



Module 4 (Part 1)

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture

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Discover the DARE Modules Learning Pathway:

Enjoy our learning blocks designed to help SMEs build diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. Unlock the power of how DEI to drive the sustainable success of your company. Our practical and interactive Modules deliver real life insights and case studies from a European perspective – Join us in creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive!

MODULE 1

Introduction: Diversities Reviving European Enterprises

Key Features: Overview and definitions of D&I in SMEs. 12 Dimensions of Diversity. Learning key competencies for business case delivery.

Part 1: Why D&I Matters for SMEs.
Part 2: Building D&I Competencies for SMEs.

MODULE 2

Inclusive Leadership Skills

Key Features: Develop inclusive leadership skills (e.g., Bias awareness and mitigation). Tap into the power of neurodiversity. Measure impact and build resilience.

Part 1: Prepare for Inclusive Change Through Leadership.
Part 2: Unlock Inclusive Leadership & Neurodiversity.
Part 3: Measure Leadership Impact & Build Resilience.

MODULE 3

Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Key Features: Inclusive advertising, recruitment and retention. Performance management and leadership succession planning.

Part 1: Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent.
Part 2: Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions & Adverts.
Part 3: Inclusive Selection, Interviewing, and Offer Strategies.
Part 4: Employee Talent Development and Retention.
Part 5: Performance Management and Feedback.
Part 6: Succession Planning and Leadership Development.

MODULE 6

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

Key Features: Learn the six core principles of inclusive community engagement. Understand the four layers to community context and prepare an effective Engagement Framework and Action Plan.

Part 1: Foundations of Inclusive Community Engagement.
Part 2: Understand & Engage Your Community.
Part 3: Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value.
Part 4: Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework.
Part 5: Create a Community Engagement Framework & Action Plan.

MODULE 5

Inclusive Marketing For SMEs

Key Features: Embed inclusivity into branding. Understand the needs of diverse audiences. Craft strategic inclusive marketing campaigns.

Part 1: The Power of Inclusive Marketing for SME Brands.
Part 2: Understand Your Customers and Overcome Marketing Barriers.
Part 3: Crafting Inclusive Marketing Campaigns.

MODULE 4

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Key Features: Build an inclusive company culture. Design and deliver a strategic cultural change audit, review policies and practices and empower teams through reward and recognition.

Part 1: Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture.
Part 2: Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.
Part 3: Support Management in Creating a Workplace of Belonging.
Part 4: From Policies to Practice: Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion.
Part 5: Empower Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition.

YOU ARE HERE

Introduction DARE to Module 4

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs



Module 4 covers key areas when building an inclusive company culture in SMEs.

Part 1: Learn the benefits of DEI for SMEs and assess your workplace’s inclusivity to create a strong foundation for belonging and equity.

Part 2: Design and implement tailored cultural audits, using surveys and engagement strategies to analyze workplace inclusivity and drive meaningful change.

Part 3: Equip line managers and team leaders with strategies to foster belonging, psychological safety, and inclusivity within diverse teams.

Part 4: Transform existing policies into actionable strategies to challenge exclusive behaviours, develop effective DEI frameworks, and embed inclusivity into daily operations.

Part 5: Empower collaboration through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), recognition programs, and inclusive leadership to build stronger, more cohesive

Section 1

Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture

Section 2

Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.

Section 3

Support Management to Deliver a Workplace of Belonging and Inclusivity.

Section 4

From Policies to Practice: Cultivating a Genuine Culture of Inclusion.

Section 5

Empowering Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4
Part 5

M4:Part 1

In today's dynamic business environment, embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has become vital for innovation, building strong teams, and ensuring sustainable growth. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), creating an inclusive culture begins with understanding the nuances of DEI and tailoring these principles to their unique company goals. This Module explores the external factors driving the need for cultural diversity, clarifies key DEI concepts, and outlines practical steps for conducting inclusive culture audits. By addressing these topics systematically, SMEs can align their values and practices with inclusivity, establish behavioral guidelines, and design measurable goals that enable belonging and collaboration.

01

Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture

- ❖ The Foundations and Importance of an Inclusive Company Culture
- ❖ Why DEI Matters in Modern SMEs and the Individual and Company Perspective
- ❖ Moving Towards an Inclusive Company Culture
- ❖ Understanding The Differences Between an Inclusive Company Audit Versus an Inclusive Culture Audit
- ❖ Inclusive SME Culture Groundwork and Practical Exercises for Your Audit Survey & Writing Your First Inclusion Charter

Learning Objectives

- 1. Understanding the Foundations of DEI:** Explore the key concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and how they shape a company's culture from both individual and company perspectives.
- 2. Why DEI Matters in Modern Businesses:** Understand the external factors driving cultural diversity and the benefits of an inclusive environment for innovation and growth.
- 3. Preparing for Inclusivity:** Establish your SME's values, vision, goals, and practices to define what inclusivity means for your company and write an actionable inclusion charter.
- 4. Moving Towards an Inclusive Culture:** Align your company's culture, values, and behavioural guidelines to promote collaboration, belonging, and an inclusive environment.
- 5. Conducting Inclusive Culture Audits:** Learn the importance of cultural audits to assess your current DEI status and identify areas for strategic improvement.
- 6. Practical Steps for SME Audits:** Use company and employee exercises, discussions and other tools
- 7. Engaging Your Team:** Facilitate workshops and brainstorming sessions between all company levels to gain clarity on current company culture, gather actionable feedback and refine your audit survey.
- 8. Bringing It All Together:** Compile insights from workshops to pinpoint improvement areas . Refine your questions for your first Inclusive Audit Survey to embark on an inclusivity roadmap for building an inclusive and equitable company culture.



