



Module 4 (Part 5)

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Empowering Teams Through DEI
Collaboration, ERGs, Recognition
and Rewards



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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

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

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

YOU ARE HERE

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture

Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.

Support Management to Deliver a Workplace of Belonging and Inclusivity.

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

Empowering Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4

Part 5

Part 5

This Module, is about Empowering Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition. It focuses on promoting a workplace where all employees feel respected, valued, and empowered. Encouraging inclusive behaviors is vital for DEI collaboration, driving innovation, and improving employee engagement. By understanding the importance of inclusive practices, supporting Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), and recognising D&I inclusivity and champions, companies can build a positive and cohesive culture. This Module also emphasises how leadership can cultivate an teams through behavioural management, helping teams from diverse backgrounds thrive together.

04

Empowering Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, Recognition and Rewards

- ❖ **Promoting Inclusive Employee Behavior:** Encouraging Collaboration, Addressing Biases, and Providing Inclusivity Training.
- ❖ **Empowering Teams with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** Enabling Employees to Take Ownership of an Inclusive Culture and Amplifying Voices From The Ground.
- ❖ **Recognizing and Rewarding D&I Champions:** Practical Strategies for Recognising and Rewarding Employees Who Actively Contribute an Inclusive Workplace Culture.
- ❖ **Developing Intercultural Competence and Trust:** Going Beyond Surface-level Diversity to Cultivate Deeper Cultural Understanding and Build Trust Within Teams.

Learning Objectives

- 1. Promote inclusive employee behaviors** through collaboration, bias reduction, and effective inclusivity training.
- 2. Empower teams to take ownership** of an inclusive culture by establishing and supporting Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).
- 3. Implement practical strategies for recognising and rewarding D&I champions** to reinforce inclusive efforts.
- 4. Cultivate deeper intercultural competence and build trust** to enhance cross-cultural collaboration and understanding.



Encourage Inclusive Employee Behaviour

This involves promoting and reinforcing behaviours that make all employees feel respected, valued, and empowered. It includes promoting collaboration, addressing biases, and providing training to support inclusivity. Encouraging inclusive behavior is essential for creating a positive workplace culture, improving employee engagement, and driving innovation. It leads to better collaboration, higher satisfaction, and stronger team dynamics, ultimately enhancing business performance and attracting top talent.

Encourage and Manage Inclusive Behaviours

Intercultural Competence	How to Encourage
<p>Respecting Cultural Differences: Employees in an inclusive workplace appreciate and respect cultural differences. They understand that people from diverse backgrounds may bring different perspectives, and they are open to learning from one another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Create Shared Values: Inclusive employees work to align on shared moral principles that transcend cultural boundaries, ensuring everyone feels respected and that diverse cultural practices are honored.
<p>Address Negative Behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When employees exhibit negative behaviours such as racism, sexism, or homophobia, it's essential to intervene quickly. Managers can address these behaviours through training on cultural sensitivity, encouraging open discussions about diversity and inclusion, and implementing a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory conduct.	



Encourage and Manage Inclusive Behaviours

Trust	How to Encourage
<p>Build Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Employees in an inclusive workplace act with integrity, build trust by honoring commitments, and foster cooperation between colleagues. Trust is a cornerstone of an inclusive culture, where employees feel comfortable being themselves and know they will be treated fairly.	<p>❖ Acknowledge and Address Power Dynamics: Inclusive employees understand that certain groups may have more access to power, information, or opportunities. They actively work to level the playing field and ensure that all employees are treated equally.</p>
<p>Address Negative Behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Negative behaviours like gossip, dishonesty, or undermining colleagues can erode trust. To address these behaviours, it's important to model integrity from leadership down and to implement clear policies that address unethical conduct. Open communication channels where employees feel safe to report negative behaviours can also help resolve conflicts and rebuild trust.	





Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

An Employee Resource Group (ERG) is a voluntary, employee-led group that promotes inclusivity, support, and community by uniting employees with shared characteristics, interests, or experiences.

ERGs can be highly beneficial to companies, they can create a sense of belonging, promote diversity, and provide a platform for employees to contribute to an inclusive workplace culture, enhancing collaboration, engagement, and innovation.

Empower Your Workforce: Establish an Employee Resource Group (ERG)

Consider engaging an Employee Resource Group (ERG). An ERG is a group that supports employees, where employees represent their peers and advocate for an inclusive company culture. It is a **voluntary, employee-led group** within a company that is formed around shared characteristics, interests, or life experiences. ERGs aim to foster a more inclusive workplace culture, support professional development, and promote a sense of community among employees.

