

# BREAKING BARRIERS

## Inclusion Toolkit

SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

**BREAKING BARRIERS EVENT**

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## What is it?

The Breaking Barriers Inclusion Toolkit helps organisations promote diversity, accessibility, and inclusion. It focuses on key concepts such as diversity, equity, and accessibility to create an inclusive environment that boosts innovation, employee satisfaction, and organizational performance while also promoting social responsibility.

## Here is how you can use the toolkit:

1. Assess current practices using the Inclusion Assessment Checklist.
2. Develop a strategy with clear goals and policies.
3. Provide comprehensive training.
4. Foster inclusive leadership and communication.

By using these tools and resources, organisations can overcome challenges like unconscious bias and resistance to change, reap benefits such as enhanced well-being and innovation, and continuously improve by monitoring and celebrating diversity.

# Introduction to Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities, feel respected, valued, and supported within an organization or community. It goes beyond mere representation and involves creating an environment where everyone can fully participate, contribute, and thrive.

## Key Concepts and Definitions

### Diversity:

- The range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status.

### Inclusion:

- The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity. Inclusion ensures that diverse individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued for their unique perspectives and experiences.

### Equity:

- The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all individuals, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

### Accessibility:

- The design of products, devices, services, or environments to ensure they are usable by all people, including those with disabilities.

## The Importance of Inclusion

### Enhances Innovation and Creativity:

- Diverse and inclusive teams bring different perspectives and ideas, fostering innovation and creativity.

### Improves Employee Satisfaction and Retention:

- An inclusive workplace where individuals feel valued and respected leads to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates.

### Strengthens Organizational Performance:

- Organizations with inclusive cultures are more likely to outperform their peers, attract top talent, and better serve diverse markets.

### Promotes Social Responsibility:

- Embracing inclusion demonstrates a commitment to social justice and equality, enhancing the organization's reputation and community impact.

## Components of an Inclusive Environment

### Inclusive Leadership:

- Leaders who model inclusive behaviour, promote diversity, and create a culture where all voices are heard and valued.

### Policies and Practices:

- Policies that support diversity and inclusion, such as anti-discrimination policies, flexible work arrangements, and inclusive recruitment practices.

### Training and Development:

- Ongoing education and training on diversity, inclusion, and unconscious bias for all employees.

### Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

- Groups formed around shared characteristics or life experiences that provide support, networking, and advocacy within the organization.

### Inclusive Communication:

- Use of inclusive language and communication practices that ensure all employees can understand and participate fully.

### Accessibility:

- Ensuring that physical and digital environments are accessible to all, including individuals with disabilities.

## Steps to Foster Inclusion

### 1. Assess the Current State:

- Conduct assessments and surveys to understand the current level of diversity and inclusion within the organization.

### 2. Develop a Strategy:

- Create a comprehensive inclusion strategy with clear goals, actions, and accountability measures.

### 3. Implement Inclusive Policies:

- Develop and enforce policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### 4. Provide Training:

- Offer regular training on diversity, inclusion, cultural competency, and unconscious bias.

### 5. Foster Inclusive Leadership:

- Train and hold leaders accountable for creating and maintaining an inclusive culture.

### 6. Encourage Employee Participation:

- Involve employees in diversity and inclusion initiatives and decision-making processes.

### 7. Measure Progress:

- Regularly monitor and report on the progress of inclusion efforts, using both quantitative and qualitative data.

### 8. Celebrate Diversity:

- Recognize and celebrate diverse cultures, perspectives, and achievements within the organization.

## Challenges to Inclusion

### Unconscious Bias:

- Implicit attitudes or stereotypes that affect understanding, actions, and decisions unconsciously.

### Resistance to Change:

- Some individuals may resist efforts to change the status quo, fearing loss of privilege or power.

### Lack of Awareness:

- Limited understanding of the importance and benefits of inclusion can hinder progress.

### Structural Barriers:

- Existing systems and structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion.

## Benefits of Inclusion

### For Employees:

- Enhanced sense of belonging and well-being
- Greater opportunities for career advancement
- Increased job satisfaction and engagement

### For Organizations:

- Improved innovation and problem-solving
- Greater ability to attract and retain top talent
- Enhanced reputation and brand loyalty

### For Society:

- Promotion of social justice and equality
- Reduction of disparities and discrimination
- Strengthening of community and societal bonds

# Assessing Your Organization

## Inclusion Assessment Checklist

An Inclusion Assessment Checklist is a tool designed to help organisations evaluate their current level of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across various aspects of their operations.