Understanding the Foundations of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Culture and Why it Matters in Modern Business



Defining Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a given setting. This could include race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, socio-economic status, and more.

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that people feel a sense of belonging and support within the workplace. It is about creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and able to contribute fully.



What Is Diverse and Inclusive Company Culture for SMEs

A diverse workplace has employees with a wide variety of identities, backgrounds, and abilities – some of these characteristics may not be visible, others will be obvious. Inclusion is defined as creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued and able to contribute.

(Source Institute of Accountants)

Diversity means including and involving people from diverse backgrounds. Inclusivity means making everyone feel welcome and valued.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion, or DEI, in the workplace refers to policies and procedures that encourage representation and participation of people of different genders, races, ethnicities, religions, ages, sexual orientations, disabilities, and classes.

(Source DEI in the Workplace)

An Exclusive Culture Does not Enable Trust for “Outsiders”.

Most companies have a culture that people talk about but struggle to define. Encapsulated by the phrase “this is the way we do things,” these cultures tend to exhibit the characteristics of the dominant group, usually alpha males.

We all do things every day that make people feel undervalued and disrespected. We don't mean to, but it happens, and these habits become embedded in our company cultures. Many decisions are made around how people will fit into a company's culture, especially when hiring or promoting someone. Most people don't realise they are part of the “dominant” group of “insiders”. An exclusive culture does not build trust for “outsiders”.

dominant culture, they are not able to bring their whole selves to the workplace. Very often they choose to cover or mask their individual differences to avoid negative stereotyping, exclusion or harassment. They change their behaviours or compromise their values specifically to fit in and gain acceptance. However, this comes at a price.

What is an Inclusive Company Culture?

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Audits are crucial assessment tools designed to evaluate a company's commitment to developing a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The D&I Company Audit systematically examines policies and practices but needs an in-depth Inclusive Culture Audit to assess company culture. Both highlight areas where the company excels and those that require improvement, ultimately guiding the path toward a more equitable work environment. Given the increasing focus on D&I within company structures, implementing such audits has become not just beneficial but essential for companies aiming to thrive in today's diverse marketplace.

The Company Culture Audit, however, assesses the shared values, ethics, attitudes, and beliefs that shape how a business operates, and interacts with employees and clients. It identifies if a company is leveraging the contributions and perspectives of all employees to achieve company goals. It enables a positive employee experience where team members feel empowered, supported, and psychologically safe to collaborate and share a united vision. Such a culture ensures employees feel a sense of belonging and are comfortable being their authentic selves without fear of marginalisation. Inclusive cultures are vital for building diverse teams and ensuring equity.

66

Culture Challenges for SMEs:

SMEs are often reactive, with 47% lacking a formal I&D strategy.

Many focus on immediate business needs over long-term I&D goals.

Limited resources hinder proactive I&D initiatives.

Source [CIPD Building Inclusive Workplaces](#)



Workplace Culture Management is a Retention Strategy

With 20% of those intending to leave their current employment citing toxic workplace culture as their primary motive, this is an issue that must be addressed.

It starts with culture and the messages you send employees about success, failure, inclusion, and recognition. Ensuring these factors are aligned with healthy personal behaviour will help create a culture that discourages toxic behaviours and patterns.

Make sure you have a strategy in place to retain your talent. Prevention rather than reaction is the strategy required, and employees will best inform you about what areas are most important to them.



What is a Great Company Culture?

"A great place to work is one where you trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do and enjoy the people you work with."

We survey tens of thousands of employees across a wide variety of industries. Based on this large data set and Ireland's Best Workplaces, **a great company culture can be defined** from an employee perspective, as a workplace where:

You Feel: That You Can Trust Those Around You,

You Feel: Fairly Treated, Regardless of Who You Are,

You Hear: That Your Suggestions and Ideas are Welcome,

You Hear: That Your Work is Valued.



Companies characterised by high levels of inclusion and gender balance are twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets.

A study from Deloitte and Kenji Yoshino¹⁷ from NYU School of Law suggests that almost two thirds of employees cover in some way. The impact of this on team performance is significant. Employees who cover, are less likely to see career opportunities in their company.

30% of millennials left a job for one with a more inclusive culture.

50% say their commitment is damaged if conformity to the dominant culture is a leadership requirement.

80% of employees say inclusion is an important factor in choosing an employer.

27% are more likely to consider leaving their company within a year.

42% are less likely to leave if they can bring their whole selves to work.

72% may consider leaving an company for one they think is more inclusive.

Moving from Diversity to Inclusion

Diversity emphasises demographic representation, while inclusion focuses on employee experience and is relevant to all employees, not just underrepresented groups.

Diversity

Having diversity alone is not enough.

Increasing diversity alone is NOT ENOUGH without inclusivity it can unintentionally harm underrepresented groups if workplace culture is not inclusive.

Inclusion

SMEs NEED TO prioritise inclusion as the foundation for diversity initiatives. Inclusion ensures that diverse perspectives, beliefs, and norms are valued, creating an environment where all employees can thrive.

Failing to address inclusion can perpetuate inequities and negatively impact employee well-being and company performance.

