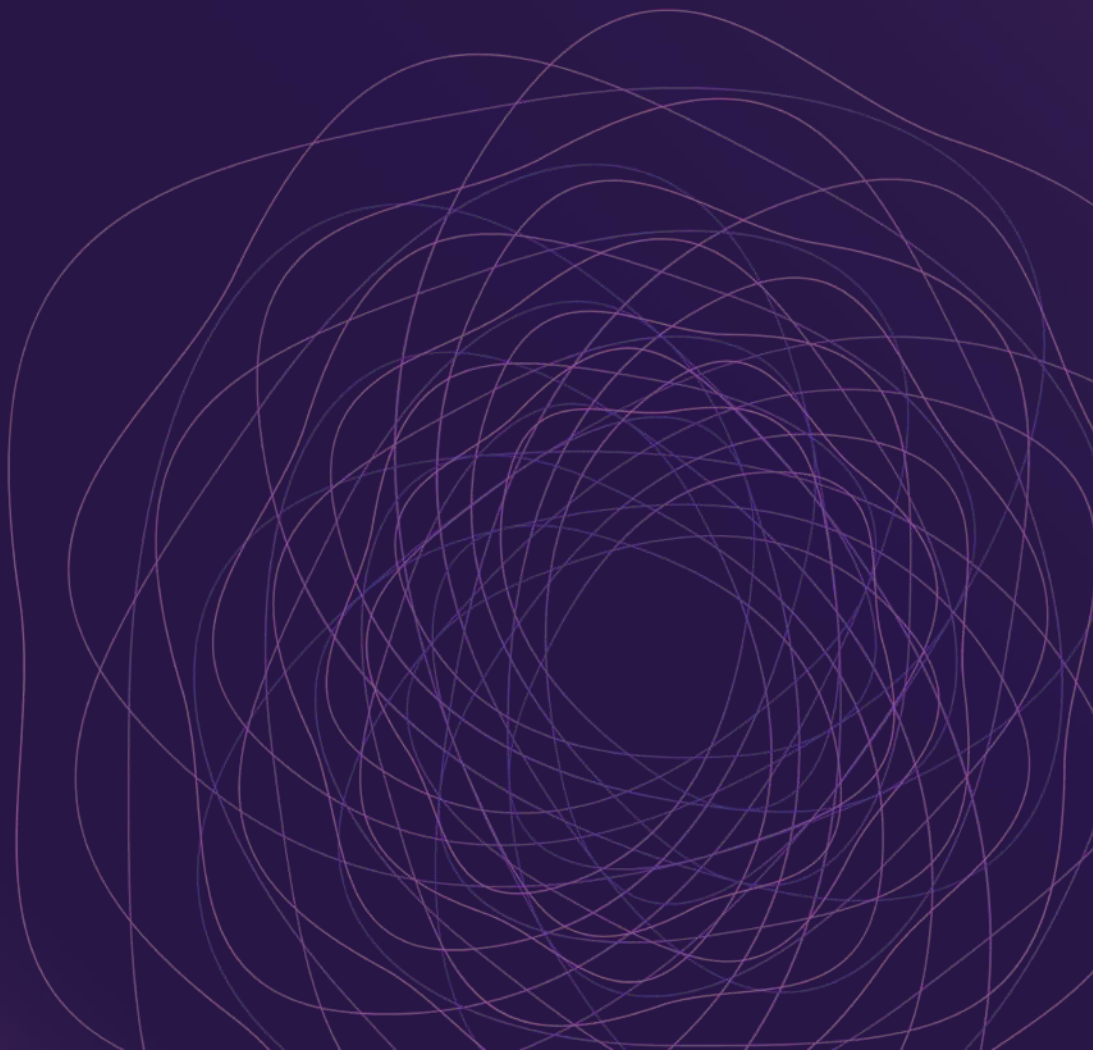




Diversity Mark

Accreditation
Guidance Notes





Introduction

We are delighted that you have joined Diversity Mark on your organisation's ED&I (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) journey. No matter where you find yourself on this journey, whether you're at the initial stages or making significant strides, we're committed to supporting your progress.