This comprehensive checklist can be used to identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement in creating an inclusive workplace. Here's a detailed Inclusion Assessment Checklist:

### 1. Organizational Commitment and Leadership

#### Leadership Commitment:

- Senior leaders demonstrate a commitment to DEI.
- DEI goals and values are clearly communicated by leadership.

#### Strategic Planning:

- DEI is integrated into the organization's mission, vision, and strategic plans.
- There are clear, measurable DEI goals and objectives.

#### Accountability:

- DEI performance metrics are included in leadership evaluations.
- There is a designated DEI officer or task force responsible for driving initiatives.

### 2. Recruitment and Hiring Practices

#### Inclusive Job Descriptions:

- Job descriptions use inclusive language and avoid biased terms.
- Essential and desirable criteria are clearly differentiated.

#### Diverse Candidate Pools:

- Recruitment strategies actively seek to attract diverse candidates.

- Partnerships with organisations that support underrepresented groups are established.

#### Bias-Free Hiring Process:

- Interview panels are diverse.
- Structured interview guides are used to minimize bias.

### 3. Workplace Culture and Environment

#### Inclusivity:

- Employees feel valued and included regardless of their background.
- There are safe spaces for employees to discuss DEI issues.

#### Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

- ERGs are supported and encouraged.
- ERGs have the resources and executive sponsorship needed to thrive.

#### Communication:

- Internal communication is inclusive and accessible to all employees.
- There are regular updates on DEI initiatives and progress.

### 4. Training and Development

#### DEI Training:

- All employees receive regular training on DEI, unconscious bias, and cultural competency.
- Training programs are tailored to different roles and levels within the organization.

#### Leadership Development:

- Leaders receive specific training on inclusive leadership.
- There are opportunities for mentoring and sponsorship for underrepresented groups.

## 5. Policies and Procedures

### Non-Discrimination Policies:

- There is clear, enforced policies against discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- Policies are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect best practices.

### Equitable Practices:

- Pay equity audits are conducted regularly to ensure fairness.
- Flexible work arrangements and accommodations are available.

### Complaint and Resolution Mechanisms:

- There are accessible, confidential channels for reporting DEI-related issues.

## 6. Accessibility

### Physical Accessibility:

- The physical workspace is accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- There are accommodations for employees with different physical needs.

### Digital Accessibility:

- Digital tools and resources are accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities.
- Regular audits are conducted to ensure digital accessibility compliance.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

### Data Collection:

- Demographic data is collected and analysed to understand workforce diversity.
- Employee surveys include questions about inclusion and belonging.

### Progress Tracking:

- DEI metrics are regularly reviewed and reported.

- There are mechanisms in place to track the impact of DEI initiatives.

#### Feedback Mechanisms:

- Employees have opportunities to provide feedback on DEI efforts.
- Feedback is acted upon and leads to visible changes.

## 8. External Engagement

#### Community Involvement:

- The organization participates in community initiatives that promote DEI.
- Partnerships with diverse organisations and advocacy groups are maintained.

#### Supplier Diversity:

- There is a commitment to working with diverse suppliers and vendors.
- Supplier diversity goals are set and tracked.

# Developing an Inclusion Strategy

## Step-by-Step Guide to Developing a Comprehensive Inclusion Strategy

### 1. Establish Leadership Commitment:

Secure senior leaders' commitment to DEI and communicate its importance. Appoint a DEI officer or task force and ensure leaders model inclusive behaviour and practices.

### 2. Conduct an Initial Assessment:

Evaluate the current state of diversity and inclusion through surveys, focus groups, and data analysis. Identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement using tools like the Inclusion Assessment Checklist.

### 3. Define Clear Goals and Objectives:

Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) DEI goals aligned with the organization's strategic objectives. Address gaps and opportunities identified in the assessment.

### 4. Develop an Action Plan:

Create a detailed action plan with initiatives, timelines, and responsible parties. Prioritize actions with significant impact and ensure they are practical and achievable.

### 5. Implement Inclusive Policies and Practices:

Review and revise policies to promote inclusivity, covering non-discrimination, equitable practices, and accessibility. Communicate these policies clearly to all employees.

### 6. Provide Training and Development:

Offer regular DEI training, including unconscious bias and cultural competency training. Provide leadership development programs focused on inclusive practices, tailored to different roles and levels.