ERGs are now crucial in today's changing work world for promoting diversity and inclusion. These groups are run by employees and offer a place for people with similar interests or experiences to meet, grow professionally, and push for change. ERGs give employees a safe place to speak up, share their stories, and help shape the company culture. They help make the workplace more inclusive and diverse. This not only helps employees but also boosts the success of the company. Up to 90% of Fortune 500 companies use ERGs to empower employees and bring about positive change.

Recent stats show how important ERGs are:

- 66% of employees think ERGs help build a strong community feeling
- 90% of companies use ERGs to help new staff settle in
- ERGs play a big part in making the workforce more diverse and representative

Source WE THRIVE

Power Of Employee Resource Groups: HR Guide To Fostering Inclusion & Success



Resource: Access This Resource from Wellable

ERGs Bring Community to Companies

ERGs are vibrant communities where individuals can connect, network, and support one another. They create a safe space for open dialogue, where employees can share their unique perspectives and feel empowered to bring their authentic selves to work.

But ERGs are much more than just social platforms. They play a crucial role in **driving company success**.

ERGs can cover endless types of groups: ethnic groups, disabilities, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith, emigrants, environmental issues

Different Types of ERGs

Most Common

- ▶ Women in Leadership
- ▶ LGBTQ+ Alliance
- ▶ Cultural and Ethnic Heritage
- ▶ Veterans and Military Families
- ▶ Disability Advocacy
- ▶ Working Parents and Caregivers

Industry-Specific

- ▶ Technology: Women in Tech, Digital Accessibility
- ▶ Finance: First-Generation Professionals
- ▶ Healthcare: Cultural Competency Groups
- ▶ Manufacturing: Safety and Wellness

Source: <https://www.phenom.com/blog/comprehensive-guide-employee-resource-groups>

Source WE THRIVE

Purpose: Employee Resource Group (ERG)

What they do: ERGs are key to making workplaces more diverse and inclusive. They offer safe spaces for groups that are often overlooked. This helps build strong trust among people and boosts creativity. It also reduces the risk of hidden frustrations at work.

ERGs let people talk openly, making the workplace more welcoming for everyone. They give power to certain groups and serve as a way to communicate. This supportive setting helps keep staff happy and reduces turnover, making ERGs a big win for today's companies.

✓ **Promote inclusion, generate cultural awareness and sensitivity:** Create a sense of belonging and provide support for diverse employees, ensuring everyone feels valued and included. ERGs can educate the broader workforce about different cultures, experiences, and perspectives, enabling a more inclusive environment. ERGs can bring attention to company policies, culture, or behaviours that could either weaken or strengthen a more equitable workplace. Through educational programs, cultural celebrations, and open dialogues, ERGs help break down barriers and foster understanding across different groups, leading to more inclusive decision-making and reduced workplace conflicts.

Example: help with supplier diversity, making the supply chain more inclusive. This boosts overall company performance and strength.

Purpose: Employee Resource Group (ERG)

- ✓ **Enhance engagement & retention:** Boost employee satisfaction and retention by addressing their unique needs and promoting a positive work environment. ERGs provide much-needed opportunities for extracurricular activities — volunteering together, fun social gatherings, discussion groups — all with people who have a shared interest.

Example: Camp Culture - An ERG for celebrating the different employee experiences that broaden our collective understanding of race and ethnicity

- ✓ **Drive innovation through diverse perspective:** Encourage diverse perspectives to fuel creativity and innovative problem-solving across the company. ERG members represent staff members across all departments serving an important role in breaking down company silos.

Example: BCG ERG helped diverse teams generate 19% higher innovation revenues

Example: Procter & Gamble's Hispanic and African Ancestry ERGs helped create successful products like Pantene Gold Series

Purpose: Employee Resource Group (ERG)

✓ **Promote professional development & identify opportunities:** ERGs offer chances for skill growth and career progress, helping underrepresented groups. Offer networking and mentorship opportunities to help employees enhance their skills, advance their careers, and become future leaders. ERGs bring issues of diversity and inclusion to the attention of all employees, everyone in the company may expand their perspectives and insights to further their own professional and personal growth.

Example: Dell Technologies' Women in Action ERG has boosted female employee retention rates

Example: Deloitte's study shows that 71% of millennials feel they're not using their leadership skills fully. ERGs offer chances for employees to improve their leadership skills, helping the business succeed.