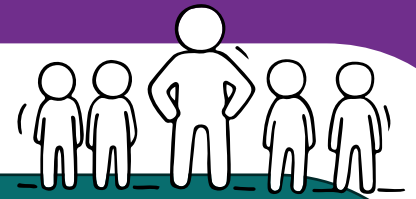
What Does Inclusive Company Culture Look Involve?

SMEs have a critical responsibility to promote diversity and inclusion by adopting fair and inclusive management practices at all levels and in every company department. These practices should encompass both formal strategies and informal approaches, driven by supportive leadership and positive employee behaviours, to provide a culture of belonging where every employee feels valued and heard. SMEs can strengthen team dynamics, increase employee engagement, and drive sustainable growth by delivering the following at a basic level.

- ✓ **Fair Policies and Opportunities:** Clear and equitable policies ensure all employees can progress, participate, and have a voice in decisions affecting them.
- ✓ **Value Diverse Perspectives:** Encouraging open sharing of ideas ensures contributions from employees of all backgrounds, fostering innovation and collaboration.
- ✓ **Employee Agency:** Providing decision-making opportunities and engaging with employee feedback enhances a sense of belonging and ownership.
- ✓ **Leadership Commitment:** Leaders should act as role models, championing inclusion initiatives and valuing individual differences genuinely—beyond token representation.



An Inclusive Workplace Culture from the...



Individual Perspective

At the individual level, inclusion refers to the experience of feeling:

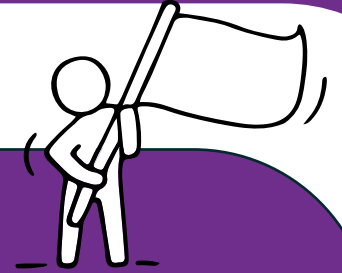
- ✓ **Belonging:** Employees feel they are an integral part of the team or company.
- ✓ **Valued:** Their unique abilities, perspectives, and skills are recognised and appreciated.
- ✓ **Empowered:** They can contribute authentically and influence decisions without fear of judgment or discrimination.
- ✓ **Heard:** They have a voice in discussions and decisions that impact their work and company.
- ✓ **Safe:** They experience psychological safety, allowing them to express themselves freely and authentically.

Company Perspective

Defined by valuing differences and ensuring employees can develop, participate, and influence change, regardless of background. It requires company practices that enable all employees to grow and thrive. Resulting in;

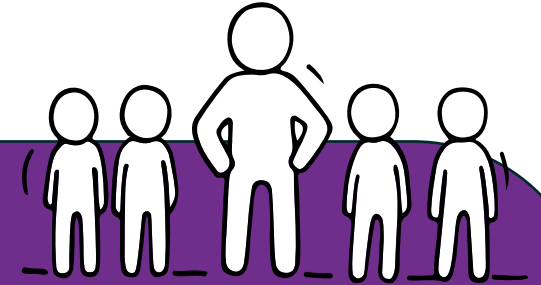
- ✓ Enhanced Team Collaboration
- ✓ Resilience and Adaptability
- ✓ Increased Employee Engagement and Retention
- ✓ Stronger Customer and Market Connections
- ✓ Positive Reputation and Brand Image
- ✓ Increased team knowledge-sharing.
- ✓ Boosted innovation and creativity.

Dig Deeper into Individual Perspectives



- ❑ **Feeling valued for uniqueness:** Research suggests that teams or companies that value uniqueness and difference and allow anyone to feel ‘part’ of a group are truly inclusive. In other words, a sense of belonging to a team must be coupled with a sense that different identities are valued.
- ❑ **The ability to be authentic:** This is where an individual's uniqueness, and authenticity is a key aspect of inclusion. In other words, individuals must feel like they can be themselves, regardless of whether they are different or share many similarities with their colleagues. Without this, individuals could feel like they need to engage in ‘surface acting’ or cover their identities.
- ❑ **Belonging and non-conformity:** Feeling that one’s unique abilities and differences are valued, coupled with an ability to be authentic, is thought to create a sense of belonging without the need to conform to group norms.

Dig Deeper into Company Perspective



- ❑ **The company defines** what inclusion is needed so their company can be inclusive and support it with inclusion-focused strategies, policies, mission statements and directives.
- ❑ **Recruitment:** Design recruitment processes that reach diverse talent pools
- ❑ **Communication:** Ensure that internal communication practices are inclusive. Provide communication methods and systems that encourage participation and amplify employee voices in decision-making.
- ❑ **Develop & Train:** Provide employees and managers with training on inclusion, cultural awareness, and unconscious bias. Provide employee development opportunities for all.
- ❑ **Inclusive leadership** mechanisms and training to empower managers to create safe spaces for dialogue. Identify gaps, empower leaders and promote their efforts.
- ❑ **Measure & Monitor:** Regularly assess, monitor, and adapt as needed based on insights via audits and feedback mechanisms (e.g., anonymous surveys).

External Factors Driving the Need for Cultural Diversity

- ❖ **Regulators:** Governments and regulators are increasingly emphasising workplace diversity. In Europe, discussions on mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting continue, it prioritises diversity in its supervisory principles, holding companies accountable for their culture.
- ❖ **Investors:** Investor pressure on D&I practices is growing. For example, the IA's Institutional Voting Information Service highlights companies failing to meet gender and ethnicity criteria, flagging them as concerns for shareholders.
- ❖ **Other Stakeholders:** Customers, suppliers, and clients increasingly base decisions on D&I performance, incorporating diversity clauses in contracts and proposals.
- ❖ **ESG Agenda:** D&I is integral to Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) efforts, with companies reporting non-financial metrics like diversity alongside emissions and safety.
- ❖ **Addresses Societal Change:** Collecting diversity data helps identify workforce disparities, lived experiences, and biases, enabling companies to promote fairness in pay, career progression, recruitment, and retention. This ensures transparency and inclusivity across the employee lifecycle and aligns workplace culture with societal expectations.



