

Shaping an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy for your organisation

Every care has been taken to ensure the information and language in this guide is as inclusive as possible, however where terminology changes as the world continues to learn to embrace diversity, we may update it periodically where necessary.



Introduction

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I); Equality, Diversity and inclusion; Diversity and Inclusion (D&I); or even Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) – whichever term you prefer to use, it's becoming more and more important for organisations to have dedicated strategies in place to ensure their business remains supportive and progressive. For the purpose of this guide, we'll use these terms interchangeably.

The progress made in this crucial focus area though, needs to be both meaningful and tangible – as your colleagues, candidates, clients, suppliers and stakeholders are looking for affirmative action, not just talk.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity – what's the difference?



Equality

Equality is where all employees have equality of opportunity and difference doesn't matter.

Source: The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion



Diversity

Diversity is where difference is recognised and emphasised, but not actively leveraged to drive organisational success.

Source: The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion



Inclusion

Inclusion is where difference is seen as a benefit to utilise; and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions.

Source: The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion



Equity

Equity extends the concept of equality to include the provision of varying levels of support based on individuals' specific needs in order to achieve fairness of treatment and equal opportunity of access.

Source: The Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management

Protected characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, there are 9 protected characteristics under which discrimination is protected by law. When referring to diversity and inclusion, it's important to remember that it covers all of these protected characteristics:



Age



Disability



Gender reassignment



Marriage or civil partnership



Pregnancy and maternity



Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic and national origin)



Religion or belief



Sex



Sexual orientation

In order to develop an inclusive workspace, all protected characteristics will need to be considered.



Diversity and NRL

Having been a trusted recruitment and workforce solutions partner for four decades, we've always been passionate about placing the right people into roles for our clients, and within our own teams. For us it's not about the walk of life these people come from, their gender nor their ethnicity, but solely about their skills and ability. Every individual brings something unique when they join a team and their perspective, experience and background help organisations to continue to evolve and be at the forefront leading their sectors.

We also understand that as a leading engineering recruitment provider, we have a platform to influence – and must use this to deliver positive change.

Like your organisation, we're also on our own journey because the work is never done when it comes to diversity. From recently securing the Association of Professional Staffing Company (APSCo)'s Inclusive+ Recruiter certification for NRL's Recruitment business, to signing the Armed Forces Covenant and Social Mobility Pledge – we're always looking for ways to continue to ensure we're as inclusive as possible. Today, we're delighted to share our insight and advice to help your organisation shape a diversity and inclusion strategy around your own goals.



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Knowing where to start your ED&I journey

If you haven't yet developed a dedicated strategy for your organisation, then the first step is to assess where you are already.



Understand your current workforce and challenges

It's important to take a step back and survey your workforce, which could be done on a formal or informal basis. Understanding your diversity split will provide an important piece in the puzzle, but you'll also need to critically assess your entire business.

Understand your current workforce mix

Both on a leadership level and within teams, a good starting point is to assess your current diversity split, to help you identify where your workforce is underrepresented.

Crucially, you'll also need to critically review your senior management team – is there wide enough representation for you to ensure you can provide an inclusive workplace?

“Executive teams with more than 30% women are more likely to outperform those with fewer or no women.”

McKinsey & Company, 2020,
Diversity wins: How inclusion matters ↗

Identify potential barriers

What job roles are in your business? Do any restrict what candidates could apply for those roles – such as the inability to accommodate someone less able bodied due to safety protocols?

Ideally anyone with the right skills, attitude and experience should be able to work in each of your roles, and where historically this hasn't always been possible, it's important to consider how this could be resolved in the future.



Ask your colleagues

You can gain valuable feedback and insight by asking your colleagues for their honest opinion on how inclusive your organisation is.

Provide the option to complete feedback anonymously, so colleagues are given the opportunity to really open up. But remember that whenever asking colleagues to share their opinion it's crucial to recognise and welcome all feedback whether positive or negative – and use it to engineer change.

If you're considering asking colleagues to provide equal opportunities data, such as their religion or sexual orientation, then it's important to make it clear that this is optional and colleagues do not need to declare it if they are not comfortable doing so. It helps to explain what you plan to do with the information and how sharing it will help to build a more inclusive workspace.

Remember to also check platforms such as Glassdoor as well to undertake social listening, to look for any feedback that might help to build up the picture.

Assess inclusivity in your workspaces

Where accommodations could easily be made for someone to work in an available role, how open are your teams to supporting this? Can traditional office roles now be undertaken at home for instance, which can often allow disabled people to work more comfortably.

“63% of people surveyed by PwC wanted a job where they felt they could truly be themselves.”

