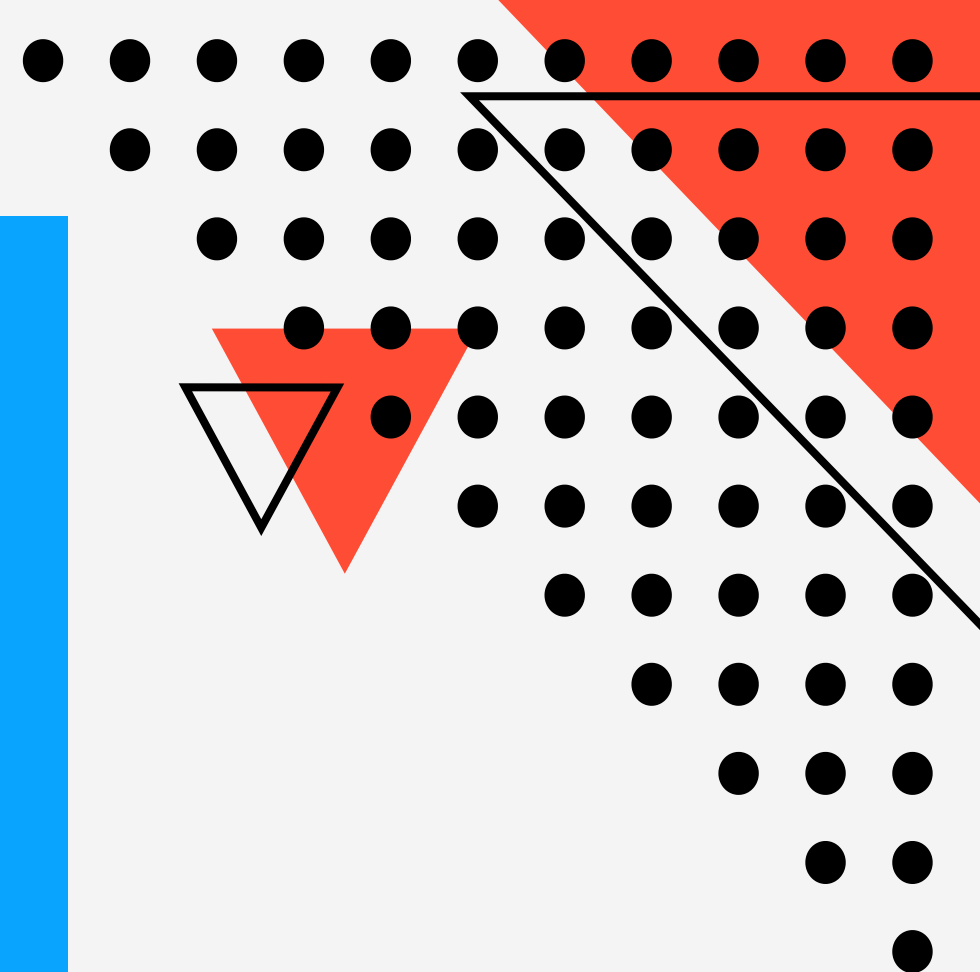


Advancing Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in the Charitable Sector.

A comprehensive report



About Mildon

Cultivating inclusive, high-performing cultures.

Mildon is an EDI consultancy that partners with organisations to build more inclusive, high-performing cultures.

At Mildon, we partner with organisations to cultivate inclusive, high-performing cultures. We've partnered with a wide range of organisations, including not-for-profits such as Plan UK, BPO, the Forward Institute, Leonard Cheshire, Making Music, Pathfinders Alliance, Liberty Human Rights, and the Directory of Social Change.

We eliminate surface-level diversity efforts and replace them with strategic, impactful actions that create long-lasting, positive outcomes. Our deep commitment to inclusivity sets us apart.

Research consistently shows that implementing EDI drives success. That's what we help you achieve.



About The Author

Brooklyn O'Sullivan

After working in international roles across the charitable sector, Brooklyn now works as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant and coach. Like many others, George Floyd's murder was a turning point, prompting her to reflect on how she could better represent communities, help organisations become more inclusive, and step up personally.

After working in international roles across the charitable sector, Brooklyn now works as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant and coach. Like many others, George Floyd's murder was a turning point, prompting her to reflect on how she could better represent communities, help organisations become more inclusive, and step up personally.

During her time in the charity sector, Brooklyn created her organisation's first EDI network - a pivotal moment that cemented her commitment to this work and ultimately led to her transition into EDI consultancy.

Brooklyn's approach is rooted in her core values: Impact, Connection, and Discovery. She makes EDI practical, relevant, and approachable by fostering cultures of curiosity and creating spaces where everyone feels part of the conversation.

Focused on making EDI feel less overwhelming, Brooklyn helps build confidence, cut through confusion, and provide clear, actionable steps that work for people at all levels. As a passionate EDI specialist and certified coach, she is driven to create meaningful change, working with both committed EDI champions and those who are hesitant to engage.

Brooklyn's approach is rooted in her core values: Impact, Connection, and Discovery. She makes EDI practical, relevant, and approachable by fostering cultures of curiosity and creating spaces where everyone feels a part of the conversation.

Executive Summary

Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the Charitable Sector report aims to provide a thorough exploration of how EDI practices are being implemented across charitable organisations and their impact, while also delving deeper into the sector's challenges and success stories.

The report offers practical and actionable recommendations for senior leaders of charities and not-for-profits, whether you are a trustee, a CEO or in another role on the leadership team to advance EDI in this sector.

"The report offers practical and actionable recommendations for senior leaders of charities and not-for-profits, whether you are a trustee, a CEO or in another role on the leadership team to advance EDI in this sector."

BROOKLYN O'SULLIVAN



Key findings

Problem:

Lack of Leadership Accountability and consistent EDI actions.

There's a noticeable gap between leadership's stated commitment and actions. The challenge isn't getting leaders on board; they often already express a strong commitment to inclusion.

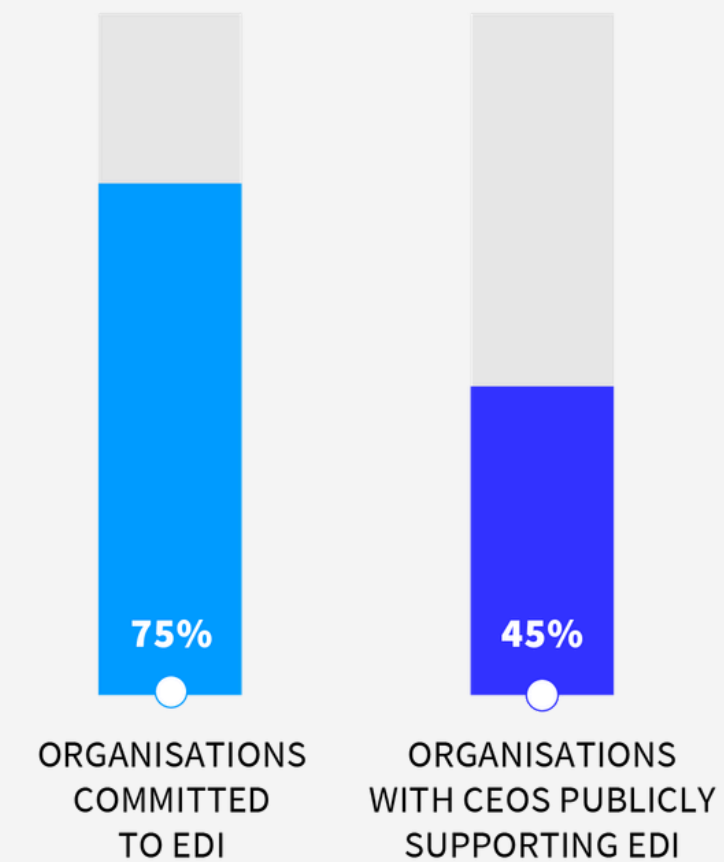
We found that **75%** of organisations show strong dedication to building an inclusive culture, but only **45%** of CEOs have publicly voiced their support for EDI, and only **33%** say leaders outside HR promote it. This highlights a disconnect between leadership and the teams driving these initiatives.

Impact:

EDI efforts lose momentum.

Solution:

It's essential that Chairs, Trustees and CEOs actively champion EDI, setting the tone from the top. This ripples to Senior Leadership, who are further supported with inclusive leadership training and coaching.



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EDI is an evolving journey, not a one-time tick-box.

Problem:

Lack of EDI strategy and data.

Only **18%** have a three-year EDI strategy in place. Without a structured EDI strategy, organisations struggle to identify gaps, set measurable goals, and track progress.

