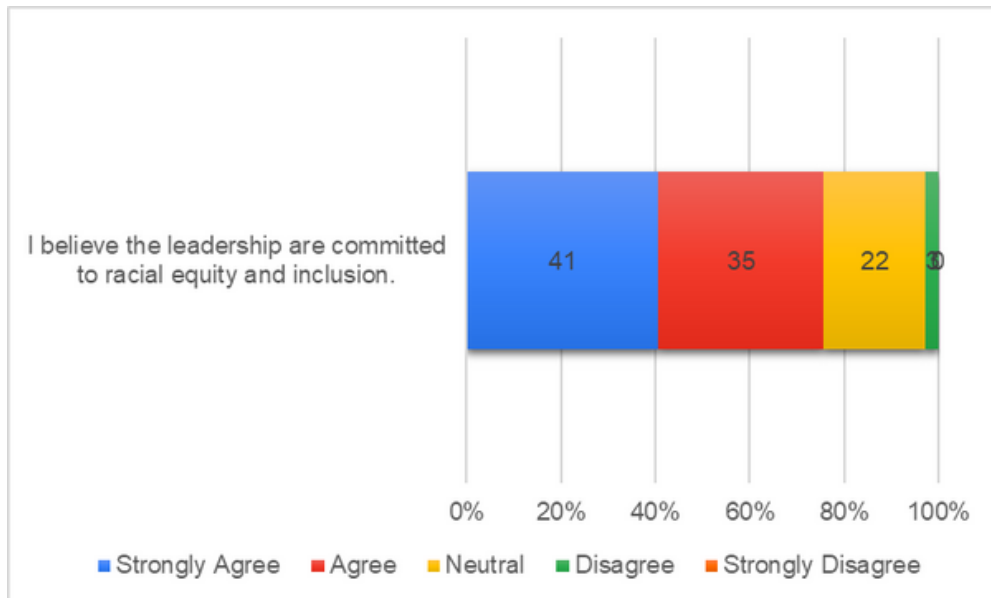


Figure 3b. Member Survey: Culture

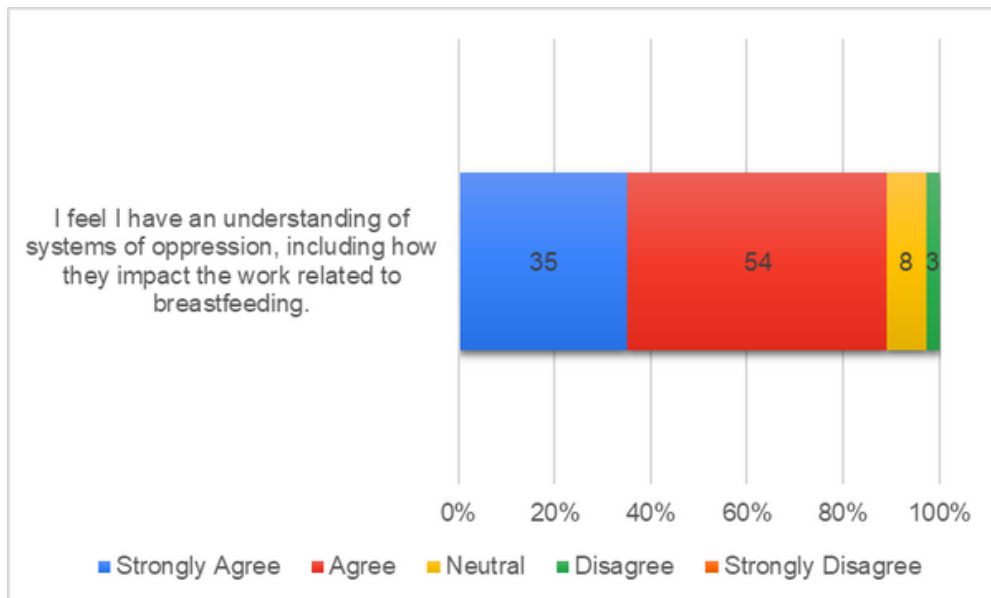


Figure 3c. Member Survey: Culture

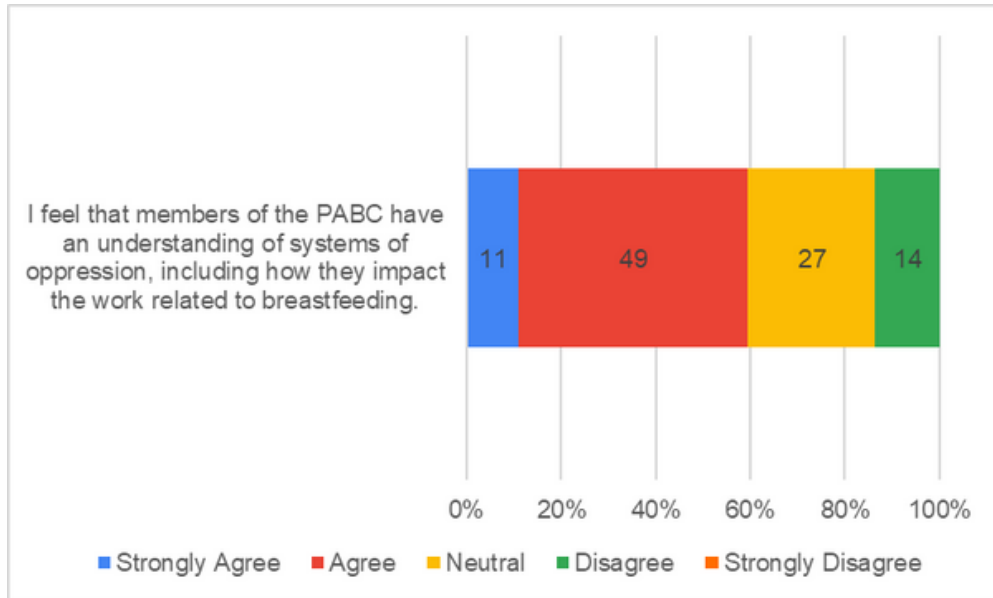