Source WE THRIVE

Purpose: Employee Resource Group (ERG)

- ✓ **Support business goals:** Align Employee Resource Group (ERG) initiatives with the company's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) objectives to drive meaningful progress and address company challenges.
- ✓ **Tackle workplace issues and reveal challenges and pain points:** Employees are often in a better position to see what's going well (or not), so ERGs help companies identify challenges and pain points at your company. By having leadership and HR work closely with ERGs, companies can improve communication and transparency between execs and employees, solve problems more quickly, and better meet employee needs.
- ✓ **Example:** In Australia, 19% of workers feel undervalued and can't move up in their careers, a jump from 2019.

Key Objectives of ERGs:

- ❖ Connect individuals with similar backgrounds and interests.
- ❖ Improve the workplace experience for employees who may feel marginalised or overlooked.
- ❖ Cultivate a more inclusive and supportive work culture.
- ❖ Identify, nurture, and develop future leaders from diverse talent pools.
- ❖ Tackle significant company challenges by leveraging diverse employee insights.

ERG Support is Multifaceted

ERGs provide strong support for underrepresented groups, making jobs more satisfying and engaging.

- ✓ ERGs run mentoring and upskilling programmes
- ✓ They help in attracting and keeping diverse talent
- ✓ ERGs make a company look good to potential employees
- ✓ They help create a healthy work culture
- ✓ Meet and connect with new colleagues
- ✓ Be an active voice for change
- ✓ Learn and grow professionally and personally
- ✓ Share their culture, values, and experiences with others
- ✓ Contribute towards a more open and human world of work
- ✓ Give back to the local community



[Source Goodera](#)

Employee Resource Group Activities: 10 Examples

 Professional development workshops	 Mentorship programs	 Guest speaker series and lunch and learns	 Cultural awareness events	 Charity fundraisers
 Book clubs	 Scholarships	 Volunteering	 Collaborating with HR and DEI teams	 Consulting on product development

[Source AHIR](#)

Resource: Employee Resource Group Toolkit: An Essential Guide

The employee resource group toolkit is a step-by-step guide for building, managing, and tracking worker-led teams tied to the DEIB goals of a company. As 90% of Fortune 500 companies invest in ERGs, having a blueprint that helps shape them into valuable initiatives that contribute to business success is essential.

Contents

- [What is an employee resource group?](#)
- [How are ERGs impacting the workplace?](#)
- [Employee resource group toolkit: How to start and manage ERGs](#)

Employee Resource Group Toolkit

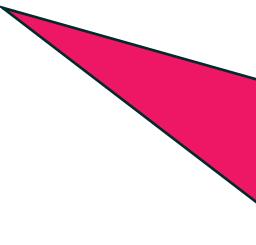


<https://www.aihr.com/blog/employee-resource-group-toolkit/>

[The 9 Best Benefits of Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)](#)

[Employee resource groups: The ultimate guide for small businesses](#)

[A Comprehensive Guide to Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\): Enhancing Workplace Culture and Diversity](#)



55% of LGBTQIA+ employees give low scores for “ability to be my authentic self in the workplace”, compared with 39% of other employees (EY 2024)

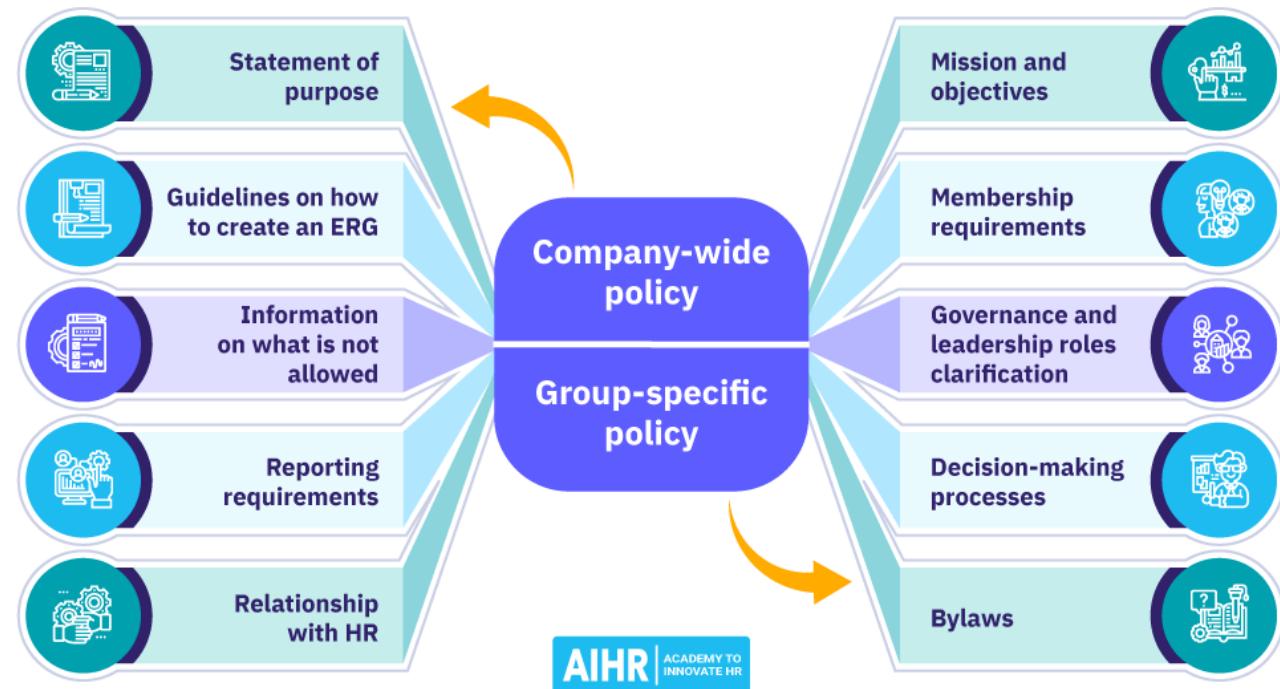
Resource: How To Create an Effective Employee Resource Group Policy with Template