The Groundwork Preparing for Inclusivity

- Assessing Your Current D&I Culture
- Developing Your First Inclusive Culture Audit
- Develop Your First Inclusivity Charter

Benefits of Cultural Change for Diversity, Inclusion and Equality



Diversity, equality, and inclusion are three elements that any company needs to survive in today's market. For small enterprises, measuring DEI is a driver for long-term success. More inclusive companies are likely to meet their financial targets, so there are compelling business reasons to prioritise DEIs. One advantage is that it will assist your small business in meeting the legal requirements of not discriminating against protected groups. It goes further to prevent tribunal cases.

Another advantage lies in the fact that it ensures a culture in which a diverse group of individuals can come to work, feel at ease, be confident in themselves, and work in a style that suits them, all in a bid to meet your company's objectives. When you do not measure diversity, equity, and inclusion, you'll be setting your business up for failure in the long run.

Benefits of Clarifying Diversity, Inclusion and Equality and What it Means for Your SME

Diversity & Inclusion

In the workplace, **diversity** means the acceptance and inclusion of employees from various backgrounds.

While **inclusion** measures how empowered the people at the table feel, diversity measures who is at the table. Inclusion describes the culture that encourages your employees to succeed.

Equality

Workplace equality is also important. It is the idea of giving all of your employees equal chances based on their particular requirements. From employment qualifications to pay fairness, you must be transparent in your hiring process. If you do so, you will be able to attract a diverse, equitable, and inclusive staff.

A D&I Cultural Change Audit is Vital

Several businesses are already assessing their business DEI to determine where the company needs to improve and what needs to be examined. To join the train, you must devise various means to measure your small business up for diversity, equity, and inclusion that's where a D&I Company Audit and Cultural Change Management Audit comes in.

A Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Cultural Change Management Audit is a vital tool which will be covered in this Module. It is essential for managing a healthy, inclusive workplace culture in small businesses. This audit helps track and evaluate your company's D&I initiatives, providing a clear understanding of progress and identifying areas for improvement. Without such an assessment, it's impossible to measure the effectiveness of your D&I strategy or make informed decisions to enhance workplace inclusion and diversity for everyone.

A D&I Cultural Change Audit Must be Backed up with a Strategy

A Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Cultural Change Audit is a critical tool for enabling an inclusive workplace, but its success depends on a well-defined strategy. Without clear and effective measurements to assess diversity and inclusion initiatives and outcomes, a company's commitment is limited by a tendency to revert to habitual and ingrained thinking and behavioral patterns. While the process of implementing and evaluating D&I initiatives can be complex, an audit offers a structured framework to identify strengths, address gaps, and drive progress. When combined with a clear Strategy and Action Plan it helps small businesses balance company effectiveness, employee well-being with actionable insights, ensuring competitiveness and alignment with company values. Meaningful progress begins with quantifying and qualifying what matters. Tracking your company's D&I efforts provides measurable benchmarks to evaluate the success of initiatives and pinpoint areas for improvement.



A D&I Cultural Change Audit Must be Backed up with a Strategy

Without an Audit, performance cannot be assessed effectively, nor can inclusion and diversity be accurately measured. By integrating a strategic approach with timely audits, small businesses can confidently make informed decisions that enhance workplace culture and promote equity and sustainable growth. Let's examine the role of a D&I Cultural Change Management Audit, why it's essential for small businesses, and how it supports meaningful progress. It covers definitions, how it differs from a D&I Company Audit and how it is perceived in the eyes of employees and the company.



Understanding Inclusive Company Audit Versus Inclusive Culture Audit

Inclusive Company Audit: Definition

Module 3 covered how to conduct an Inclusive Company Audit which is different to an Inclusive Culture Audit. It is a broader evaluation of a company's inclusivity across all its systems, processes, and structures. It includes assessing policies, practices, programs, and metrics to determine how equitable and inclusive the company is at a company level. This audit typically focuses on measurable outcomes and compliance with diversity and inclusion goals, such as recruitment, promotions, pay equity, accessibility, supplier diversity, and governance practices.

Key features of an inclusive company audit include:

- ❖ Reviewing hiring, retention, and promotion policies.
- ❖ Evaluating diversity in leadership, boards, and teams.
- ❖ Examining pay gaps, career development opportunities, and accessibility.
- ❖ Measuring progress against DEI benchmarks or compliance standards.

Understanding Inclusive Company Audit Versus Inclusive Culture Audit

Inclusive Culture Audit: Definition

An Inclusive Culture Audit is a thorough assessment designed to evaluate how well a company's culture promotes diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and belonging. It focuses specifically on understanding the behaviours, attitudes, and shared values within the company that shape the experiences of employees and stakeholders. This audit examines aspects like leadership practices, interpersonal relationships, communication norms, decision-making processes, and whether employees feel valued, respected, and included in the company.

Key features of an inclusive culture audit include:

- ❖ Evaluating workplace behaviours and informal practices.
- ❖ Assessing employee perceptions of inclusion and belonging through surveys, focus groups, or interviews.
- ❖ Identifying barriers to inclusivity in team dynamics, collaboration, and leadership.
- ❖ Measuring the alignment between the company's DEI initiatives and its actual culture.