Impact:

Inconsistent progress and employee disengagement.

Solution:

Establish structured, data-driven strategies that include three phases: Starting, Maturing, and Leading. This approach can also be referred to as Box Ticking, Doing The Work, and What We're Known For. This approach emphasises that EDI is an evolving journey, not a one-time tick-box or window dressing initiative.



Problem:

Fragmented and Impractical Policies.


Inclusive policies and practices provide the foundation of an inclusive workplace and culture. They are crucial for creating a supportive environment for all employees. However, only **42%** of organisations address inclusivity comprehensively across key areas such as family policies, disability and long-term health conditions, and observing religious practices.

Impact:

Disengagement, reputation risk, and talent challenges.

Solution:

Create Practical, relevant policies. Begin with your own EDI Policy, with a focus on creating relevant, actionable frameworks that align with your organisation's strategic goals and employees' everyday experiences.



**Inclusive policies
and practices
provide the
foundation of an
inclusive workplace
and culture.**



Continuous Learning rather than a one-off learning intervention creates an inclusive culture.

Problem:

Lack of EDI Knowledge.

Just **9%** of organisations have comprehensive, ongoing programs that equip employees at all levels to practice inclusion regularly, and **46%** of organisations lack any formal EDI training programs with a lack of dedicated budgets for EDI is a significant barrier and further amplifies this issue, with only **10%** of organisations satisfied with their resources.

Impact:

Unprepared workforce and missed opportunities.

Solution:

Continuous Learning rather than a one-off learning intervention creates an inclusive culture.



Problem:

Narrow recruitment limits diversity.

58% of organisations do not consistently integrate diversity considerations into their recruitment process. **42%** of organisations always integrate diversity considerations into their recruitment processes, and another **42%** do so only sometimes or rarely.

Impact:

Inconsistent diversity practices, limited inclusivity.

Solution:

Inclusive, values-based recruitment strategies. Create practical recruitment strategies that include wider job ad distribution, diverse interview panels, job descriptions that reflect inclusive language, and structured interview processes that include a grading scale and questions to explore culture add vs culture fit.



**Practical
recruitment
strategies allow
for diverse
recruitment
processes.**

Document clear steps from entry-level to senior roles, giving all employees a roadmap for advancement.

Problem:

Lack of Inclusive Career Development.

Organisations that excel at retaining and advancing diverse talent will create clear career development plans, however **58%** do not offer any career development program. When an organisation has clear career paths accessible to all that include the skills listed needed to advance, there is less room for bias (including racial and gender) to inform promotion decisions.

Impact:

Restricted progression.

Solution:

Structured and transparent career paths. Document clear steps from entry-level to senior roles, giving all employees a roadmap for advancement. Equip managers to articulate these pathways and leverage the accessible, online professional development resources available.



Problem:

Inaccessible Technology Limits Inclusion.

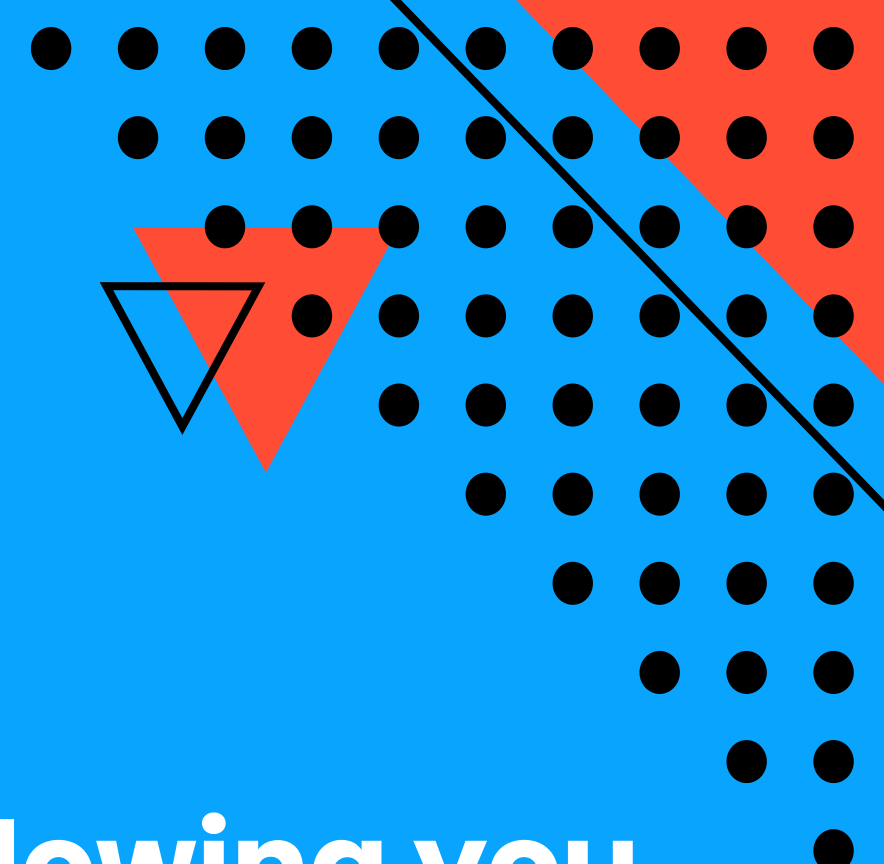
58% of organisations do not systematically address technology barriers for disabled employees and those with accessibility barriers, despite **24%** of people in the UK having a disability (and **16%** of working-age adults).

Impact:

Accessibility gaps create exclusion.

Solution:

Accessible tech and supportive culture, this can start with a simple question: what is slowing you down or what is getting in your way?.



“What is slowing you down or what is getting in your way?”



Funding gaps limit progress and impact.

Problem:

Lack of EDI budget.

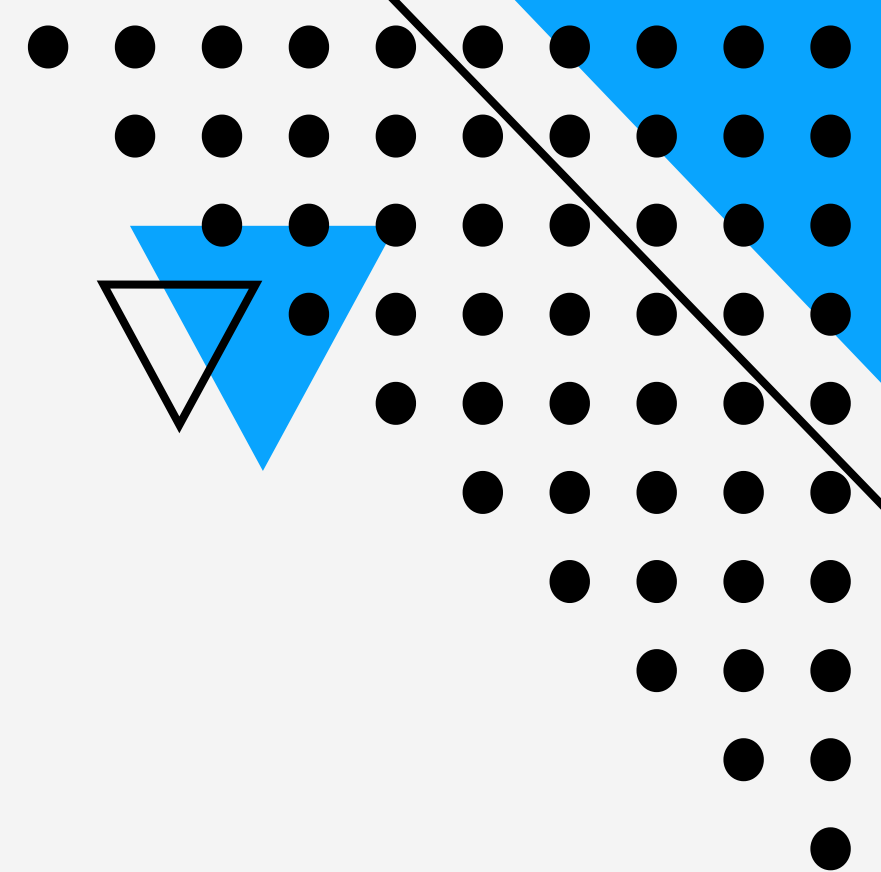
70% of organisations currently lack an EDI budget, highlighting a gap between EDI ambitions and available resources.

Impact:

Funding gaps limit progress and impact.

Solution:

Prioritise EDI budget allocation. Identify EDI priorities and align EDI with your core objectives and collaborate with your finance teams.





