



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

Ag Obair **Le Chéile**
DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ORGANISATION

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2023 - 2025



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FOREWORD

Delivering a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland is the vision that we are all working hard to realise. We have strategies, structures and systems in place to deliver the ‘climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected’ elements but it is incumbent on us not to take for granted what the ‘Ireland’ aspect entails. We are a country that is growing and changing, with a more diverse population than ever before. Our vision extends to 2050 when Ireland then will be even more diverse than today.

The development of our Department’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy reflects engagement across our Department over 2022 and 2023, including the work of the Department’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group, through work with the Irish Centre for Diversity; engagement on other critical issues such as our values and behaviours; our People Strategy and our progress towards Excellence Through People (ETP) accreditation. This Strategy and Action Plan is richer for that engagement and feedback – it has highlighted what is already in place and what we need to improve on. I would like to thank you all for your participation to date – the openness and honesty along with the listening, acceptance, and responsiveness to what has been said is very encouraging. These are of course the essential building blocks for an organisation that is open, willing to improve and welcoming of difference.

The clearest theme emerging has been that, as individuals coming to work every day, we strongly value the principles underpinning an inclusive organisation. Treating people equally; with fairness and with respect is, rightly, expected as the norm. As individuals, we believe in, and expect equality, diversity and inclusion across all our work and engagements with others. Having this is the best foundation to ensuring we deliver the ambition set out in this Strategy. As an organisation, we are at the start of our journey to consistently embed EDI into our policies and to recognise it as an everyday lived value.

Our corporate strategy, *Ag Obair Le Chéile*, aims to develop our people, culture, and organisation – this Strategy and Action Plan speaks to all three of those objectives. The dedicated EDI Unit within the Strategic Human Resources Division will lead the delivery of the Strategy and will be working with their colleagues across the corporate teams on some of the actions. By understanding, embracing, and promoting the principles of EDI together, we will create a positive environment for ourselves as individuals and our colleagues.

Fundamentally, delivery of the Strategy will make us a better organisation.

Philip Nugent

Chair, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council

DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY

Equality

Equality is about fairness, about treating individuals or groups of individuals fairly. Equality is provided for in legislation through the Employment Equality 1998 - 2015 / Equal Status Acts 1998-2018 and ensures that individuals are not treated less favourably, based on their protected characteristics (the “nine grounds” – gender, family status, marital status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller community as well as housing assistance – access to accommodation).

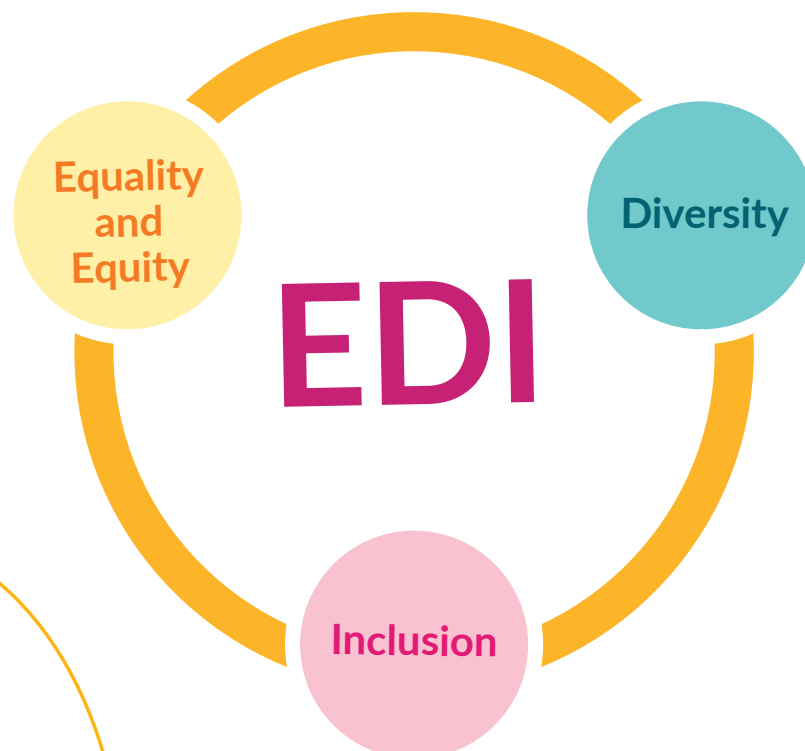
Equal treatment assumes that everyone benefits from the same support when they are treated equally. The concept of **equity** means that when people are treated equitably, individuals are given different supports based on what they need. To ensure equitable outcomes, the barriers causing inequity need to be removed.