Before you dive into the process, we strongly recommend reading and reviewing these Guidance Notes. This step is essential before setting any targets or completing the accreditation application. Make sure to revisit these guidance notes throughout your journey, and again after creating the first draft of your accreditation application before submitting it to be assessed by the Diversity Mark [Independent Assessment Panel](#).

We also recommend utilising the Diversity Mark Toolkits, referring to the [Global Resource Centre](#) on our website and reaching out to a Diversity Mark Buddy for additional support. Our team is ready to assist by facilitating introductions to a Buddy, keeping you informed of any learning opportunities, and offering valuable guidance throughout your journey.

We also encourage you to participate in our Peer Learning and Support Sessions. **Please reach out to the Diversity Mark team to enquire about any of the available support at info@diversity-mark-ni.co.uk.**

Integrating equality, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) is not a one-time task but a continuous commitment. Even the most dedicated businesses must consistently strive for progress. We recognise and commend our signatories' dedication to this ongoing journey. Our role is to support you in developing tailored action plans through the Diversity Mark framework, benefiting your employees, organisation and customers.

By pursuing the Diversity Mark Accreditation, you foster a culture where employees can bring their authentic selves to work, eliminating barriers to growth and career progression. Over time, this journey enhances your reputation as an Employer of Choice, attracting top talent with a thriving, inclusive and evolving culture.

Please note that the 'Bronze Diversity Mark' has been renamed to the 'Diversity Mark Accreditation' as of September 2024. This change reflects feedback from our signatories and underscores our belief that 'Accreditation' better represents the commitment you make to advancing ED&I in your workplace as part of your journey with Diversity Mark.





Diversity Mark

The first step in your Diversity Mark journey is achieving the Diversity Mark Accreditation. The initial Accreditation involves submitting three targets for independent assessment to set the foundations for supporting ED&I with a particular focus on Gender Diversity.

- Please [CLICK HERE](#) to access the accreditation target framework which is available for completion by accessing your online Digital Platform.
- You can [CLICK HERE](#) for a visual representation on your journey to choosing targets, further detail will be covered later in this document.

We recommend initially assessing your Organisation’s Maturity level with respect to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. [The Diversity & Inclusion Maturity Matrix](#) (image below for reference) will help you review your actions taken to this point so you can assess where your Organisation sits on the Matrix below. You can also avail of the Maturity Questionnaire from the Tap Network; this can also help you assess where you sit on the Maturity Matrix

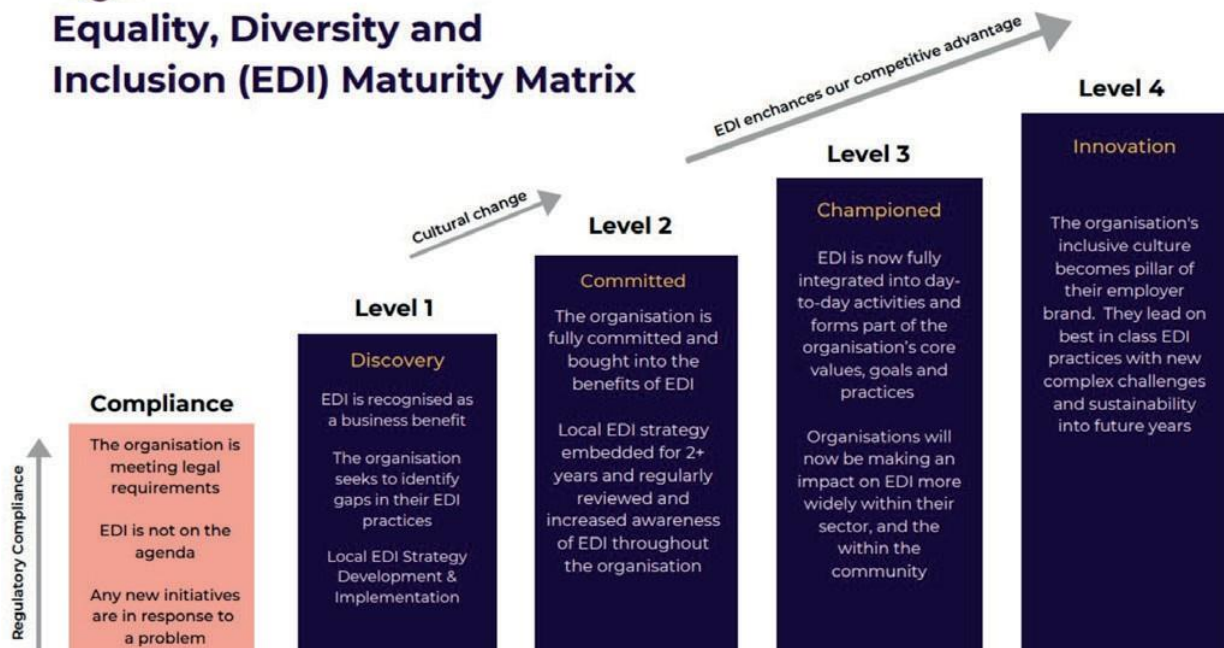
Once you have completed this step there are two options for proceeding depending on your assessment of your Organisation’s maturity level.