An employee resource group policy is key to formalizing your company's ERGs. It plays an essential role in outlining these groups' guidelines, objectives, and governance in line with the broader company goals.

Contents

- ❑ What does an employee resource group do?
- ❑ What is an employee resource group policy?
- ❑ What to include in an employee resource group policy
- ❑ How to write an employee resource group policy: Best practices

Employee Resource Group Policy What To Include



<https://www.aihr.com/blog/employee-resource-group-policy/>



Recognise, Reward, and Empower D&I Champions

Recognising, rewarding, and empowering D&I champions is crucial for building a culture of inclusion, encouraging leadership, and driving systemic change within a company. It acknowledges the efforts of individuals who actively advocate for diversity and inclusion, motivating them to continue their work while inspiring others to take part. This approach not only sustains momentum for D&I initiatives but also builds accountability, attracts diverse talent, and ensures equity, creating a supportive environment where all voices are valued and heard.

Recognise, Reward, and Empower D&I Champions

This section covers practical strategies to recognise and reward D&I champions. By acknowledging contributions to D&I, companies can amplify their impact, inspire broader participation, and establish a culture where inclusivity thrives.

Understand the importance of recognizing and rewarding employees who champion Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives to foster a more equitable workplace.

Celebrating these contributions reinforces the importance of D&I, motivates others, and nurtures a culture where inclusion becomes a company priority.



Benefits of Recognising and Rewarding D&I Champions

Recognising and rewarding your Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) champions in a small business setting can have a big impact on your inclusive workplace culture. Think about it—these are the people going above and beyond to promote inclusivity and make everyone feel valued. By acknowledging their efforts, you're sending a message to your team that inclusion matters and that their hard work is seen and appreciated.

It also motivates others to get involved. When people see that their peers are being celebrated for driving positive change, it encourages them to contribute as well. Plus, it boosts morale! Small businesses thrive on strong relationships, and recognizing someone's efforts strengthens trust and loyalty. And here's the thing: D&I champions often come up with creative ideas for improving culture or reaching new markets. By rewarding them, you're not just encouraging inclusion—you're fostering innovation and teamwork, which can directly benefit your business.

- ❖ **Increased Engagement:** Employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to D&I initiatives.
- ❖ **Promote and Prioritise Inclusivity:** Recognition promotes a culture where diverse perspectives are celebrated.
- ❖ **Momentum for Change:** Highlighting D&I champions inspires others to take action.
- ❖ **Strengthened Employer Brand:** Demonstrating a commitment to D&I attracts top talent and enhances the company's reputation.

Step 1: Define Key Contributions to D&I: Identify behaviours and actions that significantly impact D&I efforts (e.g., mentoring diverse teams, initiating D&I projects, or driving ERG participation).

Step 2: Develop Recognition and Reward Mechanisms:

Create structured recognition programs, including awards, public acknowledgments, and monetary or non-monetary incentives.

Examples: Monthly “D&I Champion” awards, personalized thank-you messages, or shout-outs during team meetings.

Step 3: Establish Transparent Criteria: Develop clear guidelines for evaluating and recognising D&I contributions to ensure fairness and inclusivity in the selection process.