Diversity

Diverse means different. Diversity is what makes each of us unique and includes our background, personality, life experiences as well as specific characteristics. Diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing differences based on our personal characteristics and other aspects of ourselves.

Inclusion

Inclusion means building a culture based on fairness and respect, value and belonging, safety and openness, and empowerment and growth.



OUR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION VISION

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Vision

Our Vision is for the Department to have an inclusive workplace, where everyone is encouraged to be themselves knowing that they will be accepted and treated fairly with dignity and respect

OUR EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MISSION

Le Chéile 23, our Statement of Strategy, commits the Department to *'allowing us individually and collectively fulfil our potential whilst delivering business goals.'* To us, delivery of our business goals means delivery of a better Ireland – one which is climate neutral, sustainable, and digitally connected. Delivering this requires a deepened connection to, and understanding of, the communities and people that we serve.

Delivering on our vision will mean an organisation where EDI is embedded and embraced, where EDI enables our operating model, informs policy development and decision making, and is reflected in our values and behaviours

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mission

THE IMPORTANCE OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TO OUR DEPARTMENT

Delivering a climate neutral, sustainable, and digitally connected Ireland requires people with diverse backgrounds and experiences who bring different perspectives and approaches to the challenges and opportunities we face. A diverse workplace can help us to better identify, address and reduce biases. Being open to listening to the experiences of our diverse staff members will improve our understanding and make our workplace more inclusive. Diversity is not just about individual personal characteristics but also about the value of diversity of thought, skills; perspectives and experience that we benefit from when we are all included and respected. We want to embrace the value of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to support people in freely expressing themselves; nurturing a positive workplace where people thrive; where they feel included respected and empowered. Therefore, our first actions in this Action Plan centre around building a framework for gathering demographic and other data as a baseline for our efforts.