Figure 3d. Member Survey: Culture

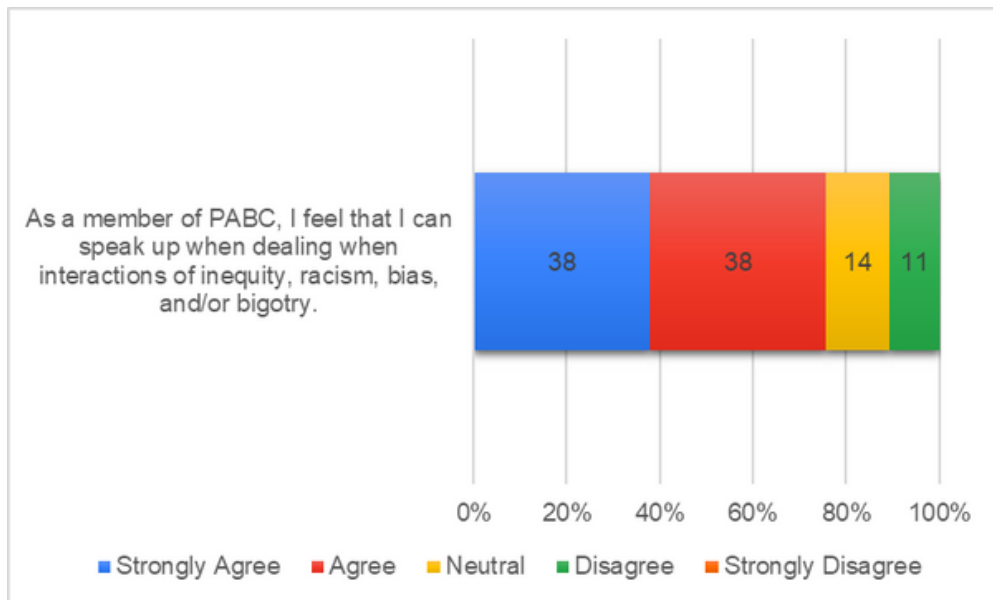


Figure 3e. Member Survey: Culture

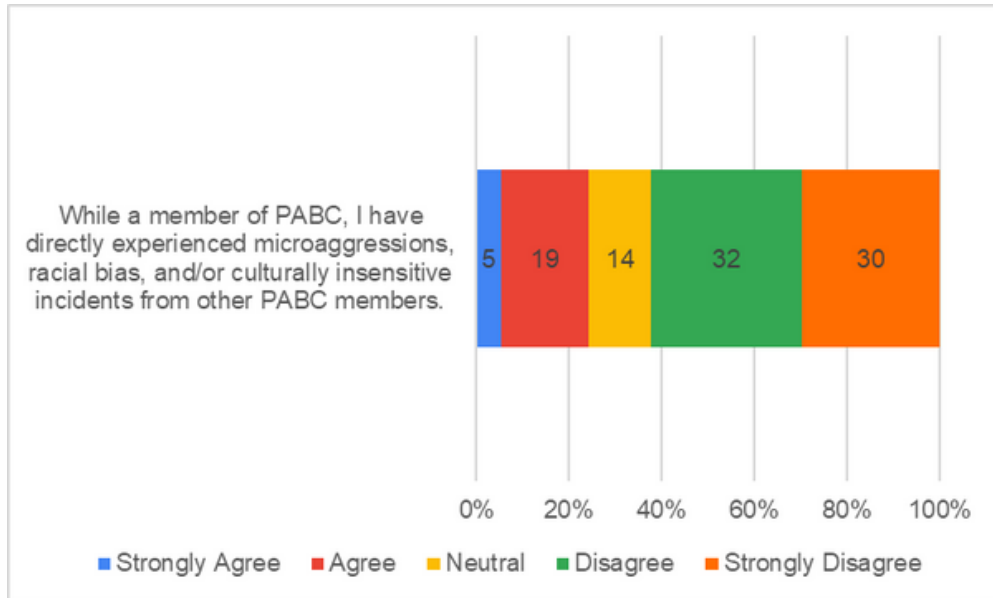


