



Australian Government

Workforce
Australia



FIXING THE SYSTEM NOT THE WOMEN

A beginner guide to creating
inclusive culture for women

Career
Revive

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Introduction and overview

Fairness and equity has quickly become one of the defining issues for organisations. In the post pandemic era, it is more important than ever that women have equal rights, responsibility and opportunity in society and in the workplace.

There are no grand gestures that will solve systemic problems of inequity and homogeneity in our workforces.

What does exist, are a series of evidence based interventions which, with persistence, can help unearth biases (unconscious or otherwise) which advantages or exclude others.

ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

The Toolkit is for organisations seeking to identify and disrupt bias across the talent lifecycle. The kit includes detailed guidance on:

- Using organisational data to identify and shape interventions and;
- Identifying and disrupting bias in attraction, recruitment and retention.

DEFINITIONS

One of the stuck patterns of inclusion work is the language that is used and applied, which influence perceptions and behaviours. The Toolkit defined equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as follows:

Diversity is about people. This includes their demographic differences, backgrounds, multiple identities, and their unique experiences, perspectives, knowledge, abilities, ideas and more.

It is not referencing specific characteristics of only the minority within a group of people or in society. Diversity is referencing all people and difference among us. Diversity is a mix of all of us.

Inclusion ensures that diversity of knowledge, perspectives, information and ideas are being used and applied when we collaborate, solve tasks, develop, innovate and make decisions.

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. On the other hand, equity recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. Equity encompasses a balance of power and correcting where inequality exists.



The case for equity and inclusion

The arguments for addressing EDI present differently across regions, organisations and time. The case for investment today, tends to fall into one of four buckets: the business case, the legal case, the fairness and equity case and the talent case.

1

THE BUSINESS CASE

The business case demonstrates the value that diversity, equity and inclusion brings to the company and its constituents.

Companies with higher gender diversity in executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than others.

People from diverse backgrounds alter the behaviours of the social majority in ways that 'lead to fewer instances of group think.'

3

THE FAIRNESS AND EQUITY CASE

The equity case is a value driven rationale founded on the belief that equity and inclusion is the right thing to do and regardless of their identity, everyone should have access to opportunities resulting in a more just, equal and fair society.

The cost of exclusion shows up in hundreds of studies as being harmful to individual performance, wellbeing and sense of purpose. Individuals who experience discrimination are more likely to suffer from stress, long term unemployment, social exclusion, outdated skills and mental health decline.

2

THE LEGAL CASE

Many organisations are driven by compliance with legislation which ensures adherence to government mandates.

In Australia, the Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their sex, gender identity, intersex status, sexual orientation, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities, because they are pregnant or might become pregnant or because they are breastfeeding. The maximum penalty for unlawful discrimination is \$66,600 per contravention for a corporation, and \$13,320 per contravention for an individual.

4

THE TALENT CASE

Skills shortages and labour market tightness is leading businesses to focus on equity, diversity and inclusion to tap into segments of the market that may be underutilised.

A report by consulting firm Korn Ferry found that by 2030, more than 85 million jobs could go unfilled because there are not enough people to take them.

Companies with a reputation for having a healthy culture, experienced lower than average turn over during the first six month of the great resignation.



Research by Georgetown University found that inclusion efforts grounded in anti-discrimination law, or the legal case, were more likely to promote equitable behaviours than emphasising the businesses case. This may be because the moral and historical grounding of the law legitimises Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) efforts with more authority, as compared with the more transient financial motivation.

Investment areas

There are a number of approaches that have been shown to improve EDI outcomes. While the focus areas below are by no means exhaustive, they will help you redesign organisations to prevent biased choices and change beliefs.

DATA DRIVEN APPROACHES

Using data to surface invisible issues and invest in areas accordingly.

See defining the challenge **P6**

SYSTEMIC INTERVENTIONS

Targeting efforts at debiasing systems, not people.

See debiasing systems on **P21**



We need to stop focusing exclusively on helping people to navigate systems that remain fundamentally unfair. We need to start changing the systems.

Joan. C Williams,
Distinguished Professor of Law and UC Hastings Foundation Chair and Director



When debiasing systems, the same principle always applies. Do whatever you can to take instinct out of consideration and rely on hard data.