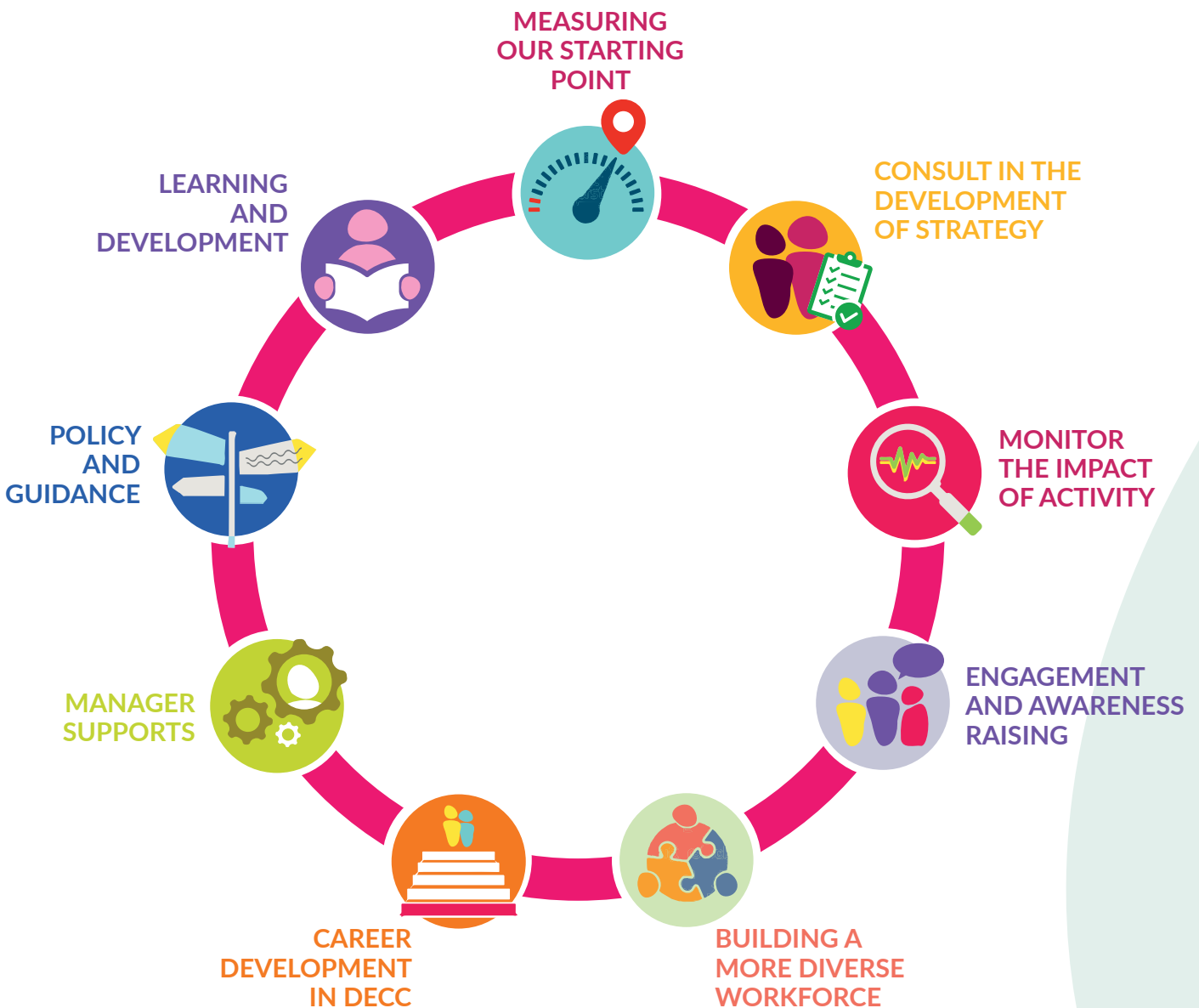
An inclusive culture within the Department will facilitate the improvement of our organisational delivery, performance, and attractiveness as a place of work. It makes for a dynamic, creative, and innovative Department where openness, positive engagement, and critical analysis flourish. It also provides the opportunity for us to better understand the people we serve.

Diversity is not just important within the Department. We appreciate that our stakeholders and customers are also from diverse backgrounds, with varying experiences, needs and specific characteristics. We appreciate that people can be disadvantaged across a number of different grounds and that intersectionality is an important consideration. As a Government Department, we want to be trusted by those we serve to deliver outcomes which best meet their needs. We respect and value their diversity and strive to harness the benefits of it to improve how our Department operates, together.

OUR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PILLARS

Equality, diversity, inclusion, fairness, respect and engagement are the rights of, and the responsibility of, everyone in this Department. It applies as we work together as colleagues and as we represent the Department in our engagement with the citizens and residents in Ireland, our stakeholders and customers.

The overall objective of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is to ensure that our actions will lead to improved inclusion of our employees and the people we work with, and more equitable outcomes for the communities and people we serve. We aim to achieve this objective through the implementation of our Action Plan, which is structured around the following nine pillars:



TIMELINE AND REPORTING

This Strategy and Action Plan runs to mid-2025. Throughout the term of the Strategy there will be continuous assessment and reporting on progress and outcomes. Progress will be driven and overseen by a Leadership Council, chaired at Assistant Secretary level and reported quarterly to the Management Board. Regular newsletters reporting on progress and notifying events, will issue to all staff.