1. [CLICK HERE](#) for guidance specific to organisations that are at the start, or an early stage on their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion journey (aligned to Compliance or Level 1 on the Matrix).
2. [CLICK HERE](#) for guidance specific to organisations that are more mature on their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion journey (aligned to level 2 or above on the Maturity Matrix).



Diversity Mark

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Maturity Matrix





Submission Data Requirements

As part of the initial Diversity Mark Application all Organisations are asked to complete a Gender Breakdown Table with relevant commentary on gender breakdown by role. In 2024 Diversity Mark introduced a new data collection for initial Accreditation (previously Bronze), namely, Age with a breakdown by role. An Excel template is available to complete at first submission, this is available for your information by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Additional data requirements have also been developed. These are optional for initial Accreditation, mandatory for Silver and Gold Applications. We would encourage our Signatories to consider expanding their data collection to include the datapoints listed below. This could be to prepare for a future Silver Application but will also help Signatories build meaningful Company metrics earlier in the process, giving wider tangible evidence on progress and helping direct future areas of focus:

- Recruitment over the reporting period
- Attrition over the reporting period
- Sickness absence over the reporting period
- Flexible Working Requests Made
- Flexible Working Requests Approved
- Tenure by Age

All of the above data points to be recorded by Gender and Grade, thus giving an intersectional view of your workforce

What are the Assessors Looking for in your Submission?

The Diversity Mark Independent Assessment Panel are committed to helping you on this journey and they want to support your progress. The panel is made up of vastly experienced independent experts who each have an array of sector knowledge and real-world experience across diversity and inclusion, implementing best practices and seeing the positive results first hand. Their process for assessment and feedback is rigorous and diligent with an ambition to help Signatories succeed and see great results as they achieve their goals.

The Assessors are keen to understand how your Organisation will develop and grow and how your Organisation develops as you achieve your Targets. Please note, it's not just setting targets and achieving them, it's also about the culture shifting as you work to retain the accreditation each year and work towards Silver and Gold, for example:

- How has your employee experience improved with the introduction of flexible working policies? What have you learnt and what might you do differently?
- Who is better off now as a result of this journey?
- Have you seen an increase in employee retention? What trends have you noticed?
- Have you seen an increase in applications from Women or Women that were previously economically inactive due to caring responsibilities? How did you track and measure their journey from shortlisting stage, to interview and into employment?
- If you have implemented apprenticeships or education outreach programmes what effect did this have, what did you learn and what might you do differently.
- What does the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion section on your Board Report look like?



Additional Notes on Targets

All Diversity Mark Accreditation (previously Bronze) Targets should be set using the OKR (Objectives & Key Results) approach. This structure allows organisations to set meaningful targets with tangible, measurable results. Objectives & Key Results were introduced in the late 20th Century as a simple goal-setting system that works for Companies, for teams, for individual Employees. An Objective is what you want to accomplish. Key results help you achieve the Objective. In simple terms Objectives, Key results are the What and the How.