Moving Towards an Inclusive Culture: The Key Differences

The ultimate goal is to ensure that inclusivity is ingrained in the **company's daily operations and relationships**, not just in formal policies or programs. You want to make sure your inclusive culture audit dives into the intangible aspects of a company's inclusivity—**how people feel and interact**—while an inclusive company audit is focused on tangible structures and measurable outcomes. Together, they provide a holistic view of a company's inclusivity efforts.

	Inclusive Culture Audit	Inclusive Company Audit
Focus	Employee behaviours, shared values, and sense of belonging.	Policies, systems, and measurable DEI outcomes.
Scope	Informal practices, attitudes, and leadership style.	Formal structures, compliance, and metrics.
Objective	To assess and improve how inclusion is experienced day-to-day.	To assess and improve companyal DEI policies and outcomes.
Methodology	Qualitative methods like surveys, focus groups, and interviews.	Quantitative methods like data analysis and benchmarking.
Outcomes	Insights into cultural dynamics and employee well-being.	Insights into structural barriers and policy gaps.

Step 1



Before You Start the Inclusive Culture Audit: Clarify What Inclusion is for Your SME

Before embarking on a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey, ask yourself: Where does your company currently stand? This requires a Company Inclusive Audit (Module 3) , which is a thorough review of your company's policies and procedures, combined with employee input and alignment of your values and practices. Examine key documents like employee handbooks and harassment policies to ensure they align with DEI objectives. For SMEs, company inclusion should encompass:

- ☐ **People Management Practices:** Inclusion begins with equitable hiring, training, and promotion processes. This ensures that everyone, regardless of background, has access to opportunities.
- ☐ **Employee Experience:** Employees should feel they are heard, appreciated, and able to contribute their authentic selves without fear of discrimination.
- ☐ **Company Values:** Inclusion should be a part of the company's mission, vision, and day-to-day behaviours.
- ☐ **Measurable Goals and Outcomes:** Setting specific targets (e.g., increasing diversity in leadership roles) allows the company to assess its progress and impact.

Step 2 >>> Now Clarify Where Your DEI Currently Stands

Before embarking on the next step of your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) journey, ask yourself: Where does your company currently stand? Now that you have some definitions of what inclusion means to your business, you need to get work to make sure your company is aligned with your values, principles, and vision. This requires an Inclusive Company Audit (covered in Module 3), which is a thorough review of your company's policies and procedures, combined with manager and employee input, to make sure they are aligned with your vision, values and practices. This will give you a good overall idea of where you are and what you need to be. **Start by identifying the core areas of your business that contribute or lack inclusivity, e.g.,**

- ❖ Diverse employee representation.
- ❖ Equity in policies and pay.
- ❖ Psychological safety.
- ❖ Inclusive leadership and decision-making.
- ❖ Employee empowerment and belonging.

Assess Core Inclusive Business Areas

Here are some ways you can assess inclusivity in core business areas. The answers will tell you if you are inclusive or if there is still work to be done.

Diverse employee representation.

- ☐ Do you have demographic data across all levels, including leadership? Are there any barriers to diversity in hiring, retention, and promotions?

Equity in policies and pay.

- ☐ Review policies to ensure they are inclusive and non-discriminatory. Are there any pay disparities? Do you accommodate working arrangements for diverse needs

Psychological safety.

- ☐ Do staff feel safe sharing feedback and concerns? Do managers receive training in inclusive behaviours and active listening? Is there a high level of employee disengagement or turnover?

Inclusive leadership and decision-making.

- ☐ Do your leaders receive DEI training? Do they understand how to incorporate diverse perspectives into decision-making? Do employees express or complain about leadership and lack of inclusivity?

Employee empowerment and belonging.

- ☐ Do you create spaces for employees to provide unique contributions, collaborate or learn? How are your employee engagement satisfaction ratings? How is employee turnover? How happy are employees? Do employees eagerly put their hand up to participate and contribute?

Step 3



Define What You Want Your Company Culture and Values to Look Like

Defining an inclusive culture involves articulating a vision and creating actionable principles that reflect the company's values and goals. Below are examples and definitions to guide companies in shaping their inclusive culture:

Vision Statement (Example)

"Our inclusive culture empowers every individual to feel valued, respected, and supported. We celebrate diversity and foster belonging, ensuring equitable opportunities for all to thrive and contribute."

Principles (Examples)

- ❖ **Respect:** Create an environment where all voices are heard and valued.
- ❖ **Equity:** Provide equal access to opportunities and resources tailored to individual needs.
- ❖ **Transparency:** Maintain open communication channels for feedback and accountability.
- ❖ **Collaboration:** Build teams with diverse perspectives to drive innovation and decision-making.

Ensure Your Behavioural Guidelines and Cultural Practices Align

Behavioral Guidelines (Examples)

- ❖ *Set clear expectations for respectful communication and collaboration.*
- ❖ *Offer regular inclusivity training for employees and leaders.*
- ❖ *Establish zero-tolerance policies for discrimination and harassment.*

Cultural Practices (Examples)

- ❖ **Celebrate** cultural holidays and milestones representing diverse employees.
- ❖ Regularly **review** policies to eliminate bias in hiring, promotions, and evaluations.
- ❖ Ensure **accessibility** in workplace design and communication channels.