Key findings

Before working in EDI, I spent over a decade in the charity and international development sectors, engaging in roles that deepened my understanding of equity and inclusion. From protecting endangered sea turtles in the Seychelles to leading leadership workshops for women and girls in Nepal, I worked with diverse communities on conservation, education, and sustainable development initiatives. Over time, I progressed into leadership roles in operations, marketing, and programme management, where I developed global strategies and co-founded impactful EDI programmes.

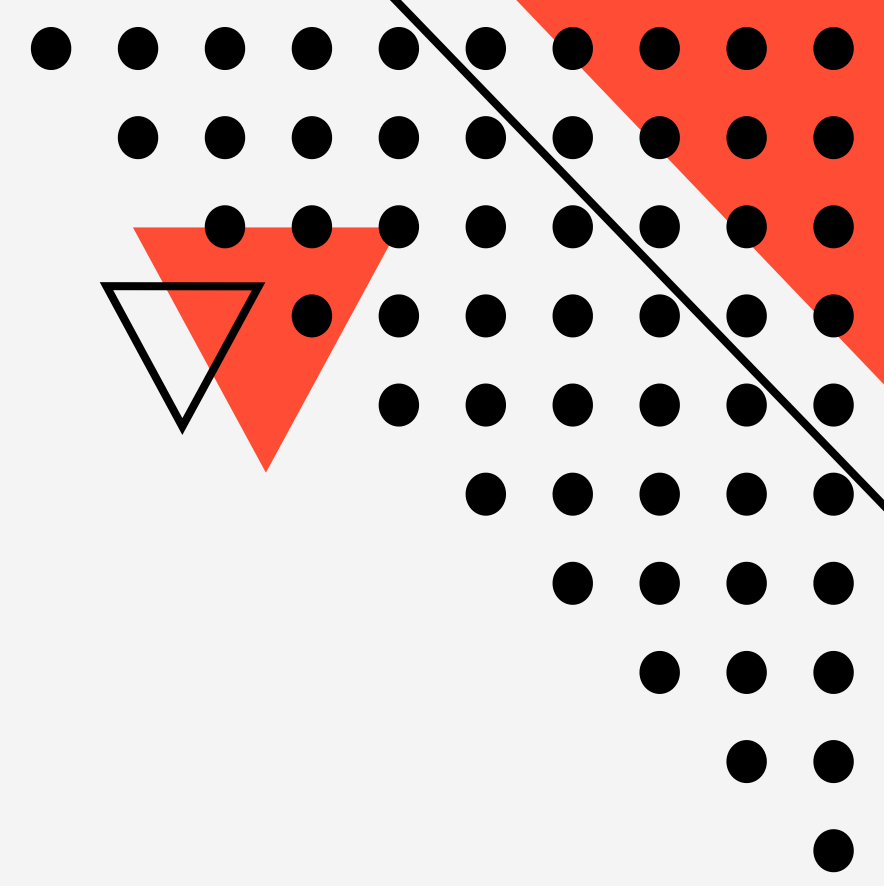
I often encountered the mindset that because charities do important work, they don't need to focus on EDI. There's a common belief that fairness and inclusivity happen automatically through their mission.

That EDI would emerge organically as a result of the positive impact charities create. This assumption often prevents a more intentional focus on equity, diversity and inclusion.

They may think their work doesn't need to actively focus on EDI and that their organisation or work is naturally fair and inclusive just because of the positive impact they make.

Although ethics and impact drive both EDI and charitable work, they serve different purposes and shouldn't be confused.

Though rooted in shared values, the goals of EDI and the charitable sector are not interchangeable; one does not automatically fulfil the other.



“I often encountered the mindset that because charities do important work, they don't need to focus on EDI. There's a common belief that fairness and inclusivity happen automatically through their mission.”



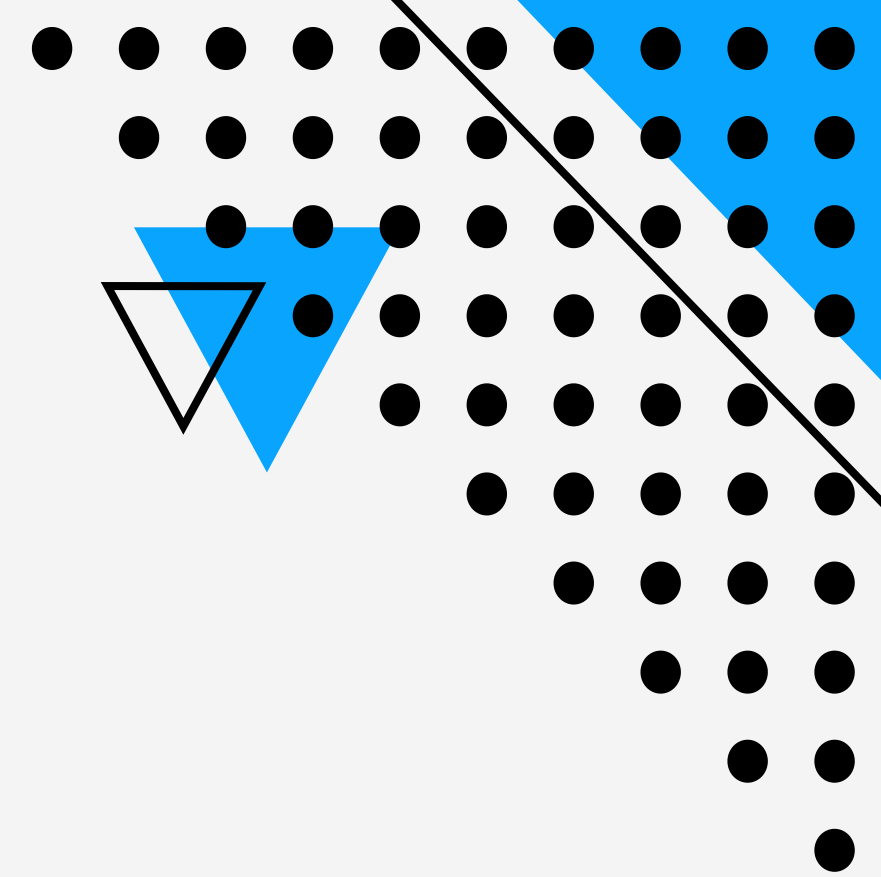


Charities can be impactful but not inclusive.

But this way of thinking can cause problems. Just because a charity does important work doesn't mean that it automatically treats everyone fairly or creates a welcoming environment for all. Without making EDI a clear goal, charities might miss out on important ways to be fairer and more inclusive.

Looking ahead, I see a clear opportunity for charities to build confidence around EDI and embed it throughout their work. EDI shouldn't be a side project or limited to one role. It needs to shape leadership, programmes, recruitment, and daily operations. By challenging assumptions and creating space for reflection, charities can foster truly inclusive cultures.

This report explores how charities can strengthen EDI by tackling challenges like unclear leadership, limited strategy, and inaccessible systems. It offers practical steps such as clear accountability, inclusive policies, data-led planning, continuous learning, and dedicated budgets. With these changes, charities can move from good intentions to meaningful, lasting inclusion.



Leadership's vital role in driving EDI initiatives within organisations

The Role of the Chair, Trustees & CEO

Problem:

Lack of Leadership Accountability.

Leadership accountability, especially from the Chair, Trustees, or CEO, is critical for successful EDI efforts. However, the challenge isn't getting leaders on board, they often already express a strong commitment to inclusion. For example, **75%** of organisations show strong dedication to building an inclusive culture, but only **45%** of CEOs have publicly voiced their support for EDI. This highlights a disconnect between leadership and the teams driving these initiatives.

Research by the DSC highlights a significant gap in EDI governance within boards. While leaders express strong support for EDI, scoring "EDI principles are embedded in the organisation" at 7.9/10, they rate their ability to reflect on EDI and understand their responsibilities much lower, at just 5.6. This suggests a disconnect between intent and action. To close this gap, leadership must move beyond symbolic gestures and take active steps to drive meaningful change.

Driving EDI initiatives

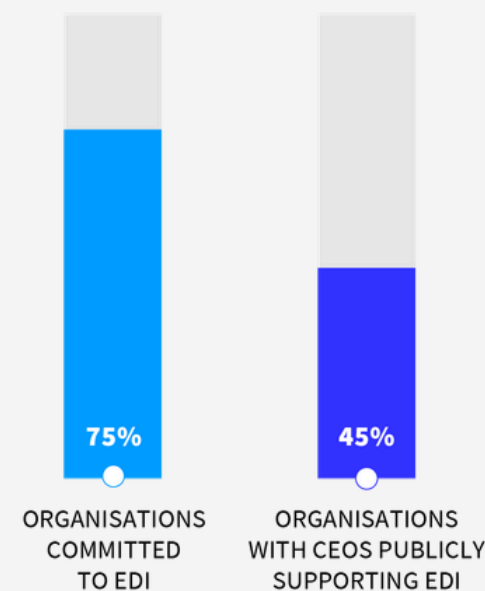
Impact:

Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Initiatives.