INVESTORS IN DIVERSITY - ACCREDITATION

As we implement our Action Plan, we will progress through the Irish Centre for Diversity¹ EDI Maturity Model to achieve “Investors in Diversity” Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Mark accreditation. The Irish Centre for Diversity works in partnership with organisations at all stages of their equality, diversity, and inclusion journey to support organisations in making their workplace equitable and inclusive. The Irish Centre for Diversity maturity model assesses organisations on Five Principles as follows:

- Diverse and Inclusive Leadership;
- Policies, Procedures and Processes;
- Recruitment, Retention and Progression;
- Recording and Monitoring; and
- Impact on External Diversity.

Organisations can attain Bronze, Silver and Gold “Investors in Diversity” Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Mark accreditation. Our Department aims, through this policy, to progress through Bronze accreditation to Silver during the course of our Strategy and Action Plan, and to put in place the framework to demonstrate further maturity in the future through attainment of the Gold Investors in Diversity EDI Mark.

1 <https://irishcentrefordiversity.ie/>

STRATEGY AND POLICY ALIGNMENT



This Strategy outlines our direction and ambition to mid-2025. The Action Plan, at the end of document, outlines the steps that we will take to achieve it. Whilst this is our first formal strategy dedicated to the work currently underway and the work still required to embed equality, diversity and inclusion principles in the Department, it is recognised that we are building on a foundation of related initiatives and requirements which are grounded in fairness, respect and belonging.

These include:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focuses on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which represent the international community’s collective roadmap towards a safer, fairer, more prosperous and sustainable world. A central focus of the Agenda 2030² is the commitment to **‘leave no-one behind’**. To successfully implement Agenda 2030, this principle must be embedded within our work practices.

As a Government Department, we operate within a **legislative** framework which protects equality and recognises the importance of diversity and inclusion. All public bodies in Ireland have a legal responsibility under **Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014**³ to have regard to the need to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. The implementation of the Department’s Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty is prioritised in the Action Plan, and the Department will assess, address and report on how we fulfil our obligations and responsibilities under this public sector human rights and equality duty and our commitments in national strategies and policies relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion in the Department.

The **Civil Service Renewal Strategy 2030** recognises that we are working in a rapidly changing Ireland with a growing and increasingly diverse population. It sets out the need to ensure that our policy and service delivery responses are focused on equality, inclusion and accessibility, and that the composition of the Civil Service itself should reflect this changing Ireland. This Strategy and Action Plan sets out the actions which the Department is

2 gov.ie - Sustainable Development Goals (www.gov.ie)

3 42. (1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to— (a) eliminate discrimination, (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services

committed to delivering itself, recognising that addressing system wide issues requires collaboration and a whole of government approach.

Le Chéile 23, the Department's Statement of Strategy, sets out our vision of delivering a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland. Underpinning this, are five strategic goals and five enablers which provide strong and dynamic management to ensure delivery of the best outcomes for the people of Ireland and Government. Our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is most strongly connected to these enablers, recognising that it is cross cutting and will benefit all our work under the strategic goals.

As one of our key strategic actions, the delivery of **Ag Obair Le Chéile**, our corporate strategy to develop our people, culture and organisation, has been identified as a priority for our Department, reflecting our commitment to ensuring that the Department is regarded as a modern, progressive organisation and a great place to work. One of five workstreams focuses specifically on people and engagement and includes a commitment to publish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan in 2023 with implementation of the Action Plan to commence immediately.

Our three Departmental Values of **working together, having an impact and delivering high standards** define how we work and shape our culture. Our Values Statement recognises the fundamental role of our people to the Department, and that we encourage everyone to be themselves knowing that they will be accepted and treated fairly with dignity and respect. It recognises that by working together we bring out the best in each other and that this strengthens our delivery of the Department's vision set out in Le Chéile 23.