Back It Up With Inclusion Metrics (Examples)

- ❖ Percentage of employees who feel included (measured through surveys).
- ❖ Representation of underrepresented groups at all levels.
- ❖ Employee turnover rates segmented by demographic groups.

Checklist for Defining Inclusive Culture

By clearly defining these elements, companies can establish a framework that guides them toward an inclusive culture.

- ☐ **Values:** What values guide inclusivity in your company?
- ☐ **Vision:** How does inclusivity align with your overall mission?
- ☐ **Goals:** What outcomes do you want to achieve (e.g., increased diversity, reduced turnover)?
- ☐ **Practices:** What tangible actions will support inclusivity (e.g., mentorship programs, leadership diversity targets)?
- ☐ **Measurement:** How will success be evaluated (e.g., employee feedback, inclusion index)?



Now Write Your Inclusion Charter

An **Inclusion Charter** is a formal document that outlines a company's commitment to an inclusive workplace culture.

It serves as a guiding framework that articulates the values, principles, and specific actions the company will take to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are embedded in its operations and ethos.

It is important because it provides a clear statement for everyone, internal and external to your company, of your intent and the company's direction. It ensures accountability and responsibility. It demonstrates inclusivity commitment and serves as a foundation for your company's D&I strategy.

Example Diversity & Inclusion Charter



The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) launched 'a Charter for competitive advantage and enhanced employee belonging'.

<https://specificationonline.co.uk/articles/2021-11-26/ciob/charter-for-diversity-and-inclusion-in-construction-launched-by-ciob>

Example Diversity & Inclusion Charters



Green Roof Diversity Charter

<https://www.greenroofcompany.org/2023/10/11/gro-signs-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-charter/>



What People With Disabilities Are Asking Of Your Organisation

Openness

Be open to and be understanding of all people with disabilities

People

Access training for your staff/volunteers to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities

Activities

Develop and deliver inclusive activities

Facilities

Review your facility/venues/equipment to make our organisation more accessible

Promotion

Promote the inclusive nature of your activities, in a variety of formats

Active Disability Charter, Ireland

<https://activedisability.ie/sport-inclusion-disability-charter/>

Write Your Inclusion Charter

Write Your Inclusion Charter

Draft a clear and concise statement that reflects your company's commitment to inclusivity and how it is demonstrated in daily operations, decision-making, and behaviours. This is a fundamental step; it acts as a living document regularly reviewed and updated to reflect evolving goals and challenges in achieving inclusivity. This can be changed and updated. Here is an example:

"At [Company Name], we are committed to creating an environment where diversity thrives and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise the value of diverse perspectives and pledge to provide equitable opportunities for all employees, customers, and partners. Our Inclusion Charter reflects our commitment to challenging biases, embracing differences, and ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging."

Example



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION CHARTER

Our VISION

We aim to foster a respectful, open and collaborative work environment that benefits from and values the spectrum of individual differences.

Our PRINCIPLES

- We have a duty to positively impact our employees, communities, and other stakeholders
- We recognize that effective teams are diverse teams, where different views, perspectives, and experiences are encouraged and valued
- It is our collective responsibility to respect and support teammates of all distinctions
- Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) is essential to our innovation and success

Our PRIORITIES

- Communicate our D&I beliefs and engage with stakeholders that demonstrate the same values
- Educate employees on the social and business benefits of D&I
- Develop leaders throughout the organization that embrace diversity and foster an inclusive culture
- Define D&I programs that benefit our communities and business

Our ACTIONS

- Build a diverse leadership team and governance structure
- Attract, develop, and retain a diverse workforce
- Prioritize and integrate D&I into our recruitment, development, and promotion processes
- Provide equal opportunity to all employees for learning and growth
- Measure and actively monitor D&I programs and initiatives

<https://www.trilliumflow.com/tf-news/diversity-and-inclusion-charter/>

Step 4



Prepare for Company Culture Audit

Determine What Needs to be Included in Your Survey

The following exercises are key to helping you design a successful company-wide inclusive culture audit survey in preparation for Step 2. This process gives you other company insights and perspectives namely employees, line managers and other employees. It not only highlights where stated values and employees' behaviours or attitudes diverge but also sheds light on areas where your company may be falling short of achieving a healthy culture of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

After completing these exercises and workshops you should be able to identify gaps or inconsistencies between what your company says it stands for and what it practices and its actual practices. You have a better understanding of the insights gathered and can now align the survey questions with the company's specific inclusive cultural needs, gaps, and goals. You can then work towards a survey which will closer address the discrepancies identified from a management and employee perspective which are crucial for building a cohesive and impactful culture that aligns with your strategic objectives.

As of 2020, about 60% of the global workforce identifies as women. However, this representation is not equally distributed across all sectors and roles, particularly in leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2020).

- ❖ **Prepare Tailored Survey:** This section is designed to help you prepare for your Cultural Inclusion Audit by gaining diverse perspectives, identifying clear gaps, and recognising both areas of success and opportunities for improvement. It will guide you in tailoring survey questions to address your company's specific needs, with the ultimate goal of enhancing your inclusive company culture.
- ❖ **Execute Strategic Survey:** You will be able to conduct your inclusive culture audit survey more strategically as you will gain a deeper understanding of 'actual' rather than 'assumed' employee experiences, identify barriers to inclusivity, and be able to develop actionable strategies to address them.
- ❖ **Implement Unique Inclusive Strategy and Actions:** With the results of the survey, you will be able to create a more equitable workplace by pinpointing areas requiring immediate attention, celebrating existing strengths, and building a roadmap for continuous improvement.