Targets should be generated with the following syntax: I will (Objective) as measured by (Key Result(s)). It is also useful to add time parameters to your OKR to become I will (Objective) as measured by (Key Result(s)) by (Timeframe). An example of a good OKR might be (Objective): We aim to increase the number of female candidates in our recruitment pipeline by 20% within 24 months as measured by:

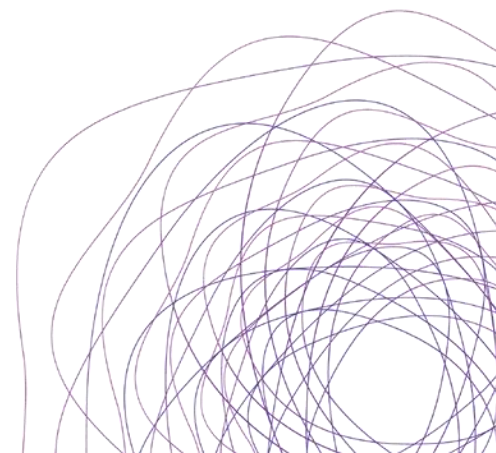
- Key result 1: Review and Update our Recruitment Branding material for Diversity and Inclusion
- Key result 2: Review our job adverts to ensure inclusive language and syntax, thereby encouraging more female applicants.
- Key result 3: Host three recruitment events with a diverse range of speakers and Company attendees
- Key result 4: Publish three blog posts about equality, diversity and inclusion as it relates to Gender Diversity and our culture each quarter
- Key results to be complete within a 12-month period

We recommend that you utilise the [Equality Commission NI](#) resources throughout your diversity journey. This includes their [Model Policies](#), where the Commission has drafted some examples of key policies you may find useful to review and adapt to suit your own circumstances. At Diversity Mark we also have a suite of Toolkits that will be helpful to you when developing new initiatives.

We recommend that, if you have a public website, this will include an ED&I section laying out your high-level commitments, for example:

- We will monitor our approach on equality of opportunity to ensure all employees have the same opportunities to progress
- We will introduce training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, with future annual certifications
- We will include additional welcome statements on our job advertisements, for example:
 - We are an equal opportunities employer and welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons. However, as women are currently under-represented in our workforce, we would particularly welcome applications from women
 - We are an equal opportunities employer and have supportive policies in place for flexible and remote working
 - We have introduced improved guidance on recruiting people with disabilities, including educating hiring managers about reasonable adjustment duty, good practice and positive action

If you do not have this then it should be included as one of your targets/supporting actions.





Progress will be demonstrated within your Organisation, and to our Assessors within your annual progress reports and future submissions, and will be supported by the data, measurables and metrics that you submit within your application painting a picture of your journey and culture shift.

There are three possible outcomes once the Assessment is completed:

- **Accredited** - awarded and in place for 12months. This will come with feedback to provide future guidance and encouragement as you work towards retention
- **Tweak** - You are almost there; the Assessors want to say 'yes' to your submission but there are a few minor adjustments and or clarifications needed prior to the accreditation being awarded. You do not have to wait until the next assessment to be awarded but you will be expected to make the required changes to the submission.
- **Resubmission** – Assessors are looking for significant adjustments to be made to your submission. You will receive feedback and support from the Assessors and Diversity Mark team, and we look forward to receiving your updated submission at the next assessment opportunity – the Assessors meet to assess quarterly.

To retain Diversity Mark Accreditation annually, and work towards achieving Silver or Gold accreditation in the future the Assessment Panel suggest these additional considerations:

1. How will you measure progress?
2. What data are you collecting as an Organisation that will support your annual report, that is, what specific evidence and metrics can you use to report back each year?
3. How can you incorporate responsibility for Gender Diversity and Inclusion at all management levels in your organisation?
4. How can the leaders in your organisation be visible champions for Diversity & Inclusion?
5. How can you be an influencer within your sector and the wider community?



Silver Diversity Mark

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the Silver Diversity Mark accreditation guidance.



Gold Diversity Mark

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the Gold Diversity Mark accreditation guidance.



Target Guidance Notes

Please check your word count at each section to ensure you remain within the word limits

Target - What is the specific Outcome you aim to achieve? : Is your target specific and measurable, using the Objectives & Key Results format? For Example, Increase X by Y%, as measured by Key Results 1, 2, 3

MONTH/YEAR

Is the target completion date at least a year from now?