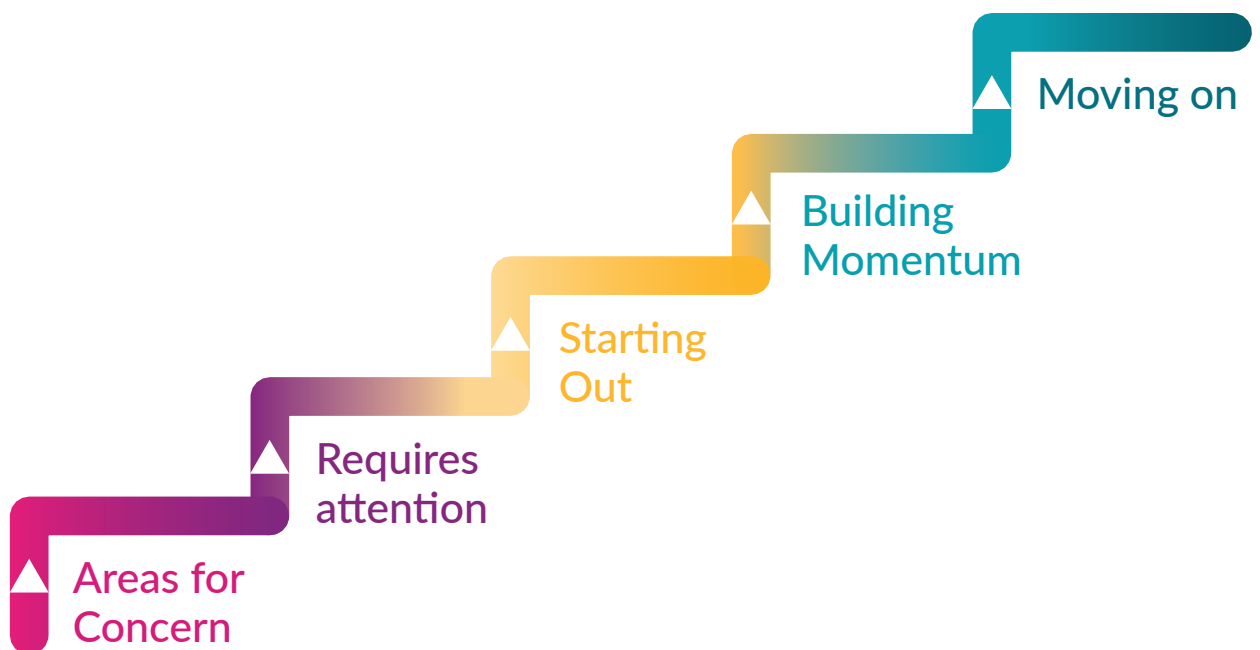
This Strategy and Action Plan is a key element of the Department's **People Strategy**⁴. In addition, this Strategy is building on several policies already in place in the Department, which are grounded in the principles of equality, fairness and respect, such as the Dignity at Work Policy, and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. In line with the other Civil Service values of independence, integrity and impartiality, other customer facing policies such as our Customer Service Charter set out our commitment to treating all our customers equally and fairly.

THE STARTING POINT

The purpose of this Strategy and Action Plan is to provide a framework for the Department to deliver on its vision of an inclusive workplace, where everyone is encouraged to be themselves knowing that they will be accepted and treated fairly with dignity and respect.

Central to our work on equality, diversity and inclusion is a commitment to openness, listening and responding. We have taken account of how our society as a whole and the wider Civil Service are changing, assessed the impact of growth and change within our own Department, and assessed, with the Irish Centre for Diversity, our organisational maturity in equality, diversity and inclusion. This has helped shape our approach and allowed us to identify what stage of our equality, diversity and inclusion journey we are currently at.

A five-point grading system is used by the Irish Centre for Diversity:



Our Department's result is at the third point 'Starting out.' This is based on diagnostics (a survey and workshops) looking beyond policies and procedures and assessing the character of the Department and the principles of staff including behaviours, conduct, attitudes, and beliefs.