Brainstorm Exercise: Inclusion Clarity Workshop for SME Managers

Objective: First, define what an inclusive culture means for your company. This should align with your mission, values, and business goals. This is the planning phase, where the audit team will collect information and research from existing inclusion culture assessments, review prior culture-related documentation, and set the timeline and objectives for the audit.

Participants: Management

- ☐ What does inclusivity look like in our workplace?
- ☐ How do we want employees to feel (e.g., belonging, equity, fairness)?
- ☐ What behaviours and practices should be part of our culture?

Try and Define, example “Our inclusive culture is one where every employee feels valued, has equal access to opportunities, and is respected for their unique contributions.”

Exercise: Review this article to see what documentation you should review e.g., statements about management styles, code of conduct and ethics, HR policies etc. <https://www.auditboard.com/blog/culture-audits-3-tips-for-assessing-your-corporate-culture/>



Brainstorm Exercise: Inclusion Clarity Workshop (Employee Sample)

Objective: Define inclusion for your SME and outline steps to implement it.

Participants: Get a sample of your employees from all levels with a diverse representation encouraged.

Gather your team and discuss these prompts:

- ☐ What do you think inclusion means to us as a company?
- ☐ How do we ensure fairness and equity in hiring, promotions, and decision-making?
- ☐ What actions or behaviours currently make you feel supported, included and valued?
- ☐ How can we explicitly promote respect and inclusion in your daily operations?
- ☐ Do you feel safe and respected? That includes both psychologically and physically safe.
- ☐ Where are our weaknesses and where are our strengths?

Record all answers on a whiteboard or collaborative digital tool.



Map Current Practices: Inclusion Clarity Workshop for All Staff.

Break into small groups. Each group will:

- ☐ Identify existing inclusive practices in their team and elaborate on the good and the bad.
- ☐ Explain how is inclusivity ensured in decision making, career progression and team development?
- ☐ Highlight areas for improvement.
- ☐ Suggest how inclusion can be better aligned with company values.
- ☐ What have we not covered or talked about that we need to?

Define Inclusion for Your SME (15 minutes)

Consolidate the discussion into a single statement that reflects your SME's definition of inclusion. For example:

"Inclusion at [Company Name] means enabling a culture where every employee feels respected, valued, and empowered to contribute, ensuring fairness in all our practices and reflecting our commitment to equity and belonging."



BRING IT ALL TOGETHER: Pinpoint Areas for Improvement

Reflect on workshop outcomes to determine what needs to be included in your inclusive culture survey. Identify Key Themes: Review the discussions and feedback from the workshop. **What are the recurring themes or concerns raised by participants in key Cultural Change Business Areas?**

- ☐ **Environment:** Are employees experiencing psychological safety, mutual respect, and belonging?
- ☐ **Barriers:** Are there any specific obstacles (e.g., bias, lack of access to resources) hindering inclusivity?
- ☐ **Policy Effectiveness:** Do employees believe current policies and practices support equitable opportunities and outcomes?
- ☐ **Leadership:** How well do employees feel leadership demonstrates a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity (DIE)?

Note Strengths and Weaknesses: Highlight areas where the company excels and those that require immediate attention. Use these insights to frame questions that confirm or explore these observations further.

Suggested Inclusive Survey Questions from Responses

Now you have tested generic survey questions with a small, diverse group of employees to assess if there is unexpected feedback or highlights areas not previously considered. Adjust questions to fit the final survey based on the pilot group's input. Here are some suggestions;

Question	Potential Responses	Survey Questions to Address Responses
1. What do you think inclusion means to 'us' as a company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ A shared commitment to diversity and respect for all.❖ A perception of tokenism or lack of real commitment.❖ Confusion or differing understandings of "inclusion."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ "How well do you think the company defines and communicates its commitment to inclusion?" (<i>Scale: 1–5</i>)▪ "Do you believe our company values inclusion in a meaningful way?" (<i>Yes/No with space for explanation</i>)

Question	Potential Responses	Survey Questions to Address Responses
2. How do we ensure fairness and equity in hiring, promotions, and decision-making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Specific practices that work well (e.g., structured interviews, clear promotion criteria). ❖ Concerns about bias in recruitment or favoritism in promotions. ❖ Lack of transparency in decision-making processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Do you feel that hiring practices at our company are fair and unbiased?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "Are promotion opportunities equally accessible to everyone?" <i>(Yes/No with space for explanation)</i> ▪ "How transparent do you feel leadership is in making decisions that affect the company?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i>
3. What actions or behaviours currently make you feel supported, included, and valued?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Examples of positive behaviours (e.g., recognition, supportive managers, inclusive team activities). ❖ Lack of acknowledgment for certain employees or groups. ❖ Gaps in leadership support or team collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Do you feel your contributions are recognized and valued at work?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "How often do you experience supportive behaviours from colleagues and managers?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "What specific actions or programs make you feel most included and valued at work?" <i>(Open-ended)</i>