Step 4: Integrate Recognition into company Culture

- ❖ Make recognition of D&I efforts a regular part of team meetings, newsletters, and performance reviews.
- ❖ Align these initiatives with company values and goals.

Step 5: Amplify the Impact of Recognition

- ❖ Share success stories on company intranets, social media, or newsletters to inspire others to champion D&I.
- ❖ Encourage recognised individuals to mentor others or lead new D&I initiatives.



CASE STUDY

Mitchell Dermot, Ireland

Mitchell McDermott is an independent, full-service and data-led construction consultancy in Ireland that empowers ambitious companies to build better.

Our company culture is one that inherently promotes curiosity, respect, teamwork and employee health.

Rewards, Recognition & Celebrations

Whether it's a housewarming gift, or baby clothes to welcome a new arrival, we enjoy recognising and celebrating the special life events of our team. New ideas that improve how we work are acknowledged and rewarded, as well as professional achievements such as Chartership.

<https://mitchellmcdermott.com/>



What to Look For in D&I Champions

- Proactive efforts in mentoring or supporting underrepresented groups.
- Advocacy for inclusive practices in hiring, team building, or leadership.
- Development or leadership of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).
- Creative ideas or projects that promote inclusivity and celebrate diversity.
- Collaboration across teams to address bias or improve equitable practices.



How to Implement Recognition and Reward Systems

- **Leadership Buy-In:** Secure leadership support to ensure resources and visibility for D&I recognition programs.
- **Dedicated Budget:** Allocate funding for awards, benefits, and celebratory events.
- **Inclusive Recognition Process:** Ensure all levels of employees, including non-managers, are eligible for recognition.
- **Feedback Loop:** Regularly evaluate and refine the program based on employee feedback.



Examples of Successful Recognition Programs

- **LinkedIn**: Recognises employees contributing to D&I through their internal "TransformHER Awards" program.
- **Accenture**: Celebrates D&I champions via public recognition during company-wide town halls.
- **Salesforce**: Offers "Equality Awards" to employees making notable contributions to inclusivity.

Supportive Guides and Articles

- [Recognising and Appreciating Diversity Through Recognition Programs](#)
- Irish Center for Diversity**: [D&I Champion Program](#)
- Diversity and Inclusion Leaders**: [How should we recognise and reward employee networks?](#)

Start Your DEI Journey Today: Implement Actions for an Inclusive Culture.

Address all survey responses systematically. By addressing gaps systematically and leveraging resources, companies can create a truly inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued and supported.

- Use all survey responses to create an **Inclusive Culture Action Plan**, prioritising areas of concern and celebrating strengths.
- Reinforce inclusive commitment by adjusting policies and introducing new initiatives, address suggestions and concerns.
- Ensure **transparency and awareness of the issues** identified by sharing results and the planned actions with the company
- Provide **employee supports** where needed (e.g., Cultural Strategies, Supports and Resources and set up an ERG and create unbiased business processes and systems and provide space and listening meetings to the opinions and expertise of employees, HR, and outside experts)
- Employee training** (e.g., Unconscious Bias, Constructive Communication)
- Leader training** (e.g., Inclusive leadership development, Unbiased Talent Management)
- Reassess** progress quarterly or annually with follow-up surveys to measure improvement. Make sure to measure success through both metrics and communication between leadership teams, HR teams, and employees.



Reminder: 6 Principles to Create an Inclusive Company Culture

According to Deloitte a company creates an inclusive company culture by using six key principles:

1. Treat the evolution of diversity and inclusion as business-critical; not compliance-necessary
2. Move beyond diversity to also encapsulate inclusion; companies that focus on the value of inclusion typically enjoy superior performance
3. Prioritize inclusive leadership
4. Reinforce an inclusive culture by integrating diversity into all talent management practices
5. Provide resources that empower individuals to take action and bring their authentic selves to work, manage unconscious bias effectively, leverage support of mentors, and offer all resources broadly—not just for diverse populations
6. Drive accountability, not metrics tracking

Learning Outcomes

1. **Apply strategies** that encourage inclusive behaviours and collaboration within their teams.
2. Establish and manage **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)** to empower employees and amplify diverse voices in the workplace.
3. Design and implement **recognition systems** that celebrate and reward employees who drive D&I initiatives.
4. Demonstrate **increased intercultural competence** and **trust-building** skills, leading to stronger, more inclusive team dynamics.
5. Contribute to **creating a sustainable, inclusive workplace culture** by leveraging collaboration, ERGs, recognition, and intercultural competence.



Thank you

Any questions?

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