PwC, 2022, [UK Hope and Fears Survey](#) 





Assess your existing culture

Also consider the workspace environment from a cultural point of view - is the culture inclusive or would someone new struggle to fit in? If it's a traditionally male dominated environment, are practical things like bathrooms and communal areas accommodating to female workers?

It's a good idea to undertake an independent review – asking colleagues who don't normally work from that office or site to spend some time in the environment, to cast a critical eye on the day-to-day culture.

Review existing policies

Nowadays every organisation has standard policies in place to manage equal opportunities, flexible working and other important employment related activities. If it's been sometime since these were last updated, it's a good idea to do some research to see how other organisations are approaching their employment policies - to check yours are not counterproductive to the work you're trying to achieve to improve diversity and inclusion.

“Organisations with greater gender diversity are 1.4 times more likely to have sustained, profitable growth.”

PwC, 2018, **Diversity is the solution, not the problem** 





Create a working group, committee or taskforce

By bringing together a wide range of colleagues from across your organisation, you can ensure you have the best representation to undertake any necessary research and develop the right strategy for your business.

Where you partner with workforce solutions providers and recruitment agencies to support your employment activities, then it's worth considering the benefits of asking them to join your working group. They can bring with them their own insight gained from actively working with local candidates, as well as insight into how a diversity strategy can be effectively developed to engineer change.

“Ask yourself challenging questions and pay attention to the answers. Don’t gloss over difficult facts and conversations.”

CMI, 2020, *The Everyone Economy* 

Understanding the current employment landscape and challenges

Before you can decide what change looks like, it's crucial to identify what is possible... and what, despite the best intentions, may not be achievable in the short term.

Understand your local communities

Whether you have one office, or several locations, it's a good idea to do some research into the local area. What is the demographic split – by age, gender, ethnicity? Are there any local community initiatives that try and help people get into work? Are there any long-standing diversity challenges that would make it difficult to achieve a better balance in your workplace?

Take a data-led approach

Look for local data insight, which may be available from your local Government authority, or regional working groups for trade organisations you are a member of.

Complementing this data with insight from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), can help to provide a regional balance. Findings from the Census 2021 for example, can help to show the population living in the local area by gender and age.

VIEW CENSUS 2021 INSIGHT



Review your industry peers and competitors

Many organisations operating in a similar sector or service offering to you may already have developed a diversity strategy, so it's worth doing a little research online to check your findings are comparable.

The Government's gender pay gap reporting, is another good resource to understand the current workforce split within other organisations. Analyse the split for large regionally based businesses, both within your sector and in different industries.

This will help to understand if the skills are readily available in the local area, if your organisation is finding it challenging to attract a diverse workforce.

SEARCH FOR GENDER PAY GAP REPORTS

This in-depth review can help to identify underrepresented demographics and ensure that the areas you believe you need to focus on are inline with other organisations trying to achieve a similar goal.



Setting your strategy objectives

All good strategies need clearly defined objectives that will measure both the current landscape and what success looks like. An equity, diversity and inclusion strategy is no different, and careful consideration will need to be taken to ensure the right objectives can and will be progressed.

You've gathered the data and insight, and now have a comprehensive viewpoint on your current workforce, local challenges and opportunities, together with a solid industry comparison – now you're best placed to start building your objectives.

Keep them realistic

Draw on your research to help ensure your objectives can be effectively achieved. You'll want them to be responsive to what your colleagues say in internal feedback to demonstrate you're listening - so you may decide to focus your main objectives around the topics that were most important to them, with others maintained for monitoring purposes only. You may want to improve your representation within a specific ethnicity group, for example. But if data analysis indicates that there is a minority population locally, is this objective achievable?

Aim for objectives that you know will make a measurable difference to your organisation. These may be soft objectives, such as providing more inclusive representation across the business, or hard objectives – such as a pre-determined percentage increase within a specific demographic or protected characteristic.



Set short, medium and long term objectives

Consider the length of time you'll set these objectives over, and how you'll measure their performance in the interim.

Short term objectives may be to review and improve talent attraction activities, and ensure your organisation is effectively set-up to engage a more diverse workforce. Such as developing a hybrid or flexible working policy to reach a broader array of candidates.

Medium term objectives may be to identify the right recruitment partners to work with to develop more comprehensive recruitment campaigns to engage with a wider mix of candidates. Drawing on their expertise to support you.

Long term objectives may involve considerable change and investment within your organisation – such as setting up diversity focused training programmes to recruit new talent into the business and train them on the job. As well as working with your HR business leaders and recruitment supply chain to develop internal progression opportunities to invest in and support colleagues to upskill and boost their career development.

