

Practice guide

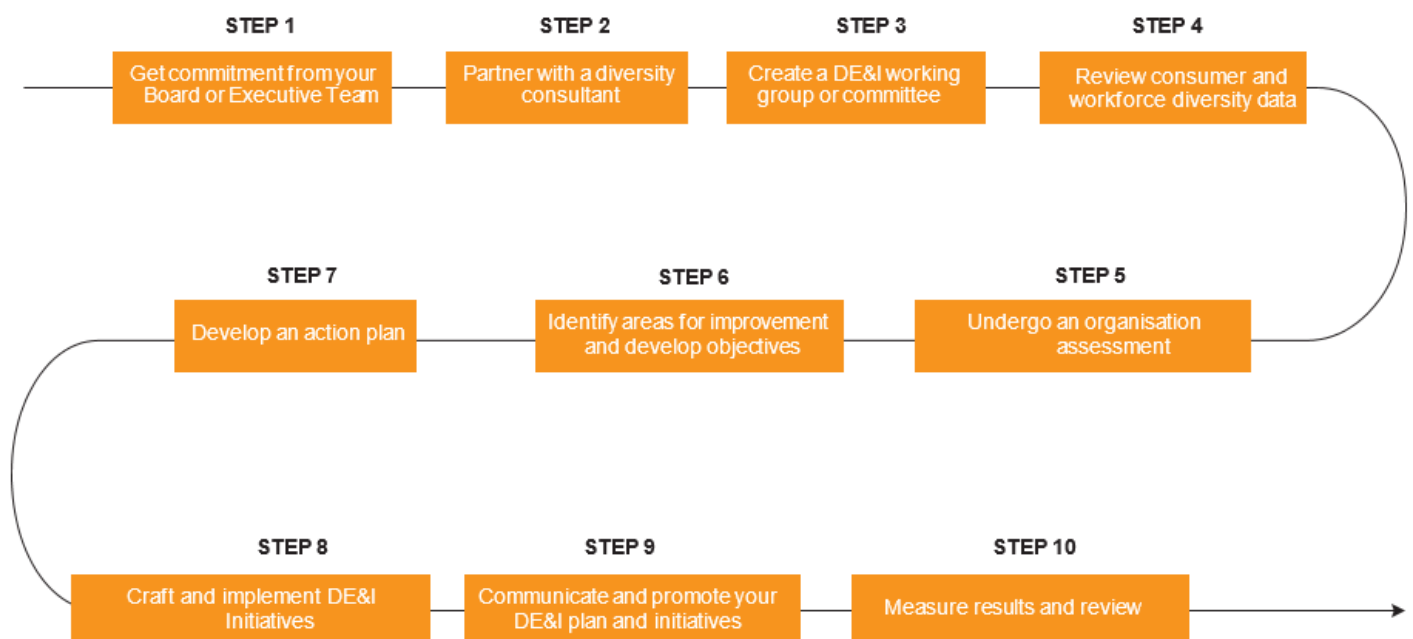
Ten Steps to Developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan in Aged Care

Australian government funded aged care organisations operate under legislative and policy frameworks which promote targeted approaches to achieve inclusive, equitable and accessible aged care and to address the diverse needs of consumers and those who are underrepresented or marginalised. These include the [Aged Care Act 1997](#), [the Aged Care Diversity Framework and associated action plans](#), and [the Aged Care Quality Standards](#).

One such targeted approach is the creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) plan. The DE&I plan would not just sit on the shelf, so to speak, but would operate across the whole organisation and be ongoing. The definitions of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are found on page six.

This practice guide aims to support you to think about a step by step approach to creating and implementing a DE&I plan within your aged care service. The ten-step approach acts as a guide to navigate a complex yet important task aimed at achieving greater choice and control for consumers regarding their care.