The CEO, Trustees and/or Chairs' involvement is an integral element to the success of EDI activity, however, many EDI efforts are led by junior and mid-level staff. Without active involvement from Chairs and CEOs, organisations miss a critical opportunity to set the tone for EDI.

When leadership isn't visibly engaged, they fail to signal that EDI is a priority, and this weakens momentum. Instead of being a driving force, leadership can unintentionally stall progress, leaving key collaborators unmotivated and EDI efforts unsupported.

As a result, this can cause frustration and disengagement; your staff may feel disconnected from the organisation's stated values, which can hinder meaningful change.



Without active involvement from Chairs and CEOs, organisations miss a critical opportunity to set the tone for EDI.

Driving EDI initiatives

While senior leaders share experience and insight, emerging talent offers perspectives on inclusion and generational change.

Solution:

It's essential that Chairs, Trustees and CEOs actively champion EDI, setting the tone from the top.

Actionable Tip: Provide training for your SLT and Trustees.

Actionable Tip: Work with your CEO, Trustees or Chair and help them to create their own supporting statement explaining why EDI matters to the 'inclusive' growth and success of your charitable organisation. This could be a written message or, even better, a recorded video that's accessible to all employees.

Actionable Tip: Develop a pipeline of future leaders through reciprocal mentoring (when two people take turns being mentor and mentee, swapping roles so that each can learn from the other). Pair established leaders with early-career staff. While senior leaders share experience and insight, emerging talent offers perspectives on inclusion and generational change.

Driving EDI initiatives

Formal mentoring programmes have a proven impact:

- Minority representation in leadership has grown from **9%** to **24%** through structured mentoring (Cornell University).
- Companies with mentoring programmes show **20%** more diversity in management roles (McKinsey & Co).
- Mentees are promoted five times more often, and mentors six times more often, than non-participants (Harvard Business Review).
- **79%** of millennials consider mentoring vital to their career growth, yet only **12%** of companies offer formal reverse mentoring (Deloitte).

Volunteering, a common route into the sector, often excludes people from lower-income backgrounds because it usually requires time and resources that not everyone can afford.

Those with financial means can sustain themselves while volunteering, but for others, costs like transport or giving up paid work create barriers.

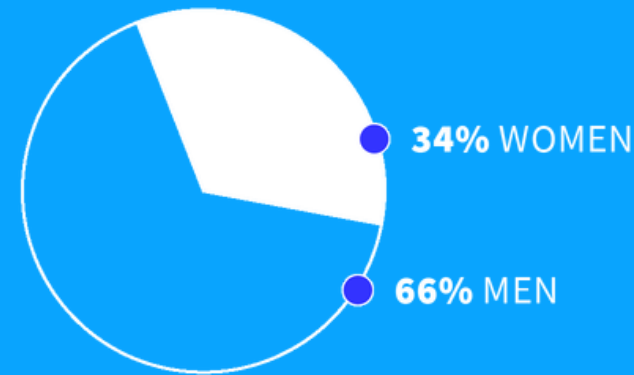
To break this cycle, organisations must remove unpaid entry barriers and invest in inclusive mentoring.

These steps are essential for developing a more equitable and representative leadership pipeline.

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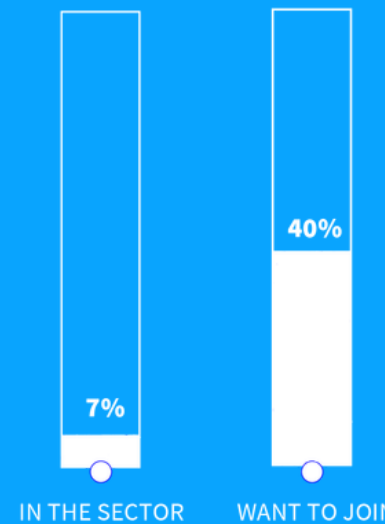
Diversity & Representation in the UK Charity Sector

59% of charities say that their boards do not reflect the communities they serve.



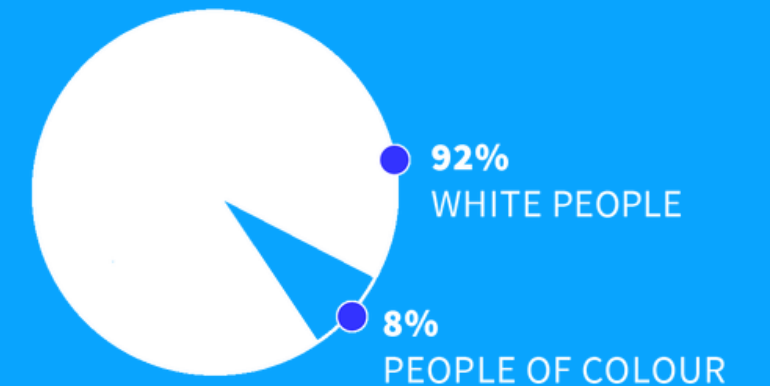
Women now make up 34% of chief executives at the 100 largest charities in the UK.

CURRENT VS POTENTIAL

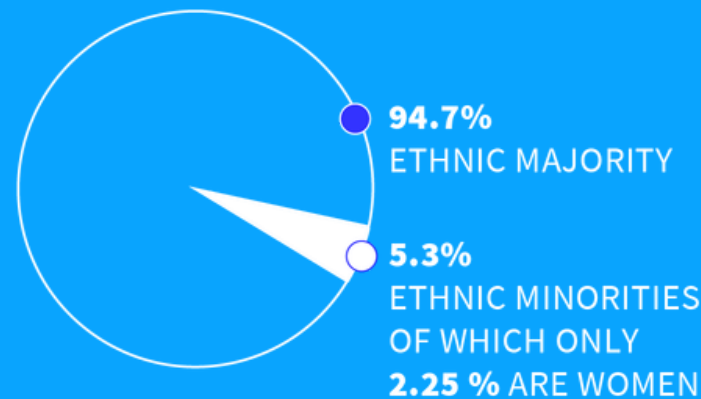


People from low-income backgrounds want to work in the sector. While only 7% currently work in the sector, 40% would be interested in a career in the sector

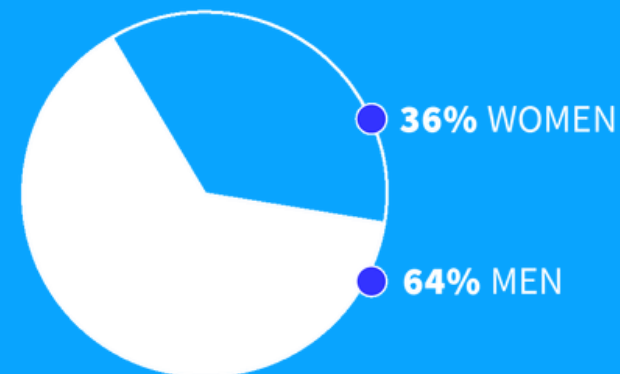
- 25% don't know where to search for and apply for jobs
- 24% think there are poor opportunities to develop a career



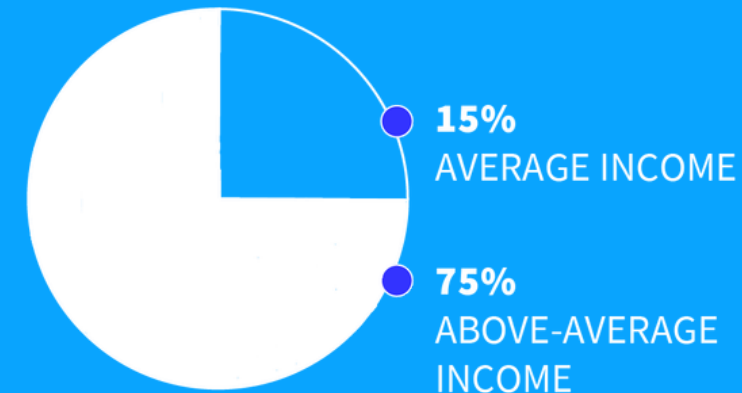
92% of trustees are White



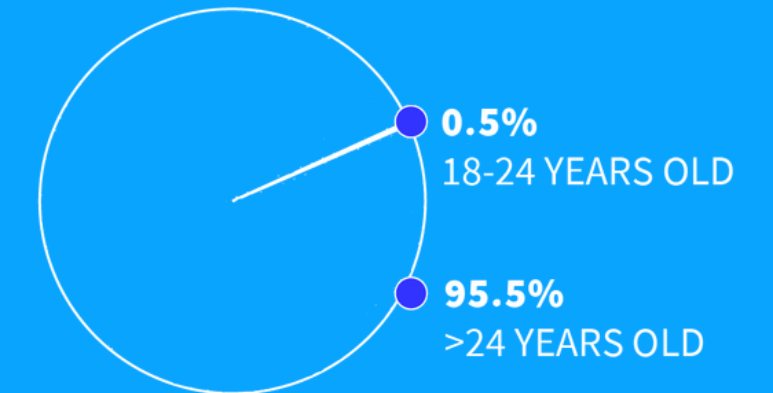
5.3% of leaders coming from an ethnic minority background, and women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups making up only 2.25% of leaders.