Figure 3f. Member Survey: Culture

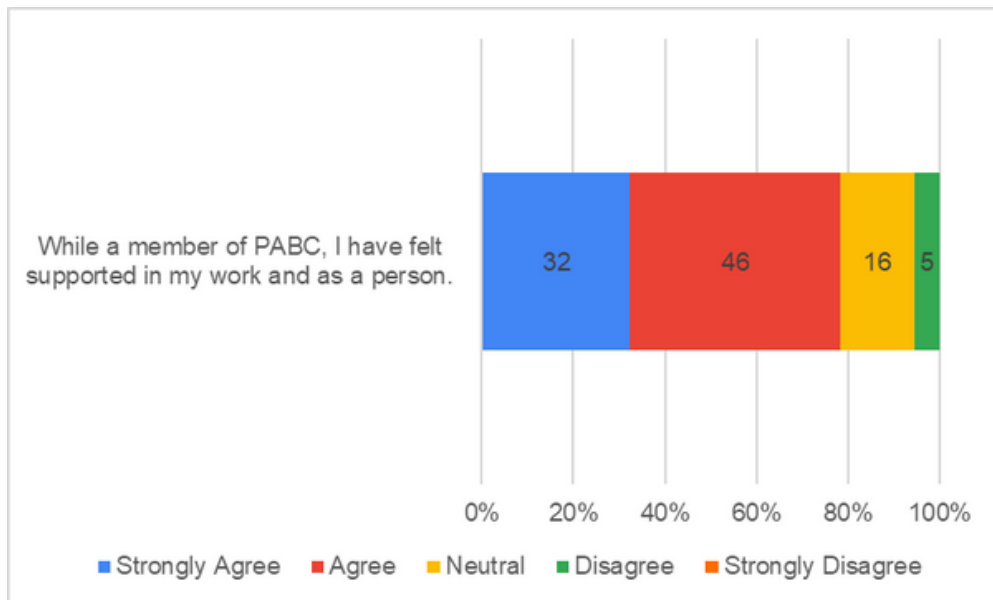


Figure 3g. Member Survey: Culture

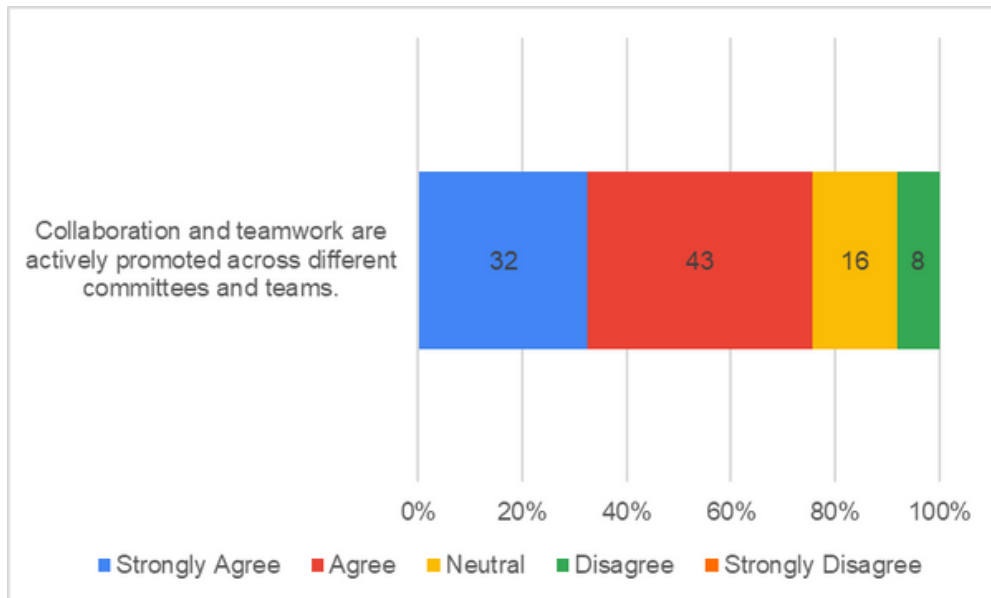


Figure 3h. Member Survey: Culture