Ten Steps to Developing a Diversity Plan in Aged Care



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Step 1: Get commitment from your Board or Executive Team

Present your business case to get your Board and Executive team to truly understand why having a DE&I plan will impact the organisation from top to bottom. Rationale for having a DE&I plan within an aged care organisation can include moral and social reasons, legislative reasons, ensuring compliance and mitigating risks. Having a DE&I plan can also assist the organisation gain a good reputation for being inclusive and applying person centred care principles in line with the Aged Care Quality Standards. Further, a DE&I plan will keep the Board and Executive team accountable in meeting targets.

Step 2: Partner with leading organisation or a diversity consultant

Source a diversity consultant or diversity expert to facilitate open and honest discussions about diversity with senior leadership. Such diversity consultants exist within the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) Program. There are also a range of diversity consultants that operate independently as well as networks and organisations such as the EEON network and the Diversity Council of Australia.

Step 3: Create a DE&I working group or committee

Developing a DE&I committee or working group will ensure that conversations and implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion strategies are ongoing and embedded within the organisation. The group should have a terms of reference with a clear mission, and objectives and meet regularly. It is important that members are representative of diverse population groups and are able to bring their lived experiences to the development and implementation of the strategy.

The group could be tasked with the following:

- Promoting training and events to bring awareness to DE&I in the workplace
- Engaging co-workers in DE&I conversations and training
- Reviewing and developing policies and procedures that will promote DE&I
- Communicating the DE&I plan and initiatives across the organisation.

In the absence of a DE&I committee, an employer can designate responsibility for the above tasks to management or consider hiring a consultant to run the group.

Step 4: Review Consumer & Workforce Data

Collecting diversity data across the organisation sets the standard of where the organisation is at in relation to diversity that exists already and any areas of underrepresentation. You need to measure and benchmark the diversity of the current state of your consumer and workforce population to identify areas of concern and track trends over time. Collecting local demographic data is critical in comparing service usage with local ageing population; marketing to potential consumer groups and responding to changing community needs/demographic profiles. Workforce data helps you plan your recruitment strategies to ensure your consumer diversity is reflected in your workforce. The Centre for Cultural Diversity in ageing has a [data and demographics practice guide](#) to support you in collecting data.

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Step 5: Undergo an organisation assessment

It is important to assess where your organisation is at in relation to DE&I strategies. The Inclusive Service Standards were developed by the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing in 2018 to assist aged care organisations become better equipped at addressing the diverse needs of their consumers. They provide a framework for services to embed a systemic and holistic approach that focuses on adapting and improving current services and organisational practices so they are welcoming, safe and accessible for everyone. The Inclusive service Standards Organisational Audit and Planning Tool sets out a series of performance measures designed to assist service providers to meet the Inclusive Service Standards. By using this tool organisations are able to review current practices against each measure, identify areas for improvement and undertake further planning and development.

Step 6: Identify areas for improvement and develop objectives

Once you have diversity data on your consumer and workforce population and undergone an organisational audit, you can now begin to identify areas for improvement and develop clear objectives and targets. For example, if you have an underrepresentation of consumers from a certain cultural background, you may wish to target that group. In addition, you may notice a gap in programs that support certain groups such as people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people living with disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities or people who identify as LGBTIQ+. Therefore you may wish to guide objectives towards these diversity groups.

Step 7: Develop an action plan

Once gaps are identified within the organisation and objectives are designed, you can approach developing your DE&I action plan with key initiatives, performance indicators. The action plan would have clear timelines and deliverables and will be overseen by the working group with clear roles and responsibilities amongst staff involved. You may need a budget to support the key initiatives. It is important to get management or Board endorsement for your action plan.

Step 8: Craft and implement DE&I initiatives

Once an action plan is created and endorsed, you can implement your proposed initiatives. These can range from reviewing, changing or creating new diversity related policies and practices, diversity staff training initiatives, conducting targeted DE&I awareness events, partnering with diverse communities on targeted programs to name a few.

It is recommended you make DE&I the business of every employee, not just human resources, through smaller, simpler initiatives. For more ideas the Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing has its [Inclusive Service Standards tip sheets and suggestions](#).