64% of trustees are male, and only 8% are people of colour (compared to 14% of the wider population).



75% of trustees are from households with incomes above the national median.



0.5% of trustees are 18-24, despite making up 12% of the population. The average age of a trustee is 61.



Driving EDI initiatives

Problem:

Leadership lacks consistent EDI actions.

Just as with top leadership, senior leaders play a crucial role in shaping workplace culture, this can break down into two responsibilities:

1. It is their responsibility to ensure their financial, commercial, marketing, and people strategies encompass EDI.
2. They are a role model for EDI, their actions and communication set the tone for inclusive behaviour and organisational values.

However, despite the responsibility they hold, there's a noticeable gap between their stated commitment and actual behaviours. While **50%** of organisations report that senior leaders actively champion EDI, only **33%** say leaders outside of HR promote it. This indicates that many leaders may recognise the importance of EDI but fail to consistently embody the inclusive actions needed to drive real change.

Many leaders may recognise the importance of EDI but fail to consistently embody the inclusive actions needed to drive real change.

One of the biggest barriers to inclusivity is the fear and lack of confidence many leaders face.

They are often worried about using language that might offend and feel uncertain when addressing topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (see more on training on page 24). Imposter syndrome and a lack of personal connection to EDI are also significant barriers. Leaders may feel that these topics don't relate to them or worry that they're "not diverse enough" to contribute meaningfully.

This hesitation, combined with a fear of getting it wrong, often leads to disengagement, particularly when discussions involve identities different from their own. Because of this fear and disconnect, many senior leadership teams (SLT) avoid addressing performance in this area, treating it as too sensitive to tackle.



Driving EDI initiatives

Impact:

Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Initiatives.

Senior leaders play a fundamental role in promoting workplace EDI, just as they lead and influence the strategic direction and values of an organisation. It is their role to set the tone for what inclusive behaviour looks like, their role as custodians of organisational values and their actions create and nurture a culture of inclusion. The disconnect between intention and action is further highlighted by low percentages of senior leaders demonstrating key inclusive behaviours.

Occupational psychologists at Talogy have identified six key inclusive behaviours (their Perceptions tool) that underpin a leader's cultural capability. However, our data shows that these behaviours are rarely demonstrated at the senior leadership level:

- Composure (**16%**): Stays calm in challenging situations.
- Belief in Diversity & Inclusion (**16%**): Understands and believes in the business case for diversity and inclusion.
- Flexibility (**16%**): Adapts approach based on individual needs.
- Empathy (**14%**): Shows sensitivity to all perspectives.
- Relationship Building (**13%**): Builds trust across diverse backgrounds.
- Learning Orientation (**13%**): Continually learns and embraces new experiences.
- Open-mindedness (**12%**): Avoids assumptions and treats everyone as unique.

Without these behaviors, leaders miss the opportunity to create a genuinely inclusive culture. This can lead to frustration among staff, a lack of trust in leadership, and limited progress in EDI initiatives.

Senior leaders
play a
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Driving EDI initiatives

Solution:

Invest in inclusive leadership training and coaching for senior leaders.

To close this gap, senior leaders must not only advocate for EDI (and fully appreciate its business case) but also integrate it into their everyday actions.

A simple, budget-friendly first step is to share a free EDI report or resource with your Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Trustees. Encouraging them to read it and discuss their insights in a staff meeting or board session along with the others listed in the references, is a great starting point. Additionally, I recommend exploring the following books for further learning:

- Inclusive Growth and Building Inclusivity by Toby Mildon
- Inclusion - The Ultimate Secret For An Organization's Success by Perrine Farque
- Mind The Inclusion Gap by Suzy Levy
- The Empathy Dilemma: How Successful Leaders Balance Performance, People, and Personal Boundaries by Maria Ross

Actionable Tip: Investing in inclusive leadership training and coaching is a crucial second step. I recommend working with a coach who can use the Talogy Perceptions tool to measure and explore leadership behaviours and create a personal action plan. This action plan should contain self-owned EDI initiatives that aim to encourage leaders outside of HR to take ownership of specific EDI goals within their teams and can also help embed these values across the organisation.

Investing in inclusive leadership training and coaching ... and measuring and exploring leadership behaviours is a crucial step.



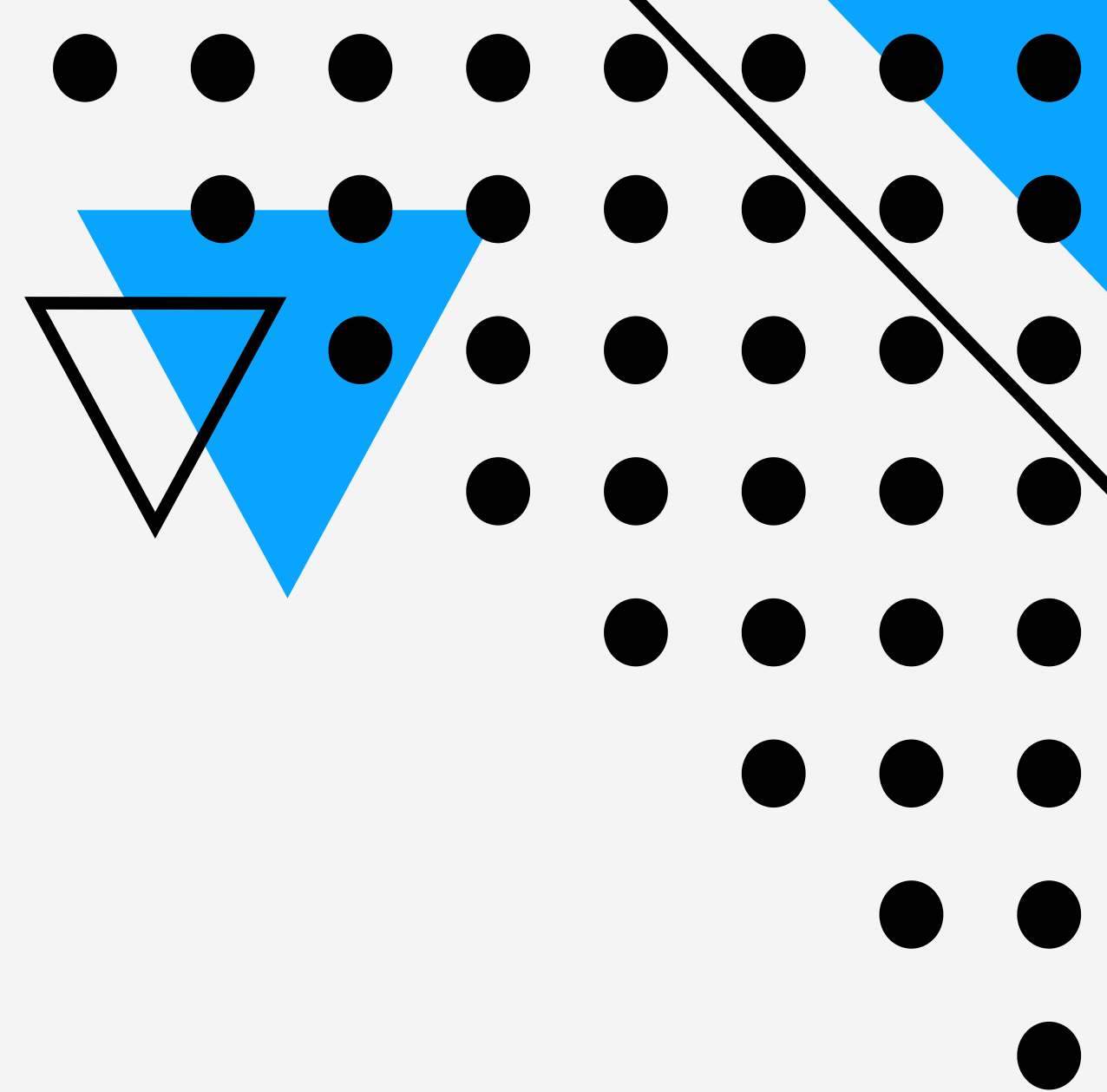
Driving EDI initiatives

Actionable Tip: When observing inclusive leaders, these are some of the behaviours that we see:

- They share personal stories to connect with their team (whilst demonstrating vulnerability)
- They admit they don't have all the answers (they are humble) - comfortable saying I don't know
- They admit to making mistakes, their team knows they aren't infallible but are committed to learning and growing
- They share their career journey, they share their successes but also their setbacks too.
- They use their privilege and influence as a leader to amplify their team, when someone has a good idea in a meeting they repeat it and give them credit
- They seek to study and learn about the challenges faced by colleagues from underrepresented groups, through podcasts, publications, books and asking colleagues about their experiences

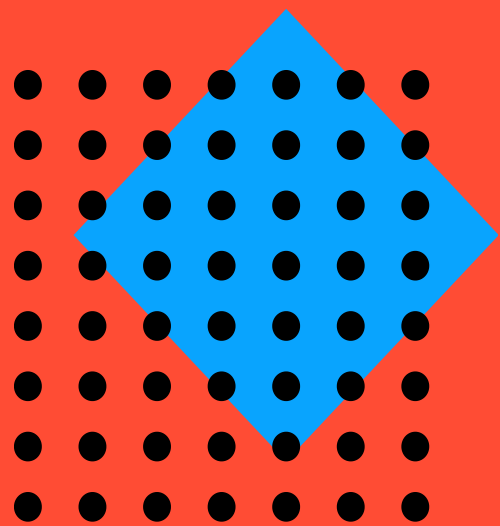
Actionable Tip: You can hear inclusive leaders say things like

- "I'm not sure what language to use, if I put my foot in it let me know"
- "I never stopped to think of it like that before"
- "Thanks for bringing that to my attention, I am glad you've told me, I didn't know and I now know."
- "I see how what I said could have been interpreted that way. I'm going to be more careful of my language going forward."
- "Wow, I never thought of that. Would you mind sharing more with me about it?"
- "Here's what I learned from something I got wrong last week..."
- Shift from "Who's to blame?" to "What can we learn?" when analysing issues
- Share back: "You told us __, here's what we're trying as a result."



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Creating a long-term EDI strategy & adopting a data-driven approach



Problem:

Lack of EDI strategy and data.

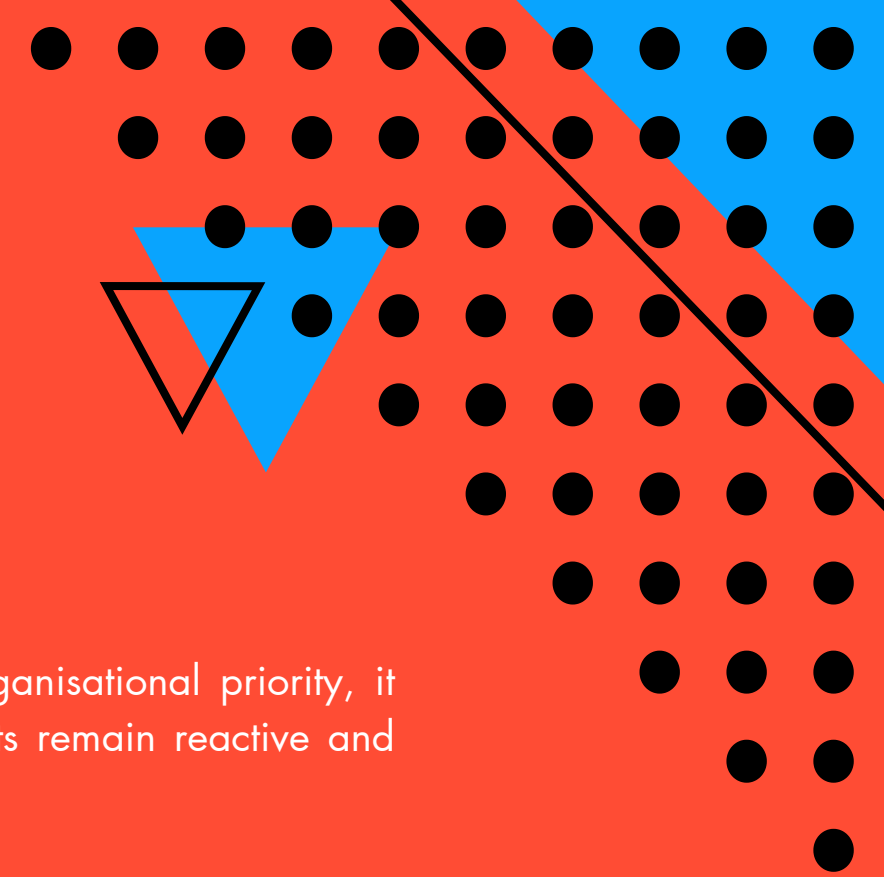
EDI cannot be left to chance or guided only by good intentions. Like any core organisational priority, it requires a clear strategy, measurable goals, and reliable data. Without these, efforts remain reactive and inconsistent. Yet, many organisations fall short of this standard.

- **64%** of organisations do not collect data to inform their EDI efforts, and
- Only **18%** have a three-year EDI strategy in place.

This lack of long-term planning and absence of data-driven insights creates a foundational challenge. Without a clear strategy, it becomes nearly impossible to track progress, allocate resources effectively, or hold anyone accountable. EDI work, like any other business function, needs structured planning to succeed.

67% of organisations never conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) during organisational changes. This oversight not only undermines the inclusivity of transformations but also exposes organisations to legal and reputational risk. Conducting EIAs is a basic yet critical practice to ensure that changes do not unintentionally disadvantage particular groups.

Organisations must begin treating EDI with the same rigour and strategic foresight as they would any core function. Without this shift, efforts are likely to remain reactive, fragmented, and ineffective.



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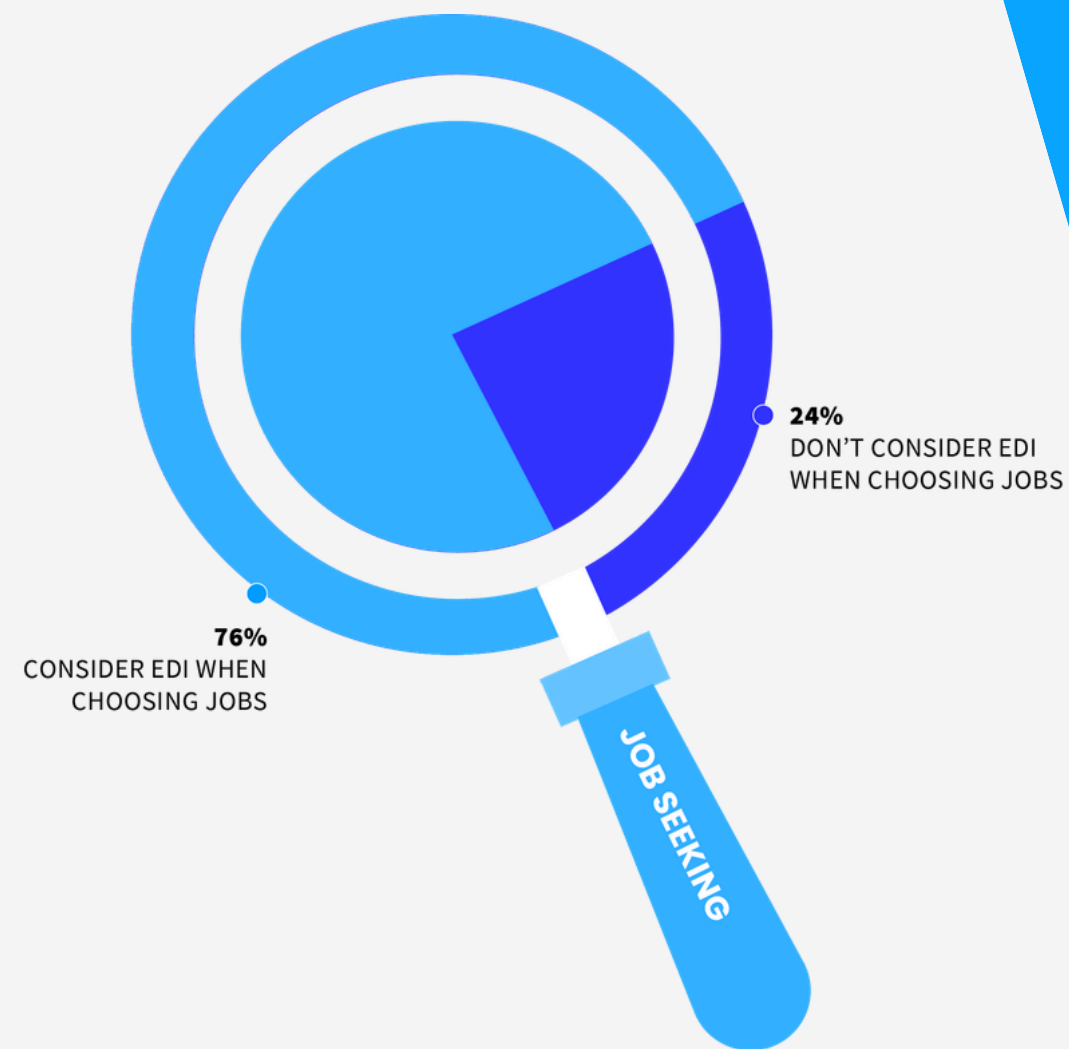
Creating a long-term EDI strategy

Impact:

Inconsistent progress and employee disengagement.