### 7. Foster an Inclusive Culture:

Encourage the formation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and promote open dialogue about DEI issues. Recognize and celebrate diversity through events and inclusive communication.

## 8. Monitor and Measure Progress:

Establish key metrics to track DEI initiatives' effectiveness and regularly review and report progress. Use both quantitative and qualitative data, and adjust the strategy based on feedback and outcomes.

## 9. Communicate and Celebrate Successes:

Share progress, achievements, and success stories with the organization. Recognize and reward contributions to DEI efforts, using multiple communication channels to highlight positive impacts.

## 10. Foster Continuous Improvement:

Regularly update the inclusion strategy to reflect new insights and best practices. Encourage ongoing feedback and involvement from employees and stakeholders, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

# Action Plan Template

## 1. Leadership Commitment

- Action: Secure senior leadership commitment and appoint a DEI officer or task force.
- Timeline: Immediate
- Responsible Parties: Executive team, DEI officer

## 2. Assessment

- Action: Conduct surveys and focus groups to assess current DEI state.
- Timeline: Month 1
- Responsible Parties: HR, DEI task force

## 3. Goal Setting

- Action: Define SMART DEI goals based on assessment findings.
- Timeline: Month 2
- Responsible Parties: DEI officer, HR

## 4. Action Plan Development

- Action: Create detailed initiatives, timelines, and assign responsibilities.
- Timeline: Month 3
- Responsible Parties: DEI task force, department heads

## 5. Policy Implementation

- Action: Review, revise, and communicate inclusive policies.
- Timeline: Months 3-4
- Responsible Parties: HR, legal department

## 6. Training and Development

- Action: Roll out DEI training and leadership development programs.
- Timeline: Months 4-6, ongoing
- Responsible Parties: HR, training department

## 7. Inclusive Culture Initiatives

- Action: Support ERGs and promote open DEI dialogue.
- Timeline: Ongoing
- Responsible Parties: DEI officer, ERG leaders

## 8. Progress Monitoring

- Action: Establish and track DEI metrics, report progress.
- Timeline: Quarterly
- Responsible Parties: DEI officer, data analytics team

## 9. Communication and Recognition

- Action: Share DEI successes and recognize contributors.
- Timeline: Ongoing
- Responsible Parties: Internal communications, HR

## 10. Continuous Improvement

- Action: Update DEI strategy and encourage feedback.
- Timeline: Annually
- Responsible Parties: DEI task force, all employees

# Inclusive Leadership

## Characteristics of Inclusive Leaders:

### 1. Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

**Description:** Demonstrates a strong commitment to DEI values and integrates them into the organization's mission and goals.

**Example:** Actively supports DEI initiatives and sets clear DEI objectives.

### 2. Awareness of Bias

**Description:** Recognizes personal and systemic biases and works to mitigate their impact.

**Example:** Participates in unconscious bias training and encourages the same for their team.

### 3. Openness to Different Perspectives

**Description:** Values diverse viewpoints and actively seeks out and listens to different perspectives.

**Example:** Encourages team members to share their unique insights and considers these viewpoints in decision-making.

### 4. Cultural Competence

**Description:** Understands and respects different cultural backgrounds and practices.

**Example:** Engages in continuous learning about different cultures and adapts communication styles accordingly.

### 5. Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

**Description:** Shows empathy and emotional intelligence by understanding and addressing the feelings and concerns of others.

**Example:** Responds sensitively to employees' experiences and fosters a supportive work environment.

## 6. Accountability

**Description:** Holds themselves and others accountable for promoting and maintaining an inclusive environment.

**Example:** Includes DEI metrics in performance evaluations and addresses non-inclusive behaviour.

## 7. Collaboration and Empowerment

**Description:** Fosters a collaborative environment where all team members feel empowered to contribute.

**Example:** Delegates responsibilities equitably and encourages team members to take on leadership roles.

## 8. Transparency and Integrity

**Description:** Communicates openly and honestly about DEI goals, progress, and challenges.

**Example:** Regularly updates the team on DEI initiatives and transparently shares outcomes.

## 9. Flexibility and Adaptability

**Description:** Adapts to changing circumstances and feedback to improve DEI efforts continuously.

**Example:** Revises strategies and approaches based on new insights and team feedback.

## 10. Strategic Vision

**Description:** Aligns DEI initiatives with the broader organizational strategy to drive long-term success.

**Example:** Develops a DEI roadmap that supports overall business objectives and growth.

# Creating an Accessible Environment

## Physical Accessibility Guidelines

### Entrances and Exits

- Ensure all entrances and exits are wheelchair accessible.
- Install ramps and automatic doors where necessary.