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Step 9: Communicate and promote your DE&I Strategy

Ensuring employees and consumers understand DE&I initiatives requires engagement from stakeholders in executive and senior leadership. It is important that senior leaders can articulate their business case for DE&I, inspire employees to make sustained commitments, and pilot and support DE&I efforts. Ongoing promotion of DE&I initiatives should be included in all aspects within the organisation including social media, websites, and all types of communication directed at consumers. A public launch celebrating the development of your DE&I Strategy will help build your public profile as an inclusive organisation aimed at being a provider and employer of choice.

Step 10: Measure results and review

Measuring results for DE&I initiatives can make the difference between DE&I in theory and DE&I in action. The outcomes you measure are your indicators of change - without targeted KPIs, you can't learn whether your program achieves its intended purpose.

Some outcomes to consider measuring are:

- Representation of consumers accessing your service
- Consumer feedback
- Workforce is representative of the diverse communities you support
- Attitudes amongst staff toward diversity, equity and inclusion; e.g. from staff surveys
- New or existing programs and policies focussing on targeting diverse consumer populations
- DE&I training completion rates
- The creation of a DE&I strategy and progression toward its proposed actions.

Supplementing your quantitative research with qualitative methods can help to determine what aspects of your program influenced consumer experience.

DE&I initiatives are not static, and an ongoing review and a response to changing needs are necessary. Your organisation can establish procedures for periodic review of DE&I initiatives and goals. Periodically, an organisation may need to go back to the start and collect data to refocus its DE&I program. DE&I planning means organisational change and change often does not occur in a linear but rather in a cyclical manner.

Key considerations

1) Keep updated with Diversity and inclusion initiatives in the aged care sector

The Aged Care sector is constantly evolving and changing in relation to DE&I initiatives. It is imperative to keep updated with new programs and policies relating to diverse consumers such as navigator programs and language services initiatives to address language barriers.

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2) Be mindful of DE&I challenges within aged care organisations such as:

- Thinking diversity approaches "others" people
- Lack of staff, time, resources or allocated funding
- Lack of commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Lack of change readiness
- DE&I not being a priority

3) The importance of partnerships and networking

Developing a DE&I strategy involves consultations and input from a range of stakeholders. This involves developing effective partnerships within the organisation and externally.

Good practice example

Uniting Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023



In late 2019, Uniting established a D&I Team, with responsibility for an enterprise-wide D&I Strategy. The development of this strategy was led by a Working Group of diverse voices and experiences from across the organisation, and began with a dedicated phase of exploration.

Formal and informal networks of employees shaped the strategy through focus groups, surveys and interviews. External experts were consulted, contemporary D&I research was reviewed, and internal D&I data was analysed against external data sets to identify a pathway forward. The Uniting Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023 covers the 3 years from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2023. The D&I Strategy was endorsed by Uniting's Executive in July 2020 and approved by the Board in August 2020.

Useful Resources

[Aged Care Diversity Framework](#)

[Aged Care Diversity Framework Action Plans](#)

[Uniting Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020-2023](#)

[Inclusive service standards](#)

[The Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing's Diversity webinar series 2022](#)

[Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care Program](#)

[Equal Employment Opportunity Network Victoria](#)

[Diversity Council of Australia](#)

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Definitions

Diversity

Diversity encompasses any characteristic used to differentiate one person from another. These characteristics permeate the way we individually experience the world, the way we self-identify and the way we are identified by others. These characteristics and attributes shape who we are and what is important to us. We can identify with multiple characteristics at any given time or given context.

Inclusion

Inclusion is positive action taken to help consumers participate and be represented in all areas. Inclusion is where environments are welcoming, people feel comfortable to be themselves and they are empowered. Creating inclusive services and environments means addressing power and privilege imbalances.

Equity

Equity is about fairness. It is about recognising that disadvantage exists and finding solutions to the barriers, behaviours and attitudes that create unequal situations and outcomes. In order to be fair it is necessary to treat people differently. Equity doesn't mean disadvantaging anyone. It is about making the playing field level.

Intersectionality

In addition to common challenges, social differences often overlap as people identify with more than one characteristic, exacerbating already complex issues. There is no limit to the number of different characteristics a person holds and no two people's lived experiences are the same.¹

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1. Aged care diversity framework