Without a structured EDI strategy, organisations struggle to identify gaps, set measurable goals, and track progress. This is compounded by the fact that **55%** of organisations lack any formal EDI strategy. Additionally, the absence of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) during organisational changes further limits the ability to ensure that transformations are mitigating bias, inclusive and equitable.

As a result, EDI efforts may be inconsistent and ineffective, leading to disengagement from employees and key collaborators, and exposing the organisation to risks such as discrimination claims.



Did you know?

76% of employees and job seekers

consider a company's diversity and inclusion efforts when deciding where to work.

According to a survey conducted by Glassdoor in 2019.

Creating a long-term EDI strategy

Solution:

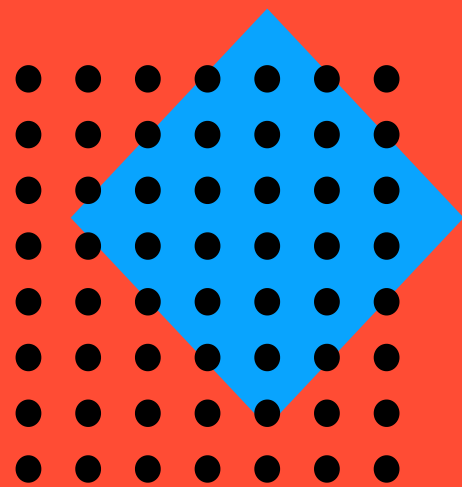
Establish structured, data-driven strategies.

Actionable Tips:

- To build a successful long-term EDI strategy, organisations should break their strategy into three phases: Starting, Maturing, and Leading. This approach emphasises that EDI is an evolving journey, not a one-time tick-box initiative. You can access our free guide for this on building-inclusivity.scoreapp.com
- Communicate your EDI strategy with your key collaborators, including senior leaders, team leaders, any Employee Resource Group (ERG) and network leaders, employees and volunteers is crucial. I recommend sharing this externally and communicating it on your website, to enhance transparency and accountability.
- Conducting regular Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) whenever undertaking organisational design or strategic changes (for example, making redundancies, designing your new offices) to assess the impact of changes on different groups. By integrating data collection and analysis into their EDI strategies, organisations can ensure their efforts are aligned with their overall mission and values.



Developing Policies & Practices that support the people within your organisation



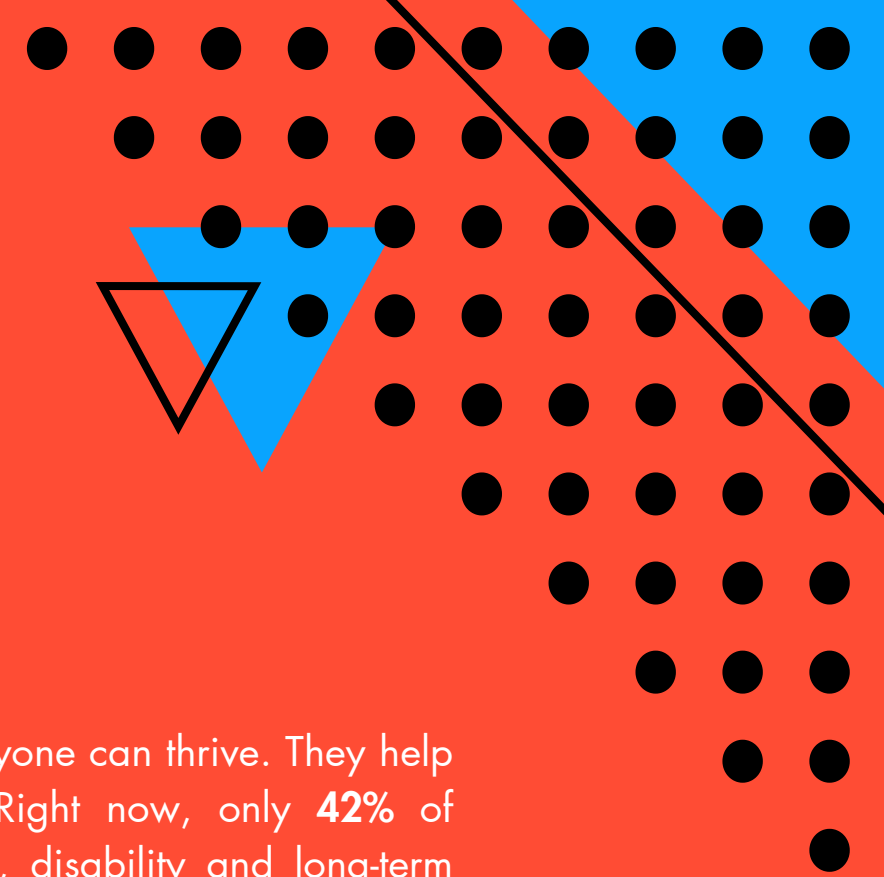
Problem:

Fragmented and Impractical Policies.

Inclusive policies and practices lay the groundwork for a workplace where everyone can thrive. They help build a culture that genuinely supports people's needs and experiences. Right now, only **42%** of organisations take an inclusive approach across key areas like family leave, disability and long-term health conditions, and religious observance. That means many people are falling through the cracks.

There's often pressure to jump onto the latest EDI trend or roll out a quick-fix policy. But when these don't reflect what employees are actually experiencing, they can feel disconnected or even tokenistic. Trying to solve things in silos, one policy for disability, another for faith, another for carers, can lead to gaps and inconsistencies that don't serve anyone well.

When policies don't reflect the day-to-day realities of your people, it shows. Employees can end up feeling overlooked or unsupported, and the organisation misses a chance to build a feeling of genuine belonging. A joined-up, practical approach, rooted in empathic, active listening and lived experience, goes much further in creating the inclusive culture most organisations say they're aiming for.



Developing Policies & Practices

Impact:

Disengagement, Reputation Risk, and Talent Challenges.

- Weak Inclusive Foundations: Without robust policies, organisations struggle to build a supportive and equitable culture.
- Employee Disconnection: Policies that fail to resonate with employees' real-life needs are unlikely to be valued or adopted, reducing their impact.
- Reputational and Financial Risks: Organisations without practical EDI policies risk damaging their reputation, losing trust, and missing funding or partnership opportunities, as key collaborators increasingly prioritise inclusivity.
- Difficulty Attracting Talent: A lack of EDI focus can deter candidates, particularly younger generations, with **75%** of Gen Z saying they would reconsider applying to an organisation that doesn't prioritise inclusivity.

Organisations
without
practical EDI
policies risk
damaging their
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Developing Policies & Practices

Solution:

Create Practical, Relevant Policies.

To build strong, inclusive policies and practices, organisations should focus on creating relevant, actionable frameworks that align with their strategic goals and employees' everyday experiences.

1. Start With a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy

Start with creating your own Diversity, Equity & Inclusion policy. No two organisations are the same, and will require their own unique policies, tailored to their organisation.

Actionable Tip: Engage employees in policy development to ensure relevance and address real challenges experienced day-to-day.



Developing Policies & Practices

2. Develop Additional Policies

You can then consider creating further policies. Connect with your employees to ensure policies address real challenges and feel relevant to their experiences. Consider the following examples:

- Talent Attraction, Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Work-Life Balance Policy
- Disability and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Indigenous Peoples Policy
- Trans-Inclusion Policy
- Anti-Racism Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Menopause Policy

Actionable Tip: Review policies periodically to ensure they reflect evolving employee needs and industry best practices.



