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COQUAL RELEASES NEW FINDINGS FROM ITS BLACK EQUITY INDEX, A TOOL FOR COMPANIES TO MEASURE & ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

NEW YORK, November 30, 2023 — Coqual, a leading global think tank, today released a new white paper with the results of its second annual Black Equity Index (BEI), a benchmarking tool created for companies to drive measurable change, track true progress, and demonstrate their commitment to racial equity in the workplace.

Coqual finds most (86%) companies that participated in the BEI are concerned about the outcome of the US Supreme Court Affirmative Action case, and its implications for workplaces. Compared with last year, companies' involvement in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion conversation is diminishing from the public eye—with its risk of public and legal scrutiny—and some are shrinking their investment in DE&I teams.

“Despite the recent attacks on DE&I initiatives nationwide, companies have maintained ongoing efforts to improve equity in the workplace,” said Coqual CEO Lanaya Irvin. “Participating companies are committed to driving racial equity, transparency, and are dedicated to making meaningful strides in the workplace.”

Established in 2022, the BEI harnesses the power of data to create opportunity for Black professionals and measures an organization's efforts in six domains: accountability, advancement, representation, investment, sustainability, and public engagement. Informed by Coqual's decades of research and DE&I expertise, the white paper presents actions within each domain that companies can take in the complex pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

More than 40 companies participated in Coqual's second annual BEI survey, representing a diverse group of the corporate sector — both small and large public and private companies from industries such as healthcare, tech, banking, and retail. The number of participating companies nearly doubled from the BEI's inaugural year, indicating that corporate America is working hard to improve their DE&I efforts.

BEI KEY DATA & FINDINGS:

Representation: Building Black representation at every level of an organization is critical to moving DE&I efforts forward. Representation continues to lag and ranks as one of two BEI domains most in need of improvement.

- Fewer than 2 in 5 BEI participating companies have 10% or greater Black representation in their workforce.
- Only 7% of people managers—and only 3% of executives—are Black.
- Black professionals are more likely to be represented in HR and support functions. On average, 13% of support professionals and 12% of HR employees are Black.
- Half of BEI participating companies have surpassed 10% Black representation at the Board of Directors' level. Yet one in eight companies (13%) still do not have a single Black board member.

Accountability: Companies must hold their leaders accountable for the state of DE&I as they do for other business priorities. Transparency is transformative—and Coqual finds opportunities within the accountability domain for companies to be more vocal about the great equity work they are already undertaking.

- Nearly 7 in 10 (67%) participating companies include a DE&I-related focus in C-suite performance evaluations.
- Fewer companies (58%) hold leaders to this level of accountability by considering workforce diversity in performance evaluations.
- Even fewer still (44%) tie C-suite pay to progress on diversity metrics.

Investment: Companies must back their commitments with tangible resources. Deepening and sustaining investment in DE&I is integral to rooting out inequity and ensuring that inclusion is a top priority throughout the organization.

- Nearly all respondents (81%) have an organization-wide DE&I task force, council, or working group that is separate from their DE&I team.
- Of companies that provide anti-bias training, 5 out of 10 companies (55%) make it mandatory for senior leaders.

The full findings for the report can be found [here](#).

Coqual's 2023 BEI results indicate great progress, as well as great opportunity for increased investment. This is not the time to slow down. Coqual suggests the following data-based actions for leaders to use moving forward. As always, Coqual's corporate guidance is backed by decades of intersectional, deep-dive research and advisory work and thought leadership on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Recommendations include:

- **Study and champion sponsorship.** Get clear on the critical distinctions between mentorship and sponsorship, and work towards building a culture of sponsorship. Sponsorship programs should be monitored for effectiveness and refined accordingly.
- **Recruit from the top down.** Pay attention to your board, your executives, your people managers, and other key positions of power within your organization. If Black professionals are concentrated at entry level, and siloed in certain positions, the work is not done.
- **Disaggregate, always.** While overall representation numbers may seem positive, Black professionals may be overconcentrated in certain roles and lack access to others, as our BEI results show. Companies should aspire to reflect the regions in which they operate, and in certain parts of the country, Black representation far exceeds 14%.
- **Get high-tech.** BEI companies share that they are tapping into technology to help make their recruitment and hiring processes more equitable. Leverage the growing body of technology built to help the mission of diversity, equity, and inclusion—but of course, vet it critically and thoroughly.
- **Connect with Black youth.** In addition to college recruitment, invest in and improve representation long-term by partnering with schools, and grassroots and nonprofit programs that serve Black youth.

Companies can sign on to learn more and participate by emailing BEI@coqual.org

Methodology: The 2023 Black Equity Index is an annual survey that captures information on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts focused on Black professionals. This computer-assisted survey was fielded online between February and May of 2023. A total of 43 companies submitted completed forms. All information was provided by representatives from respective companies and relied on voluntary, self-report data. Activities associated with instrumentation, fielding, and analysis were conducted by Coqual, an independent, nonprofit research organization. Additionally, each company that submitted a completed interview received an individual company scorecard documenting their standing across each of the six BEI domains. Weighted calculations of domain totals were applied for a maximum index score of 180. Response items that were left blank were treated as missing or non-applicable. The findings presented here are descriptive in nature and do not attempt to make any inferences about the programming impact of participating companies, or their related outcomes.

About Coqual: Coqual (formerly Center for Talent Innovation) is a leading global, nonprofit think tank dedicated to helping leaders design diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces where every person belongs. Founded in 2004, Coqual provides in-depth research, thought leadership, and data-driven, actionable solutions for companies to address bias and barriers to inclusion for underrepresented populations in the workplace. Coqual's cutting-edge research and Advisory Services focus on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, veteran status and LGBTQ identities, and others—as well as the intersections among these groups. For more information, visit www.coqual.org.