### Pathways and Navigation

- Keep hallways and pathways clear of obstacles.
- Provide clear signage with large, high-contrast text.

### Restrooms

- Provide accessible restrooms with grab bars and enough space for manoeuvring.
- Ensure sinks, soap dispensers, and hand dryers are within reach for wheelchair users.

### Seating Arrangements

- Designate wheelchair-accessible seating in various locations.
- Offer adjustable-height desks and workstations.

### Emergency Procedures

- Implement accessible emergency exits and alarms.
- Provide evacuation plans that include accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

### Best Practices:

- Regularly audit physical spaces for accessibility compliance.
- Involve individuals with disabilities in the planning and evaluation process.

## Digital Accessibility Guidelines

### Website Design

- Use descriptive alt text for images and non-text content.
- Ensure compatibility with screen readers and other assistive technologies.

### Text and Colour

- Use high-contrast colours for text and backgrounds.
- Provide options to adjust font size and type.

## Navigation

- Ensure keyboard navigability for all interactive elements.
- Use clear, descriptive headings and links.

## Multimedia Content

- Provide captions and transcripts for all audio and video content.
- Offer sign language interpretation for key videos.

## Forms and Interactive Elements

- Label all form fields clearly and provide error messages that are easy to understand.
- Ensure interactive elements are accessible via keyboard and screen readers.

## Best Practices:

- Conduct regular accessibility testing with tools like WAVE or Axe.
- Follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.

## Event Accessibility Guidelines

### Venue Selection

- Choose venues that are fully accessible, including entrances, seating, and restrooms.
- Ensure accessible parking and transportation options.

### Communication Access

- Provide sign language interpreters and real-time captioning services.
- Offer materials in alternative formats (e.g., braille, large print).

### Assistive Listening Devices

- Provide assistive listening devices for attendees with hearing impairments.
- Ensure the availability of audio description services for visual content.

### Service Animals

- Allow service animals in all areas of the event venue.
- Provide relief areas for service animals.

## Event Registration

- Include accessibility questions in the registration process to identify needs in advance.
- Offer various ways to register (online, phone, mail).

## Best Practices:

- Train staff and volunteers on accessibility and inclusivity.
- Gather feedback from attendees with disabilities to improve future events.

# Training and Education

## Overview for Inclusion Training

Inclusion training is a crucial step in fostering a diverse, equitable, and welcoming workplace. This training aims to equip all employees with the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary to contribute to an inclusive environment.

### 1. Understanding Inclusion and Diversity

#### Objective:

- Define key concepts such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Explain the importance of these concepts in the workplace.

#### Content:

- Definitions: Understand the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Importance: Learn why an inclusive workplace is beneficial for everyone and how it enhances creativity, productivity, and employee satisfaction.

#### Activity:

- Group discussions on personal experiences with diversity and inclusion.

### 2. Recognizing and Mitigating Unconscious Bias

#### Objective:

- Identify unconscious biases and their impact on decision-making and interactions.
- Learn strategies to mitigate these biases.

#### Content:

- What is Unconscious Bias: Explore how biases form and their effects on behaviour.
- Impact on Workplace: Understand how biases can influence hiring, promotions, and workplace dynamics.
- Mitigation Strategies: Learn practical techniques to counteract biases.

#### Activity:

- Implicit Association Test (IAT) and group reflection on results.

### 3. Inclusive Communication

#### Objective:

- Develop skills for inclusive communication that respects and values diverse perspectives.

#### Content:

- Language Matters: The impact of inclusive vs. exclusive language.
- Active Listening: Techniques to ensure all voices are heard.
- Feedback: How to give and receive feedback in an inclusive manner.

#### Activity:

- Role-playing exercises to practice inclusive communication techniques.

### 4. Creating an Inclusive Culture

#### Objective:

- Understand the elements of an inclusive culture and how to contribute to it.

#### Content:

- Culture of Belonging: Building a workplace where everyone feels valued.
- Support Systems: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and other support mechanisms.
- Celebrating Diversity: Recognizing and celebrating diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

#### Activity:

- Brainstorming session on initiatives to enhance workplace inclusion.

### 5. Allyship and Advocacy

#### Objective:

- Learn how to be an effective ally and advocate for colleagues from underrepresented groups.

