

## Session Summary – Embedding DEI into an Organisation’s Ecosystem Webinar

This session focused on how organisations can meaningfully embed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) across their entire ecosystem—internally, externally, and through the systems that connect the two. Participants explored practical examples, shared challenges, and reflected on the Global DEI Benchmarks (GDEIB) as a tool for assessing maturity and guiding action.

### 1. Opening Reflections

The session began with a check-in acknowledging current global events and their emotional impact. Participants highlighted how geopolitical instability affects people personally and professionally, reinforcing the importance of psychological safety and empathy in DEI work.

### 2. Revisiting the Four ‘I’s Model

The group revisited the Four ‘I’s Model from Charlotte Sweeney OBE’s book *Inclusive Leadership*, focusing on the goal of moving DEI work into the **Inclusion** quadrant—where engagement is high and DEI is fully embedded into business-as-usual. This framed the session’s emphasis on shifting from isolated initiatives to systemic integration.

### 3. Understanding the Organisational Ecosystem

Participants explored the many interconnected elements that make up an organisation’s ecosystem, including:

- **Internal stakeholders:** leaders, managers, employees, ERGs, past employees
- **People systems:** values, behaviours, hybrid working, policies, processes
- **External stakeholders:** customers, suppliers, partners, communities, ESG commitments
- **Wider influences:** regulation, activism, generational expectations, competitors, brand perception

The discussion highlighted that organisations often focus heavily on internal DEI, while external and systemic influences receive less attention despite their significant impact.

### 4. Introducing the Global DEI Benchmarks (GDEIB)

The GDEIB was presented as a global maturity framework covering 15 categories across four areas:

- **Foundation** (vision, leadership, governance)
- **Internal** (talent, job design, pay, benefits)
- **External** (community, products, marketing, supply chain)

- **Bridging** (communications, learning, assessment, sustainability)

The tool helps organisations understand whether they are **inactive**, **reactive**, **proactive**, **progressive**, or at **best practice**, and provides guidance on how to advance.

## 5. Deep Dive: Foundation

Discussion centred on how organisations embed DEI into:

### Vision & Strategy

- DEI integrated into mission statements
- Clear, shared definitions of DEI that go beyond gender and ethnicity
- Local adaptation of global DEI language to ensure cultural relevance

### Leadership

- Leaders communicating consistently about DEI
- DEI competencies built into performance expectations
- Transparent reporting (e.g., annual reports including DEI KPIs)

### Structure & Governance

- Clear reporting lines for DEI
- Dedicated committees or board-level oversight
- Resourcing and budget aligned to ambition

Participants noted the gap between written values and lived behaviours, and the challenge of ensuring consistency across large, complex organisations.

## 6. Deep Dive: Internal

This section covered recruitment, advancement, job design, compensation, and benefits.

### Recruitment & Advancement

- Inclusive job descriptions and skills-based hiring
- Diverse candidate slates and structured interviews
- Onboarding accessibility
- Succession planning and positive action
- Ensuring hiring managers understand their role in DEI outcomes

### Job Design & Pay

- Pay gap reporting and transparency challenges
- EU Pay Transparency Directive implications
- Fair performance criteria and bias mitigation

### **Benefits & Flexibility**

- Hybrid working fairness
- Caregiver support
- LGBTQ+ inclusive benefits
- Accessibility and workplace adjustments
- Challenges around collecting disability or religious data in certain regions

Participants shared examples of hiring guardrails, data-driven talent identification, and the tension between legal constraints and the desire for better demographic insight.

### **7. Deep Dive: External**

Participants explored how DEI influences outward-facing areas:

- Community engagement and volunteering
- Inclusive product and service design
- Marketing that reflects diverse lived experiences
- Supplier diversity and equitable procurement practices
- Local hiring to reflect cultural and language needs

Examples included inclusive advertising campaigns and philanthropic partnerships such as sponsoring girls' sports teams.

### **8. Deep Dive: Bridging Areas**

These categories connect internal and external DEI work:

- Accessible communications (e.g., sign language at town halls)
- Embedding DEI into leadership development
- Using data and feedback loops to measure progress
- Aligning DEI with ESG and sustainability governance

Participants discussed challenges with self-ID data and the role of ERGs in increasing trust and participation.

### **9. 2026 DEI Priorities (Participant Reflections)**

One organisation shared its 2026 priorities:

- **Building a diverse talent pipeline**, with a focus on gender and Black African talent
- **Strengthening sponsorship capability**, including mobility and coaching
- **Enhancing ERGs**, aligning their plans with the DEI strategy and clarifying roles with HRBPs

A key challenge raised was HRBP resistance to DEI targets. The group explored how to uncover underlying concerns and build shared ownership.

### **10. Embedding DEI: The EMBED Tool**

The facilitators introduced the E.M.B.E.D. tool to help integrate DEI into processes:

- **Explore** purpose, impact, and context
- **Measure** outcomes and feedback
- **Build in** DEI from the start
- **Engage** stakeholders
- **Develop** capability

This provides a practical structure for turning DEI principles into everyday practice.

**The facilitators reinforced that embedding DEI is an ongoing process requiring alignment, accountability, and continuous reflection across the entire organisational ecosystem.**