Consider the scope of your objectives

Where you engage recruitment agencies to supply temporary and contracted workers to support your business operations and projects, consider whether you want to share these objectives across your extended workforce.

Meet with your recruitment partners to share your strategy, and ask them to devise their own plans on how they will support your equity, diversity and inclusion objectives. Then set-up regular review sessions to monitor progress and identify any additional work needed.

“Working with your recruitment supply chain partners can help to drive diversity across your entire workforce, and identify future talent growth avenues.”

Emma Lowden, Regional Director, **NRL** 

Delivering your recruitment strategy

Once you've identified what change looks like and have the right smart objectives, you'll need to put your strategy down on paper and into action. The most effective strategies cannot be delivered in a silo however, so it's important to engage the right people at the right time – setting clear expectations and interim milestones to ensure the strategy remains on track.



Communicate your strategy

Once you've written out the strategy, be sure to develop a comprehensive communication plan to accompany it so everyone across your organisation understands what you want to achieve and can help to support its delivery. Include the working group in the communication activity, to act informally as ambassadors sharing updates and encouraging involvement across the workforce.

Consider engaging ways to communicate the strategy internally, as well as what materials you can provide to colleagues and teams to help them consider their own action plan to support the strategy. Material should be easily accessible and prominent, so channels such as a company intranet is a great place to develop a dedicated place from which to engage colleagues. Where possible, this should also be built in onboarding material for new starters. Consider what initiatives can be developed to improve inclusion within your organisation. A targeted internal communication plan is essential to ensure the strategy remains front of mind for colleagues.

You'll also need to carefully consider how the strategy will be communicated externally, ensuring your stakeholders understand your equity, diversity and inclusion objectives – together with regular updates on how you're progressing against these goals. Some organisations may consider including this within their annual report or could decide to develop specific material to track and monitor strategy progress.

Identify the right partner to help deliver your objectives

You'll need the right data insight and recruitment initiatives to deliver your equity, diversity and inclusion strategy, so it's worth considering partnering with a trusted expert.

A recruitment partner can ensure you're following industry best practice and give practical advice on how to effectively target and attract underrepresented demographics.

When appointed to centrally manage your recruitment supply chain, a recruitment partner can also engage your appointed suppliers on your behalf. Working with them on a 1-2-1 basis to ensure that the strategy is fully understood and any necessary changes are being put into action.

Organisations may also want to consider using their recruitment partner to undertake formal audits of their agencies. Reviewing how effectively they are implementing initiatives to deliver on equity, diversity and inclusion objectives and identifying improvement opportunities. Look for a recruitment partner with a formal diversity and inclusion qualification.



Linx, part of the NRL Group, provide dedicated workforce solutions to global businesses, supporting them to provide a central point and management and coordination across their entire supply chain, whilst providing the insight and guidance to effectively engineer positive change.

Consulting with key stakeholders across the client's business functions and recruitment supply chain to ensure everyone is fully engaged throughout the change management programme and effective measures are put in place to monitor the impact and value from recruitment process improvements.

Find out more about how the Linx team support clients by visiting linx-solutions.co.uk



Develop inclusive recruitment processes

To attract the right people, your internal recruitment processes will need to be reviewed to gauge their effectiveness, and improvements implemented to ensure all elements of the recruitment journey are inclusive – from the initial job advert to the diversity of the job interview panel.

It's a comprehensive undertaking, which a trusted recruitment partner will be able to support, but areas of focus will include:

- Reviewing the effectiveness of current advertising channels such as job boards, websites, and social media
- Investigating potential new advertising channels
- Reviewing the language used in job adverts and career campaigns to check for unconscious bias and unbalanced gender language
- Assessing the application process to check for accessibility and inclusion
- Reviewing how job interviews are undertaken, including their location, timings, and format

Where needed, additional training should then be identified to ensure everyone involved in recruitment, within your organisation, has the knowledge and skills to develop more inclusive processes before they are developed and communicated, with the right measures in place to ensure they're being implemented consistently.