#### Content:

- What is Allyship?: Understanding the role and responsibilities of an ally.
- Advocacy in Action: Practical ways to support colleagues and promote inclusion.

- Challenging Inequity: Strategies to address and challenge inequities and exclusion.

**Activity:**

- Scenario-based discussions on how to act as an ally in various situations.

## 6. Implementing Inclusive Practices

**Objective:**

- Develop actionable steps to implement inclusive practices in daily work.

**Content:**

- Inclusive Policies: Overview of workplace policies that support inclusion.
- Best Practices: Day-to-day practices that foster an inclusive environment.
- Continuous Improvement: Importance of ongoing learning and adaptation.

**Activity:**

- Creating a personal action plan for implementing inclusive practices.

# Promoting Cultural Competency

## Cultural Competency:

Cultural competency is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. It involves being aware of one's own cultural worldview, gaining knowledge of diverse cultural practices and perspectives, and developing skills for effective cross-cultural communication.

## Key Practices for Promoting Cultural Competency:

### Education and Training:

- Provide regular training on cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Include topics on global cultural norms, values, and communication styles.

### Self-Assessment:

- Encourage self-assessment of personal biases and cultural assumptions.
- Use tools like the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to identify unconscious biases.

### Diverse Interactions:

- Foster opportunities for employees to engage with diverse groups.
- Promote multicultural events and inclusive team-building activities.

### Inclusive Policies:

- Implement and enforce policies that support cultural diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure all workplace practices are culturally sensitive and inclusive.

### Ongoing Learning:

- Encourage continuous learning about diverse cultures and perspectives.
- Provide resources such as books, articles, and webinars on cultural competency.
- By promoting cultural competency, organisations can create a more inclusive environment where all employees feel respected, valued, and empowered to contribute their best.

## Additional Resources

### Australian Organizations and Networks Dedicated to Inclusion

#### Diversity Council Australia (DCA)

- **Description:** An independent, not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- **Website:** [Diversity Council Australia](#)

#### Australian Network on Disability (AND)

- **Description:** A national, membership-based organization that supports businesses to advance the inclusion of people with disability.
- **Website:** [Australian Network on Disability](#)

#### Pride in Diversity

- **Description:** Australia's first and only national not-for-profit employer support program for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion.
- **Website:** [Pride in Diversity](#)

#### Reconciliation Australia

- **Description:** An independent, not-for-profit organization promoting reconciliation between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Website:** [Reconciliation Australia](#)

#### National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

- **Description:** The national peak body representing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.
- **Website:** [NACCHO](#)

#### Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH)

- **Description:** A national organization promoting the health and well-being of migrant and refugee women.
- **Website:** [MCWH](#)

## Women on Boards (WOB)

- **Description:** An organization supporting women to access board and leadership roles.
- **Website:** [Women on Boards](#)

## People with Disability Australia (PWDA)

- **Description:** A national disability rights and advocacy organization.
- **Website:** [PWDA](#)

## Legal and Compliance Resources

These resources offer guidance, tools, and compliance information to help organisations navigate legal requirements and promote inclusive practices in Australia.

### 1. Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

- **Description:** Australia's national human rights institution, promoting and protecting human rights.
- **Website:** [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

### 2. Fair Work Ombudsman

- **Description:** Provides information and advice about Australia's workplace rights and rules, including discrimination and equal opportunity.
- **Website:** [Fair Work Ombudsman](#)

### 3. Disability Discrimination Legal Service (DDLS)

- **Description:** Provides free legal services in disability discrimination law to people with disabilities in Victoria.
- **Website:** [DDLS](#)

### 4. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)

- **Description:** Provides resources and compliance information to help organisations promote and improve gender equality in the workplace.
- **Website:** [WGEA](#)

### 5. Australian Network on Disability (AND)

- **Description:** Offers resources and guidance on disability inclusion, including legal compliance and best practices.
- **Website:** [Australian Network on Disability](#)

## 6. Diversity Council Australia (DCA)

- **Description:** Provides research, tools, and resources to assist organisations in achieving diversity and inclusion goals, including legal compliance.
- **Website:** [Diversity Council Australia](#)

## 7. Reconciliation Australia

- **Description:** Offers guidance on legal and compliance aspects related to reconciliation and Indigenous employment.
- **Website:** [Reconciliation Australia](#)

## 8. Office of the eSafety Commissioner

- **Description:** Provides resources and information on preventing online harassment and promoting online safety, which is crucial for inclusive environments.
- **Website:** [eSafety Commissioner](#)