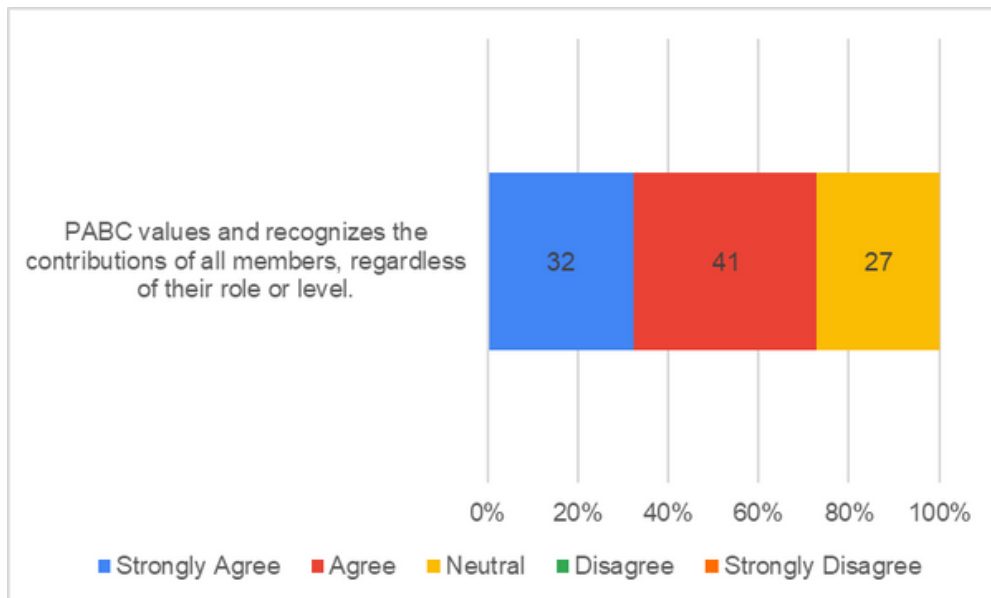
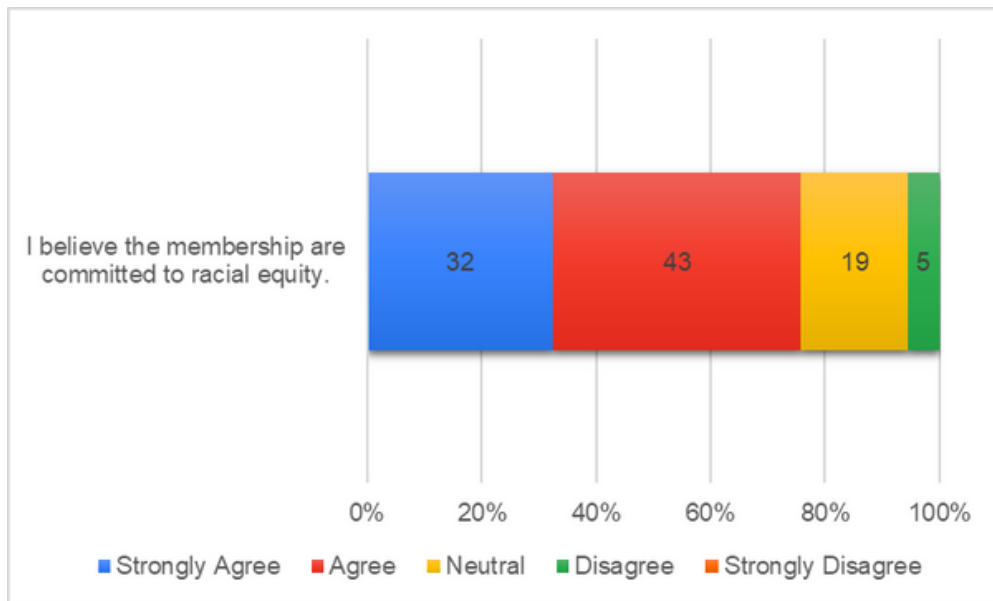


Figure 3i. Member Survey: Culture



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