Specifically, an assessment of 'Starting Out' means that whilst we have demonstrated that we have some aspects of diversity and inclusion in place, we still have some work to do to fully embed a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion into the Department. We have some good results, which this strategy will be working to maintain as well as working to address the significant opportunities for improvement. To help us best identify the areas to focus on, the assessment by the Irish Centre for Diversity is further broken down between

four areas. The results for our Department under each of these four areas are:

DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

We are Building Momentum

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PROGRESSION

We are Building Momentum

POLICY PRACTICE AND PROCESS

We are Starting Out

RECORDING AND MONITORING

This is an Area for Concern

The survey and workshops provided very interesting insights from colleagues across the organisation as to how progress can be maintained and suggestions to help address the identified gaps, which all helped to shape our approach. It is hoped that this Strategy and Action Plan will reflect the values, perspectives and input that we have heard over the past few months, and that its implementation will have a positive, meaningful and visible impact on us as individuals and an organisation.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Through our engagement in the development of this Strategy, staff have taken the opportunity to express their concerns, share their experiences and identify areas that work well and those which require improvement. The maturity assessment has shown that the Department is starting to make progress on its equality, diversity and inclusion journey. To move forward, we have used the insights from that engagement and the input from the Irish Centre for Diversity to identify the following actions for delivery.



PILLAR	ACTION	OWNER	TIMELINE
Measure Our Starting Point	Develop framework to capture demographic data and related factors in line with best practice, ensuring staff trust how the data is collated, stored, and managed. This will include data relating to recruitment, promotion, learning and development, and pay	EDI Unit	Q4 2023
	Review the demographic data captured, as it becomes available, to identify trends in underrepresentation and inform appropriate action. This data and findings will be published and shared in an appropriate, aggregated manner	EDI Unit	Q2 2024
	Maintain database of complaints, grievances, disciplinary matters and any other relevant matters for analysis related to discrimination, and collect data on any appropriate investigation and remedial action where negative trends emerge	Strategic Human Resources Division	Ongoing
Consult in the Development of Strategy	Implement the Department’s Public Sector Equality and Human Right Duty – assess, address and report on the implementation of the Duty	EDI Unit	Q4 2023
	Develop framework for consultation with internal and external stakeholders to better include the perspectives of people with lived experience of discrimination, inequality and socio-economic marginalisation in the policies that affect them	Communications and Media Relations Division	Q2 2024
	Develop capability to embed an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective in the day-to-day work of the Department through the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights duty, and the development of equality, diversity and inclusion impact screening tools and methodology	EDI Unit	Q3 2024
	Develop guidance and best practice examples of key Agenda 2030 considerations and SDG inclusion to embed SDG matters in policy development	SDG Team and EDI Unit	Q1 2025





PILLAR	ACTION	OWNER	TIMELINE
Monitor the Impact of Activity	Establish Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Council chaired at A/Secretary level which will meet at least quarterly to oversee delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan; track progress and impact, and make recommendations for improvements, if needed. Quarterly report on progress to be provided to Management Board	EDI Unit	Q3 2023
	Publish annual report on progress of this Strategy and Action Plan	EDI Unit	Annually
	Benchmark progress across the Irish Centre for Diversity Maturity Model, progressing through Bronze to Silver Investors in EDI Mark Benchmark progress against the Our Public Service Public Service Maturity Model, and work with other Civil Service Departments to share learnings and approaches	EDI Unit	Bronze “Investors in Diversity” EDI Mark Q1 2024 Silver “Investors in Diversity” EDI Mark Q2 2025
Engagement and Awareness Raising	Establish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) unit within Strategic Human Resources Division to oversee and support implementation of the Action Plan, and to work with Civil and Public Service colleagues and bodies under the aegis to further progress equality, diversity and inclusion	Strategic Human Resources Division	Delivered
	Develop equality, diversity and inclusion employee resource group to facilitate consultation across the Department and inform the work of the Leadership Council	EDI Unit	Q3 2023
	Establish and support staff-led networks to reflect diversity, for consultation and to identify and address barriers, so that the contribution of all staff can be recognised and valued, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and Allies Network • LGBTQ+ Network • Access Group • Other Groups 	EDI Unit	Ongoing
	Establish dedicated equality, diversity and inclusion Intranet page and publish quarterly calendar of events and an equality, diversity and inclusion newsletter	EDI Unit	Q3 2023 and ongoing
	Establish network of trained Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions across the Department with an Annual award ceremony to acknowledge individual achievements	EDI Unit	Q2 2024