Why have you chosen this target?

Please use bullet points and use this space to help the assessment panel understand your motivation and reason for choosing this target, why it is relevant at this stage on your journey and explain the current state of play.

Does your rationale relate to your own company data or research? For example, you may wish to refer to any relevant data in the Gender Breakdown Table. If relevant, you may wish to drill down further and utilise role specific demographics, recruitment and promotions data or trends, staff survey results or feedback from underrepresented groups. It may also be useful to refer to historical data (if it is available) to look for trends and for comparison purposes. Additionally, you may wish to consider integrating relevant sector-specific external data

Example

If an organisation's target is to "Increase applications from women for roles within software development by 15% by September 2025" they may wish to add a table in this section to assist in painting a picture.

| Software Development Roles | Men | Women | Totals |
|-------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| In role at present (Jan 2024) | 27 (90%) | 3 (10%) | 30 |
| Left within the last 5 years | 8 (54%) | 7 (46%) | 15 |

Recruitment Data Jan 2022– Jan 2024

| | Men | Women | Totals |
|----------------------------|----------|--------|--------|
| Applications for new roles | 58 (93%) | 4 (7%) | 62 |
| Shortlisted for interview | 23 (92%) | 2 (8%) | 25 |
| Offered | 6 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 6 |

By completing an exercise like this you might spot trends which can assist in developing the target for example:

- What is the experience of the three women in a mostly male environment?
- Can the underrepresented woman within software development, and other women within the organisation provide feedback via a working group to assist in developing a more gender inclusive workplace?
- How can you involve the younger generation in providing feedback for example bring your daughter/niece/sister to workday, to help you in considering what the next generation will value when considering your workplace.
- How might you attract a higher percentage of applications from women? This could be a metric. Have you considered women on all interview panels, language and role models used, where you are advertising for jobs, education outreach, girls' schools, and colleges etc? Have you included your commitment to ED&I on your company website?
- With just 3 women in these roles and 7 having left employment within the last 5 years – what are the reasons for them leaving? Did the company carry out exit interviews? If not, this could be an action going forwards to look for trends.



- Have you carried out an anonymous survey with an action plan within the organisation to understand the motivations, values of the workforce and any potential barriers?
- Have you considered a diverse working group, or employee led network to assist in identifying barriers, developing policies, and driving activity?
- Do men in the organisation understand the vast benefits of Gender Diversity for employees and the employer?

By drilling down into data, you will probably think of new actions which will inform further targets.

At present you might not have a system for monitoring and tracking data enabling you to easily identify trends. If not, you may wish to consider a method of tracking data moving forwards – this could inform a target at the start of your journey and will support your future submissions and the data requirements for Silver and Gold Accreditation

Companies have been most successful in driving ED&I when they utilise a diverse working group of energetic and enthusiastic individuals to help drive activities within the organisation. Individuals can take ownership of some of the actions (to achieve your target) which will also assist them with their own personal development.

How will you achieve this target?

| SMART Action Plan – minimum of 4, maximum of 8 actions | When? | Who is Responsible? |
|---|-------|---------------------|
| <p>These actions must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). This is where you can expand on your Key Results as previously logged, example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key result 1: Review and Update our Recruitment Branding material for Diversity and Inclusion • Key result 2: Review our Job Adverts for Inclusive language and syntax to encourage more female applicants • Key result 3: Host three recruitment events with a diverse range of speakers and Company attendees • Key result 4: Publish three blog posts about equality, diversity, and inclusion as it relates to our culture per quarter • All Key Results to complete within a 12-month period <p>You may also want to add additional Supporting SMART Actions in this section of the document. These could be those actions that need some research or time to work with external organisations so timescale can't yet be confirmed. They can then become Key Results for future annual reports or for a Silver Accreditation Application. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore best options to set up a Women's Network Group in the next 18 months • Research Learning Options for Diversity and Inclusion training in our Company, with an aim to form a plan for training in the next 18 months. <p>Each action should relate to the individual target. As a guide, the assessors would expect to see a minimum of four actions under each target, but more complex, challenging targets will likely have more actions.</p> <p>You should include milestones to be achieved in the months/quarters leading up to your target completion date and who is responsible, to be reviewed regularly with your Diversity working group.</p> <p>For example, if you just say...'Focus on.....' the panel will want to understand how you intend to focus.</p> | | |



Understanding your Vision

Why have you Chosen this Target?