Iris Bohnet,
Director of the Women and Public Policy



At times there may be a tendency to focus efforts on bringing women into organisations rather than considering the environment that they are entering. A more holistic approach may be to look at the end to end experience that women have in the workplace, paying close attention to those who stay, those who go, those who flourish and those who drop out of the workforce entirely.



DEFINING THE CHALLENGE



Diagnostic approach

The equity ecosystem

Metrics

Data driven approach

Whether you are starting at the beginning or seeking to renew your approach, it is important to begin with an honest assessment of businesses priorities, processes and culture. A data driven approach will help you to surface invisible issues and invest efforts accordingly.

The diagnostic below presents some of the levers that may be impacting your ability increase the presence and impact that women have in your organisation.

Reflective questions and sources of data have been included on pages 8-20 to help you to initiate the diagnostic process. Click on each slice to navigate through each lever.



Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



PRIORITIES

CONSIDER:

- How explicitly have we defined our gender and equity goals and commitments?
- Have we articulated goals which are specific, measurable, achievable and time bound?
- Have we established internal targets for gender representation and equity?
- Have we considered and designed for intersectionality?

- Have we clearly communicated why equity, diversity and inclusion is good for everyone, good for the bottom line, and good for our customers, partners and shareholders?

DATA POINTS:

- EDI Strategy / Equity Strategy or Policy.
- *Sample survey questions:* Our organisation is genuinely committed to equity and diversity.
Agree Disagree
- Employees of different ages are valued equally by our organisation.
Agree Disagree
- Our organisation demonstrates a commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities.
Agree Disagree

- Business Strategy.
- Annual Report.
- Strategic Planning Day Agenda.
- *Sample survey question:* I believe having a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture is critical to business success?
Agree Disagree

Metrics

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PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

CONSIDER:

- Do we offer leaders and managers effective supports to foster equitable and inclusive cultures and enhance diversity?
- Do we recognise and value the time and investment of sponsors and champions?
- Do we have a dedicated resource / working group to progress the EDI agenda?
- Do leaders provide strategic insight in relation to EDI?
- Are we recognising and rewarding the contribution of those who are progressing this work?

- Do we talk regularly about our commitment to gender inclusive workplaces?
- Do we share and celebrate success?

DATA POINTS:

- Existence of training opportunities for executive, managers and staff, including training for hiring managers and selection panels.
- Protected time / time codes for work that contributes to advancing the EDI agenda.
- Budget and resources for EDI activities, including EDI personnel.
- *Sample survey questions:* In my experience professional development opportunities have helped me to promote equity in our practice.
Agree Disagree
- In my experience, professional development opportunities help me promote culturally responsible practice in my team and amongst my peers.
Agree Disagree

- Existence of Employee Resource Groups.
- Evidence of an EDI communications plan / strategy.
- Review of communications materials and platforms.
- Recognition of cultural / religious celebrations.
- *Sample survey question:* We take time to recognise and celebrate the diversity of our workforce and team.
Agree Disagree

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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HIRING & SELECTION

CONSIDER:

- How frequently are we reviewing role descriptions, job advertisements and selection criteria?
- Are we offering flexible work by default in our advertisements?
- How clear have we made expectations around negotiations and salary?
- Might our definition of 'culture fit' exclude some members of society?
- Are we emphasising traits or attributes that may be exclusionary?

- Are we favouring certain talent sources over others based on historic success?
- How reliant are we as an organisation on referrals or hiring through alumni networks?
- Are we discounting individuals with career gaps in their CVs?
- Are we considering candidates from a broad variety of universities and non-traditional education backgrounds?

DATA POINTS:

- Review language, skills, qualifications and capabilities specified in job advertisements and focus only on minimum requirements.
- Review interview questions to determine whether questions may inadvertently be excluding some groups.

- Examine potential applicant pools – including the proportion of the pool with relevant qualifications and experience.
- Review CVs of successful candidates to see if there are common patterns among applicants who do progress to offer.
- *Sample survey questions:* Our organisation takes active measures to seek a diverse candidate pool when hiring.
Agree Disagree
- There is diversity among the people a job candidate will meet/see on their first visit to the company.
Agree Disagree

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



HIRING & SELECTION (CONTINUED)

CONSIDER:

- Is our candidate assessment process fair?
- Where possible, do we emphasise the importance of a diverse shortlist for recruitment?
- Have we structured our interview process with standard interview questions?
- Do we have diverse and balanced assessment panels?

