

ESTABLISHING AN ED&I COUNCIL

In the UK, we are facing significant challenges to progress our economy in a rapidly changing world. For businesses and economies to be globally competitive, it has never been more important to nurture and utilise the talent available to us. Inclusive organisations that attract and retain the broadest talent pools are consistently more effective¹; therefore Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) has become a responsible business imperative.

What is an ED&I Council?

An ED&I (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Council is an advisory board for an organisation and is composed of employees who lead, advocate for, coordinate, inform, and drive the organisation's ED&I strategy.

A key component of a comprehensive workplace ED&I strategy is the formation of an ED&I council. ED&I Councils, sometimes referred to as forums or committees, function

to prioritise a diverse, equitable and inclusive working environment, identify systemic inequities and ultimately improve the organisations workplace culture².

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¹ [Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review - GOV.UK](#)

² [Inclusive Leaders Group \(2023\) 'How to Launch \(or fix\) A DEI Council: 7 Actions you must take](#)



Some things to consider when putting together an ED&I Council:

1. What are the current ED&I issues within your organisation? If you do not know what they are, do this analysis first through speaking to colleagues directly, focus groups and/or staff surveys.
2. How are people currently engaged? Consider how ED&I is currently being discussed internally and how often.
3. Is Leadership engaged? Be sure to detail *how*³. An executive sponsor in the form of a senior leader, such as CEO, or a visible “operational” executive leader will ensure the council has backing and resources. This also demonstrates visible buy-in from the organisation’s senior leadership.
4. For an ED&I Council to be effective, a framework is needed for its operations, ensuring that the Council can effectively contribute to the organisation’s equity, diversity and inclusion goals with consistency.
5. What size is your organisation and what is your projected growth for the next year, as this will have an impact on the size of the Council, members and frequency of meetings.
6. What will the structure of the Council be; who do you want to be involved and why?

³ [Forbes \(2020\) “What is a Diversity Council and how Do you make it a success”](#)

Considerations

To ensure the council is supported across the organisation, it is imperative that the council is composed of a diverse range of people, who are passionate. For ED&I initiatives to be sustainable, the responsibility for their delivery cannot fall to just a few individuals as this is not sustainable. ED&I Councils can serve as valuable development opportunities for less experienced team members.

Structure and size of the Council may vary depending on the size of your organisation, however key role to consider are:

- **HR Professionals:** to guide policies, address employee needs and to ensure alignment with organisational goals.
- **Data or IT Specialists:** To collect, analyse data and track progress towards key goals.
- **Marketing:** To craft internal and external communications.
- **Senior Leaders:** To guide, advocate for Council initiatives and secure Leadership Buy-In

Other than that, a diverse group of positive and enthusiastic people that can help drive activity in your organisation.

Terms of reference

A guiding document is helpful to share the Council's **mission statement, objectives**, including, the **logistics** and meeting schedule, **roles and leadership** composition, **membership** and **decision-making process**⁴.

The Mission Statement

The **mission statement** summarises the group's purpose and intent. Below is an example of a step-by-step guide for organisations to follow:

1. Define the core purpose: Be clear on why the EDI Council is being established.
2. Reflect core values: Set out the core values that the Council will stand for, such as respect, equity, belonging, diversity and inclusion.
3. Set clear goals: Possible goals could be conscious inclusion training for all line managers, policy development, increase employee engagement by ..%.
4. Use inclusive language: this will ensure that the mission statement is accessible to all employees.
5. Involve stakeholders: to include employees and management to ensure the mission statement reflects a broad range of perspectives⁵.

⁴ [University of British Columbia: Activating Inclusion Toolkit \(2023\)](#)

⁵ [Government of Canada \(2022\) How to create an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#)



Objective examples:

1. Ensure the organisations ED&I strategy is implemented successfully while maintaining the organisations vision and values.
2. Forge links with internal and external stakeholders to discuss equity, diversity and inclusion issues and encourage participating in action plans.

Logistics and processes

This will cover where and when you will meet, as well as a location where resources and meeting minutes will be stored and who has access. Processes also need to be established for managing potential conflicts, communication and for adding new members⁶.

Roles and leadership

This is self-explanatory, but it is important to reinforce that people need to have a clear understanding of their role within the Council and the duration of appointment. It is also

good practice to have a process in place for appointing new members when an appointment is complete⁷.

Membership

Once you have considered the above, it will then become clear, what your ED&I Council will look like. Generally, they tend to fall into one of two types:

- A Council of senior leaders with decision-making ability
- A Council consisting of Junior to mid-level employees from different backgrounds, providing insights from a different lens but this Council should be chaired by someone with ED&I expertise and there should also be an executive sponsor.



⁶ [USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism \(2023\) "How to create a DEI committee so more Voices can be heard"](#)

⁷ [University of Leicester \(2023\) EDI Committee: Terms of Reference](#)

Measuring impact

The Council needs to be able to **measure progress**, which will guide overall activities and there are many options on how you can do this. Using the SMART approach is popular for many organisations.

An example of SMART goals might be:

- **Specific:** Increase the participation of underrepresented groups in organisational activities
- **Measurable:** Achieve 20% increase in participation within the next 12 months
- **Attainable:** Seek support from BITC to receive resources that will support participation.
- **Relevant:** Enhancing D&I within workplace activities aligns with the organisations mission have a respectful and equitable working environment.
- **Time-bound:** Implement this goal by the end of the next fiscal year, with quarterly reviews to check progress⁸.

Case study | NIE Networks

NIE developed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion forum, which is comprised of 30 passionate volunteers from all levels of the organisation, including two Executive members.



Since its launch, the Forum has driven noticeable improvement across the business, including six employee resource groups, DEI training on topics such as unconscious bias, co-designing bespoke training with local charities and developing online resources.

The Forum has also driven mentoring programmes for women in leadership and minority ethnic groups and is developing a self-identification campaign to capture more robust diversity data.

“NIE IS A GREAT COMPANY TO WORK FOR. I JOINED OUR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FORUM TO HELP MAKE IT AN EVEN GREATER COMPANY, WHERE EVERYONE FEELS VALUED AND RESPECTED – PART OF THE NIE NETWORKS FAMILY.”

Bert Mayes, Reporting & Compliance Officer

⁸ Gloucester City Council (2023) Gloucester ED&I revised SMART goals

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