PILLAR	ACTION	OWNER	TIMELINE
	Arrange, host, and support the delivery of quarterly equality, diversity and inclusion events / training	EDI Unit and Learning and Development Team	Ongoing
	Continue to improve accessibility of information by adopting new technology and approaches	Communications and Media Relations Division EDI Unit	Ongoing
Building a More Diverse Workforce	Enter into 'learning partnerships' with external organisations and offer paid placement and apprenticeship opportunities to help improve access to, and diversity in, civil service employment	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q4 2023 and ongoing
	Continue to implement a holistic reasonable accommodation approach working with the Disability Liaison Officer, employees and managers to ensure access to employment, promotion, and training	EDI Unit Strategic Human Resources Division	Ongoing
	Continue to ensure Interview Boards are diverse in their make-up and that all interview board members have participated in Unconscious Bias training	Strategic Human Resources Division	Ongoing
	Review internal resourcing processes and take appropriate action to ensure that our processes deliver equitable outcomes and support this Strategy	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q2 2024
	Build partnerships with local educational institutions to develop inclusive Transition Year and internship programmes aimed at increasing the accessibility and understanding of public service careers for young people from diverse backgrounds and those at risk of socioeconomic marginalisation	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q3 2024
	Explore options to increase apprenticeship route for technical roles within Department, ensuring that these are accessible and examining best approach options to attract participants from diverse backgrounds and those at risk of socioeconomic marginalisation	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q2 2024
	Work with colleagues across the civil and public service to pilot models, share knowledge and increase inclusion in the civil service workforce of the future	EDI Unit Strategic Human Resources Division	Q1 2024



PILLAR	ACTION	OWNER	TIMELINE
Career Development	Conduct research among staff on any barriers they perceive to career progression within the Department, starting with a focus on gender and continuing to expand to include disability and the intersections of multiple characteristics	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q3 2023 and ongoing
	Review data from promotion opportunities within the Department to identify and address areas of underrepresentation	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q3 2023 and ongoing
Manager Supports	Provide inclusive leadership and management training as part of Leadership and Management Development programmes, and include key guidance and practical day to day visible inclusive leadership tips in a Manager Toolkit	EDI Unit Learning and Development Team	Q3 2023
Policies and Guidance	Review Civil Service Dignity at Work, disciplinary and grievance policies. Develop practical guidance to ensure that managers are appropriately supported to manage cases to achieve equitable outcomes. Make policy guidance readily available and understood through a communication campaign	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q4 2023
	Work with colleagues across the civil service to develop and implement coherent policies and approaches to support staff understanding of gender identity and to assist those that wish to express their gender identity in the workplace	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q4 2023
	Develop framework, training, and guidance to support staff to deal 'in the moment' with inappropriate and unwelcome behaviour	Strategic Human Resources Division EDI Unit	Q4 2023
	Generate guidelines to support the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion values amongst contractors to the Department for inclusion in the wider contractor processes	Strategic Human Resources Division	Q2 2024



PILLAR	ACTION	OWNER	TIMELINE
Learning and Development Supports	Provide training on a continuous basis to ensure that no one is left behind with topics for prioritisation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health • allyship (increasing awareness and supporting our staff and colleagues’ diversity) • bullying and harassment • inclusive awareness and language • poverty and social exclusion • unconscious bias • sign language 	Learning and Development Team EDI Unit	Ongoing
	Enhance equality, diversity and inclusion content in Department Induction processes and continue to roll out equality, diversity and inclusion training modules for new joiners and existing staff	EDI Unit	Ongoing
	Provide training on chairing inclusive meetings to improve inclusion and engagement of all staff voices in fora, network and divisional meetings	Learning and Development Team	Q3 2023
	Train key points of contact across the Department as ‘mental health first aiders’	Learning and Development Team	Q4 2023



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