DATA POINTS:

- Review interview processes with a view to determine where there is imbalance in assessment panels or decision makers.

- Are people from minority groups more likely to be recruited into lower paid roles than men?
- Do starting salaries differ according to gender, race, ability?

- Critically analyse the proportion of men and women hired by unit, department and seniority and starting salaries for similar roles.

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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LEADERSHIP

CONSIDER:

- Is there diversity in our leadership teams?
- Do our female and male leaders have the same level of influence and quality of experience?

DATA POINTS:

- Consider split by seniority, unit and department.
- *Sample survey questions:* Female leaders in our organisation have less influence than males at the same level.
Agree Disagree
(Provide an example of where this has occurred)
- Female leaders in our organisation do more 'housework' than our male colleagues.
Agree Disagree
(Provide an example of where this has occurred)
- Engage an independent party to audit meetings.
- Consider who is being spoken over and whose views are being recognised.

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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LEADERSHIP (CONTINUED)

CONSIDER:

- Do leaders use their positional power to promote diversity, equity and inclusion?

- How frequently do our leaders discuss equity?
- Do diversity and inclusion influence 'the way we do things around here'?

- Are there accountabilities in place to ensure our business, leaders and staff meet or strive towards EDI outcomes?

DATA POINTS:

- *Sample survey questions:* Leaders demonstrate the importance of inclusion through their actions.
Agree Disagree
- My supervisor handles matters related to diversity, equity and inclusion in a way I find satisfactory.
Agree Disagree

- Audit communications with a focus on frequency of reference to EDI including speeches, all staff emails and town halls.

- Codify EDI outcomes in performance frameworks and agreements.
- EDI is a standing item at Board meetings.
- Incentivise EDI outcomes, including bonuses, time, training to pursuit and advance work.

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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NORMS

CONSIDER:

- How would our people describe the culture in our organisation?
- Would they refer in a friend? A daughter?

DATA POINTS:

- *Sample survey questions:* At this company, employees appreciate others whose backgrounds, beliefs and experiences are different from their own.
Agree Disagree
- Employees of different backgrounds interact well in our organisation.
Agree Disagree
- I believe that anyone from any background could work here and feel safe and valued.
Agree Disagree

- What are past employees saying about us (either publicly or privately)

- Review Glassdoor for sentiment from previous employees.
- Review Exit Interview data for common trends.

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



NORMS (CONTINUED)

CONSIDER:

- What behaviours and actions are rewarded and encouraged?

DATA POINTS:

- *Sample survey questions:* What behaviours are rewarded and encouraged in our business? (Provide an example of where this has occurred)
- What (if anything) do we turn a blind eye to? (Provide an example of where this has occurred)

- Does our infrastructure reflect and cater to the diverse needs of our entire workforce? E.g. Safe spaces where people can express and store milk?
- Are there adequate bathroom and changing facilities for all of our people?

- Physical site review.
- *Sample survey question:* We have adequate facilities for all our staff? (Provide an example)

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



PROGRESSION

CONSIDER:

- Are we keeping track of who is promoted?
- Where possible, do promotion applications represent the diversity of the grades below?
- Are diverse people making it through short listing process and assessment rounds?
- Do men and women receive different performance scores on average?

DATA POINTS:

- Monitor promotion by seniority structure, job types and department.
- Break down performance scores by grade and job, particularly if scores vary between groups.
- Review self-assessments for imbalance across genders.
- *Sample survey questions:* I aspire to progress through the organisation.
Agree Disagree
- There is a visible career development path for all employees hire.
Agree Disagree
- It is clear some people work harder than their colleagues to get the same level of recognition.
Agree Disagree
(Please provide an example of where you have seen this occur)

- How are leaders using their influence to help others advance?
- If so, who is benefitting?

- *Sample survey question:* Our leaders use their influence to advance individuals with similar traits and characteristics to their own.
Agree Disagree

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



PROGRESSION (CONTINUED)

CONSIDER:

- Do we have mechanisms in place to recognise and disrupt bias in promotions?
- Do we have a person who's responsibility it is to monitor equity and diversity in hiring decisions?
- Does this person, or the leadership team, hold senior staff and hiring managers to account for hiring decisions?
- Are we using a consistent grading rubric to assess staff?
- How prevalent are 'tap on the shoulder' promotions?
- Do we follow up with staff if they are unsuccessful?
- Are we supporting part time employees to progress?
- Are we more likely to support staff who are physically 'on site' to progress over those who work more flexibly?