Outline the analysis you have undertaken to choose this target.

Short and Long-Term Impact, who will Benefit?

Use metrics referring to the current state of play and the output or result that you hope to achieve.

For longer term targets you might wish to include milestones here with what you hope to achieve each year up to the target completion date.

Have you included your thoughts and aspirations on how this target will move the dial? Be specific on your thoughts, for example 'we will have a more diverse leadership team' is a generic statement. You may wish to consider being more specific to help paint a picture for the assessment panel.

How Will you Measure Success and Evidence Progress?

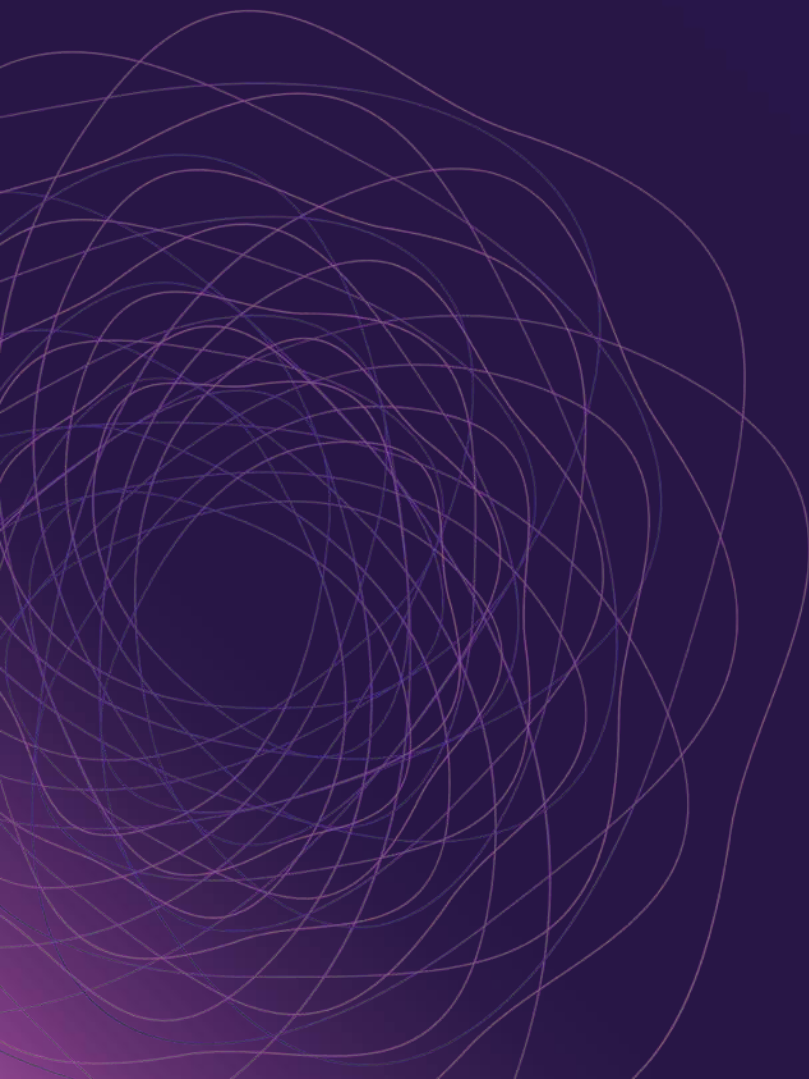
Use your baseline data to set the scene, then outline your ambitious goals and vision for the Target. Be specific and tangible, use numbers and percentages to show your aspirations.

'We know that by improving diversity in our leadership team we will make better decisions resulting in increased innovation. Our ambition, therefore, is to have 40% women representation at SMT and Board level by 2025.'

This will not be set in stone, but it will give the panel an understanding of your motivation and senior level buy-in.

You can access our Global Resource Pool [HERE](#) to assist you on this journey.





Diversity Mark