Focus on shaping careers early

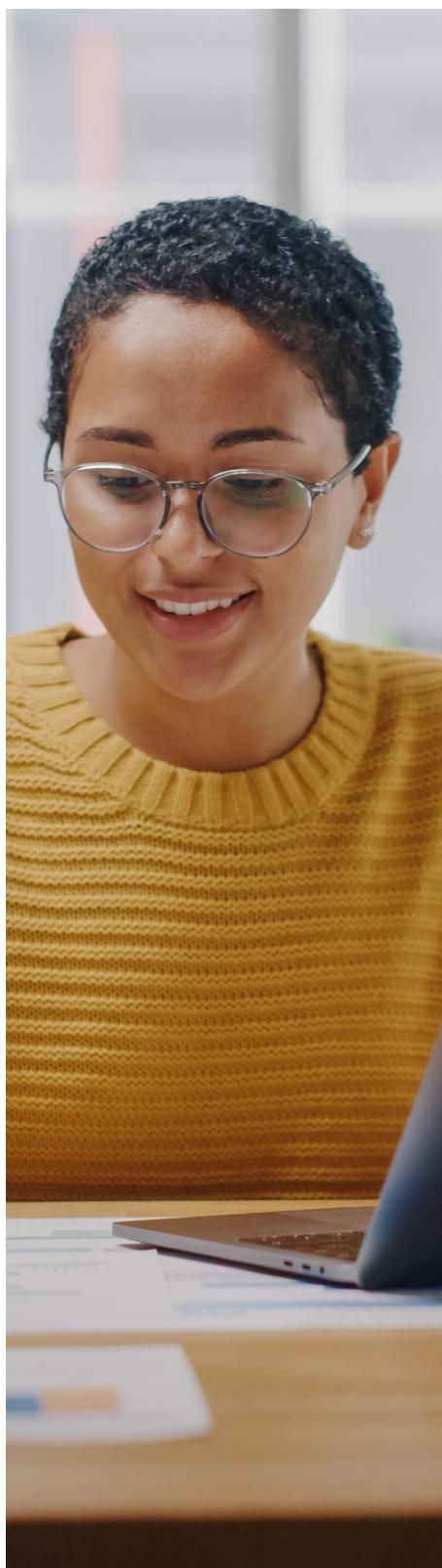
To effectively deliver against your inclusion objectives however, you may need to consider implementing initiatives that engage future candidates well before they begin job hunting.

To build sustainable change in underrepresented demographics, consider how you can engage with young people before they begin considering their future career. Looking for ways to challenge social mobility and raise awareness of the career opportunities that they would not usually consider due to geographical, social or cultural factors. This can be through open days, work experience, apprenticeships, school programmes and college activities.

This is where long-term objectives come into play, such as developing dedicated outreach programmes to provide work opportunities that will help to engage a more diverse demographic in the future.

Driving the right culture across your workplaces

For any strategy to remain effective however, an organisation's culture needs to be aligned. No matter how impressive an equity, diversity and inclusion strategy is, if the culture and values within the workforce and best practice isn't being implemented across your existing workforce, then it will be an upward battle and lack integrity.





Keep the conversation going

Consider setting up colleague-led forums to ensure effective two-way communication is captured from your workforce, helping you to identify what is working and what additional changes will be needed. HR representation within these forums will allow you to redefine internal policies and ensure that all viewpoints are considered.

Look for practical changes

Ask forum members to share their ideas on what they would like to see implemented within the workplace. It could be that a dedicated place of worship would be an important but easy improvement to make or permitting more flexible public holiday annual leave to accommodate religious festivals would be more meaningful to colleagues.

Consider formal accreditations for inclusion

If you're looking for a public and highly visible way to hold your organisation accountable for delivering against your inclusion objectives, then it's worth thinking about undertaking a formal accreditation. This provides a great opportunity for your strategy and recruitment processes to be externally audited and verified and can help you to stay on track.

There are a number of accreditations that can be considered, both nationally, internationally and within your industry sector. The NRL Group, for example, hold the Inclusive+ Recruiter accreditation with the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo), where colleagues have undertaken extensive ED&I training to further their knowledge. Our formal commitments include the Social Mobility Pledge and Armed Forces Covenant, demonstrating to our candidates and clients that we're continuously looking at how we can always be improving our inclusion and diversity effectiveness.





Tailored support and guidance along the way

We know that developing and implementing an equity, diversity and inclusion strategy can seem daunting, so we're always on hand to help organisations take those first steps. Supporting them along the way to ensure they're developing the right objectives for their organisations and have the processes and initiatives in place.

If you'd like to discuss developing a strategy for your organisation then get in touch with our Recruitment team at nrl.co.uk/branches

Start your ED&I Journey

- Understand your current workforce
- Identify employment challenges and local challenges and opportunities
- Undertake colleague surveys and research
- Review your workplace culture
- Assess existing policies
- Create a working group
- Research your local communities
- Review competitors and industry peers
- Engage your recruitment partner

Need additional support?

Contact our team to learn how we could assist your organisation.



enquiries@nrl.co.uk



nrl.co.uk/branches