- Are we monitoring who has access to certain assignments and how these are allocated?
- Do people get stuck at certain level?

DATA POINTS:

- Monitor promotion by seniority structure, job types and department.
- Examine part-time workers by grade and occupation.
- *Sample survey question:* Employees of different backgrounds are encouraged to apply for higher positions.
Agree Disagree

- Review training budgets and stretch opportunities by gender and flexible work arrangements.
- Examine gender balance across seniority structure, job types and departments.

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

While reviews can be conducted internally, organisations may also benefit from engaging an external reviewer.



RETENTION

CONSIDER:

- Do we have a culture of absenteeism?

- Are men and women leaving our organisation at different rates?
- When women get to a certain level do they leave?

- Are we retaining staff following parental leave?
- Are there patterns among those who are leaving?

- What is prompting people to stay in our organisation?

DATA POINTS:

- Measure uptake of sick leave by function or unit.

- Monitor per centage of men and women leaving the organisation each year by seniority level. Make sure to look at the proportion of women leaving relevant to the proportion of women in that grade.

- Review per centage of women who have left the organisation following parental leave.

- *Sample survey question:* What factors contribute to your remaining in our organisation?
(Please provide an example)

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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POLICIES

CONSIDER:

- Do we have differences in compensation which cannot be explained by seniority and ratings?
- Are women getting paid less than men with similar performance evaluations?
- How much is compensation reliant on informal and private negotiation?
- Are men and women doing comparable work receiving different bonuses, pay for unsociable hours, or overtime.

- Do we offer supports to women who have been victims of domestic violence?
- Do we have mechanisms in place to support people to anonymously report acts of intimidation, harassment or abuse?

- Have we formalised a flexible work policy and / or approach?
- Do we have equal access to parental leave for men and women?
- How does our uptake vary by unit and business area?
- Have we considered different types of flexibility for frontline workers?

DATA POINTS:

- Examine whether men and women doing comparable work receive different bonuses, pay for unsociable hours, or overtime.
- Compare starting salaries by gender within comparable roles.

- *Sample survey questions:* I am aware of and understand the procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination and/or bias in the workplace.
Agree Disagree
- I believe the company will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination and/or bias.
Agree Disagree

- Review uptake of flexible work arrangements, parental leave, including by gender.
- *Sample survey question:* I feel supported to take up flexible work.
Agree Disagree

Metrics

To identify areas for investment and improvement in your organisation, consider the questions and data points below.

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EVALUATION

CONSIDER:

- Do we have credible evidence to demonstrate that an EDI issue needs to be addressed?
- Are we clear on the extent in which gender equality is institutionalised into our policies, procedures and practices?

- How frequently are we reviewing progress against our goals?

- Are we being transparent about our progress and pain points?

- Do we have dashboards in place to analyse trends at a unit level?

- How are we ensuring continuous improvement?
- Do we have mechanisms in place to gather and monitor qualitative and quantitative data?

DATA POINTS:

- Review current data collected by human resource systems, including: workforce demographics, recruitment, hiring and selection; training and development, promotion, retention and termination.
- Participatory methods including anonymous surveys, focus groups and in depth interviews to facilitate recognition of all stakeholder perspectives.

- Evidence of regular reporting to the Board and Senior leaders.
- Evidence of external auditing to identify gaps.

- Regular public reporting on progress.
- Internal conversations which are data driven.

- Evidence of reporting dashboards and evaluation mechanisms.

- Evidence that the organisation is measuring quantity of women and quality of experience (including through regular surveys and round tables.)



DEBIASING SYSTEMS

The organisational ecosystem

Managing bias across the talent lifecycle

Research shows that bias exists in every corner of an organisation, including hiring, performance, evaluations, meetings, sponsorship, promotion and pay. Left unchecked, bias can also shape a company or industry culture and norms.

Naming the bias and developing mitigation strategies is critical to creating more inclusive, diverse, and equitable organisations.

The map below, shows common types of bias and how they manifest across the talent lifecycle. While the explicit focus of this interactive map is gender bias, biases are not gendered by nature. Unconscious racism, ageism, ableism and sexism impacts all people within your organisation.

Click through the map below to see how common forms of bias materialise across the talent lifecycle. The map may be used to spark a conversation about organisational bias and steps to disrupt and mitigate.