Question	Potential Responses	Survey Questions to Address Responses
4. How can we explicitly promote respect and inclusion in your daily operations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Suggestions for training, team-building, or communication improvements. ❖ Requests for addressing microaggressions or bias. ❖ Frustration over lack of action from leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "How effective are current efforts to promote respect and inclusion in daily operations?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "What additional steps could the company take to promote respect and inclusion in the workplace?" <i>(Open-ended)</i> ▪ "Do you feel comfortable addressing inclusion-related issues with leadership or HR?" <i>(Yes/No with space for explanation)</i>
5. Do you feel safe and respected? That includes both psychologically and physically safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Positive feedback about a safe environment. ❖ Concerns about harassment, bullying, or unsafe conditions. ❖ Suggestions for improving psychological safety or conflict resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Do you feel psychologically safe to express your opinions and ideas at work?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "Do you feel physically safe in your workplace environment?" <i>(Scale: 1–5)</i> ▪ "Have you experienced or witnessed behaviours that made you feel unsafe or disrespected?" <i>(Yes/No with space for explanation)</i>

Question	Potential Responses	Survey Questions to Address Responses
6. Where are our weaknesses, and where are our strengths?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Feedback on specific areas where the company excels (e.g., flexible work policies, team diversity). ❖ Identification of weaknesses (e.g., representation gaps, lack of leadership accountability). ❖ General suggestions for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "What do you believe is the company's greatest strength in providing an inclusive workplace culture?" (<i>Open-ended</i>) ▪ "What areas of our workplace culture need the most improvement?" (<i>Open-ended</i>) ▪ "Do you feel the company takes meaningful action to address its weaknesses in inclusivity?" (<i>Scale: 1–5</i>)

RESULT: Understanding of Current SME Inclusion Culture

Result: This section was key to guide you to the next step:

Inclusive Culture Audit Survey which will include the same questions but will give you a more comprehensive view of inclusivity across your culture and systems. You now know what to focus on and what to not focus on.

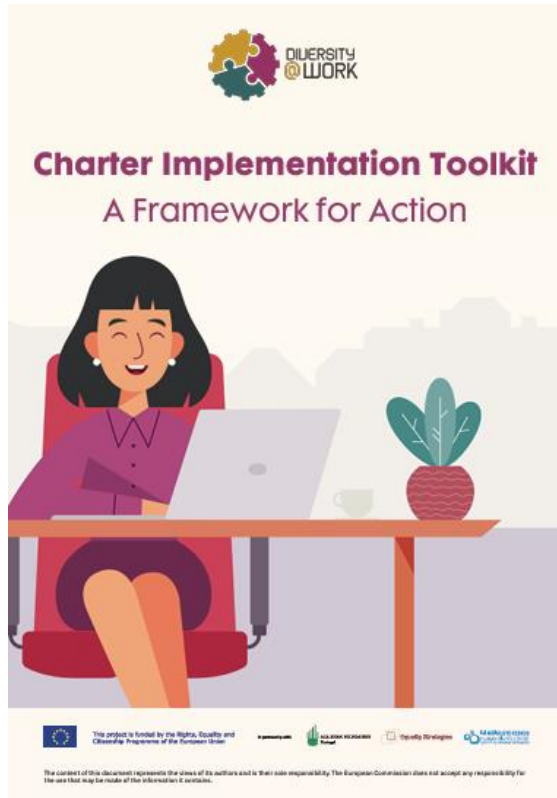
You want your survey to be as short and concise but as strategic as possible. That is why Step 1 cannot be skipped it provides you with all the information you need focusing on key company areas.

By aligning the survey questions with workshop outcomes, and company goals, and industry best practices, your company can design a meaningful and actionable inclusive culture audit survey that lays the foundation for measurable change.

Tip: Review [inclusive framework standards](#) to ensure your survey covers all essential aspects of DIE.



Resources



The CIT is the outcome of a consultative, collaborative approach involving ongoing discussion and detailed engagement with each of the Diversity Charter. (ADD LINK)

36% of managers say their diversity strategy doesn't include disability diversity (EY 2024)

45% of ethnic and cultural minorities don't feel optimistic about their career opportunities, compared with 36% of other employees (EY 2024)

66

Workplace culture is viewed as one of the most critical factors for predicting overall success. A cultural audit is important because it allows a company to assess the current state and take corrective actions before unacknowledged cultural issues derail its success. Culture can make or break a company, and if it breaks there may be no coming back. Not all cultural issues lead to an implosion, but a bad culture, even a localised bad culture, can hurt a company.

Source [Audit Board](#)



Learning Outcomes

- 1. You Understand the Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)** You have gained a clear understanding of what DEI means and its importance for individuals and businesses.
- 2. Clarify and Align DEI with Your Business Goals:** Know how DEI applies to your SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise). Can define and clarify what inclusion means for your company and identify how it aligns with your values, vision, and goals.
- 3. Conduct a Cultural Change Audit:** Learned what an inclusive cultural change audit is and why it's vital. You understand the difference between inclusive company audits and inclusive culture audits and can identify the four core areas that need to be assessed for building an inclusive workplace.
- 4. Move Towards an Inclusive Culture:** Identify the key differences between workshops, implementing DEI policies and building a truly inclusive culture.
- 5. Develop and Implement an Inclusion Audit:** You have created your first comprehensive inclusion charter and developed a draft of actionable steps and audit questions. Through the exercises and workshops, you have learned that you need to adopt better inclusive practices and values and what you can do to address such gaps in your company culture. You are now prepared to move onto the next section and engage the entire company in a deeper exploration of inclusivity by implementing an Inclusive Culture Audit so that you can pinpoint areas for improvement and establish measurable actions and outcomes for your Inclusive Strategy.





Well Done!

Module 4 Part 2

Part 2: Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.
Part 2 delves into designing and delivering an effective cultural change audits tailored to a company's unique needs. Participants will learn to design surveys targeting four core business areas, delivery methods that engage employees and analyse results.

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