Developing Policies & Practices

3. Avoid a Siloed Approach

Ensure EDI policies work together rather than in isolation. For example, link flexible working and wellbeing policies with recruitment and retention efforts.

Tip: Review policies regularly to ensure they reflect employees' current needs and align with organisational goals.

4. Integrate Policies into Everyday Practices

Policies should be more than words on paper, they must be embedded into the organisational culture and ways of working.

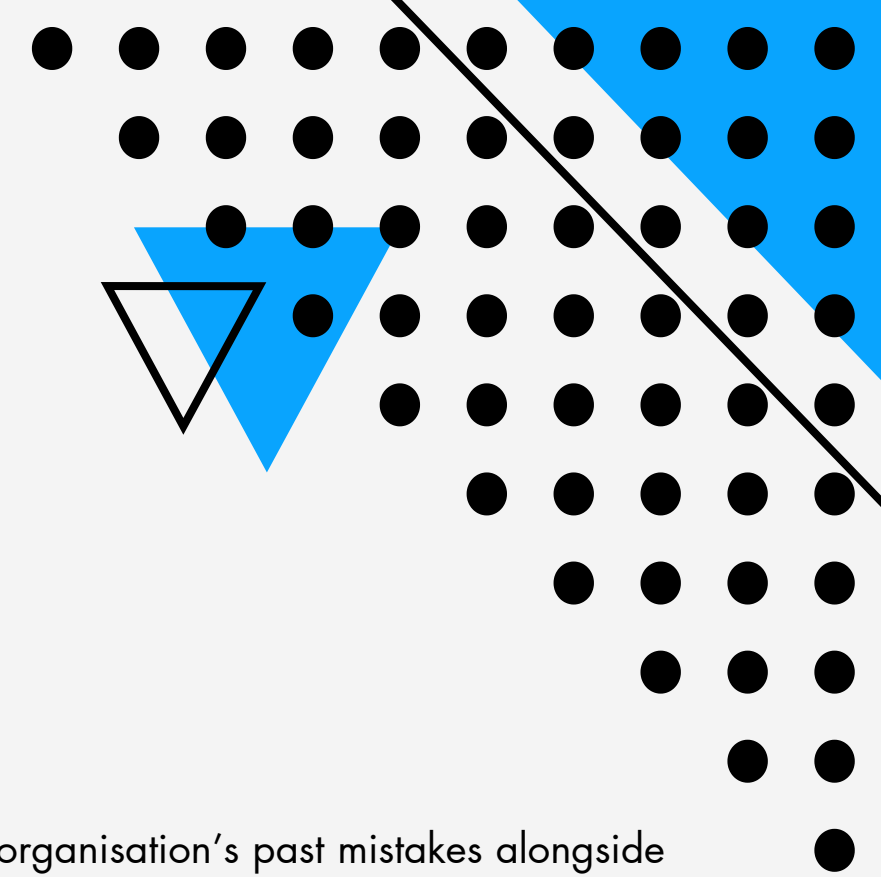
- Train Leaders: Equip managers to implement policies consistently and fairly.
- Communicate Clearly: Use FAQs, summaries, and training to make policies understandable and actionable.
- Monitor Implementation: Gather feedback on how well policies are working and adapt them as needed.

Highlight real-life examples of how policies have benefited employees to demonstrate their practical value.

5. Be Honest About Your Past Mistakes

Adopt a "flaws and all" approach by acknowledging your organisation's past mistakes alongside its achievements. Transparency builds trust and shows a genuine commitment to improvement.

Actionable Tip: Share lessons learned and explain how they've shaped your current EDI efforts. For example, if past policies fell short, highlight specific steps taken to address those gaps.



Continuous EDI Learning & Training

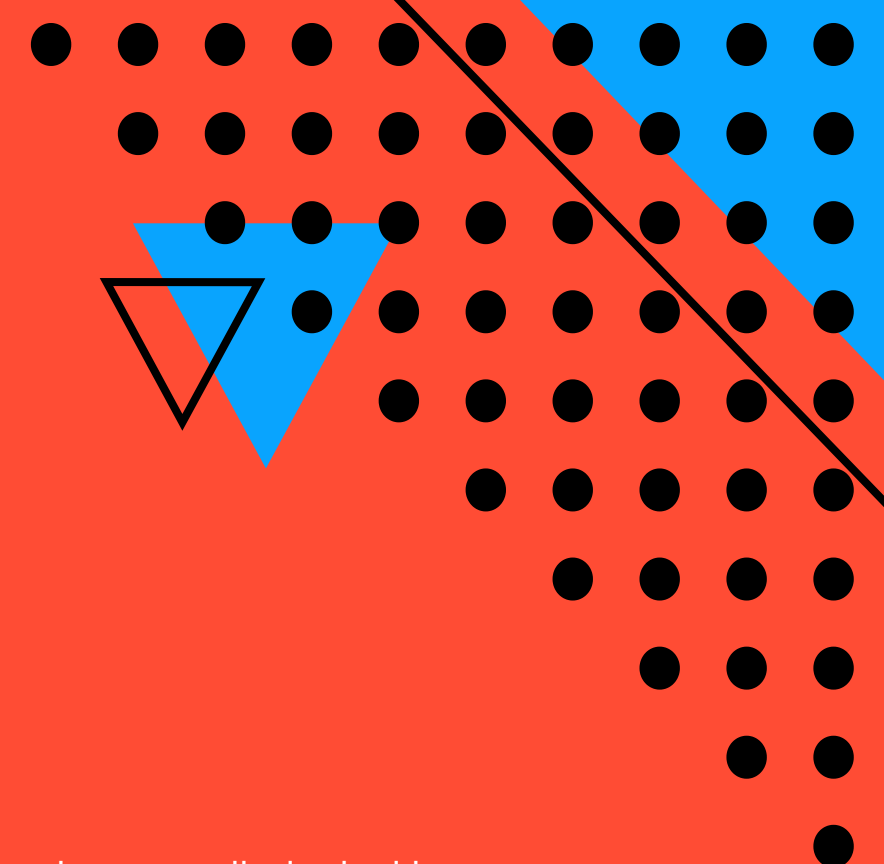
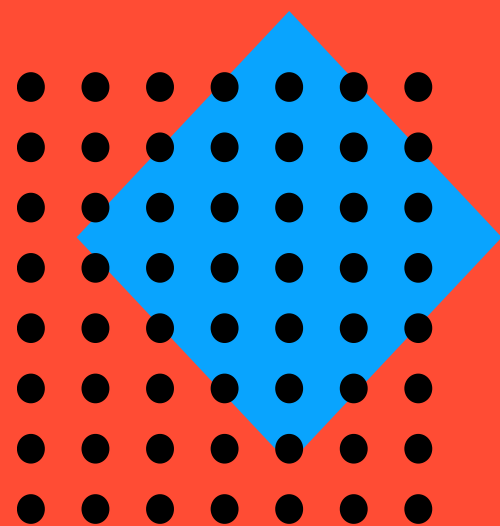
Problem:

Lack of EDI Knowledge.

Training plays a vital role in helping people understand what inclusion really looks like in practice, and how they can contribute to it. But despite its importance, **46%** of organisations still don't offer any formal EDI training.

Without structured opportunities to learn, many people are left unsure of what inclusive behaviour actually means, how to challenge bias, or how to be an ally to others. That lack of clarity can lead to hesitation, silence, or unintentional harm, even from well-meaning colleagues.

This gap in training isn't just a missed opportunity; it creates real barriers to progress. If we expect people to show up in inclusive ways, we need to give them the tools, confidence and language to do it well. Training doesn't need to be tick-box or heavy, it just needs to be thoughtful, relevant, and embedded into the culture of learning across the organisation.



Continuous EDI Learning & Training

Impact:

Unprepared Workforce, Missed Opportunities.

A lack of formal EDI training means organisations miss out on the benefits of a more inclusive and engaged workforce. Data shows that:

- **46%** of organisations have no formal EDI training in place.
- **27%** offer only basic or introductory training, covering fundamental concepts.
- **18%** of employees are unsure if their organisation provides any meaningful EDI training.
- Only **9%** have comprehensive, ongoing programs that equip employees at all levels to practice inclusion regularly.

The lack of dedicated budgets for EDI is a significant barrier and further amplifies this issue, with only **10%** of organisations satisfied with their resources. This stems from EDI often not being seen as a priority within organisations, meaning it fails to receive the financial backing and resources it needs. Without proper investment, EDI efforts may remain performative, surface-level, unable to drive lasting change.

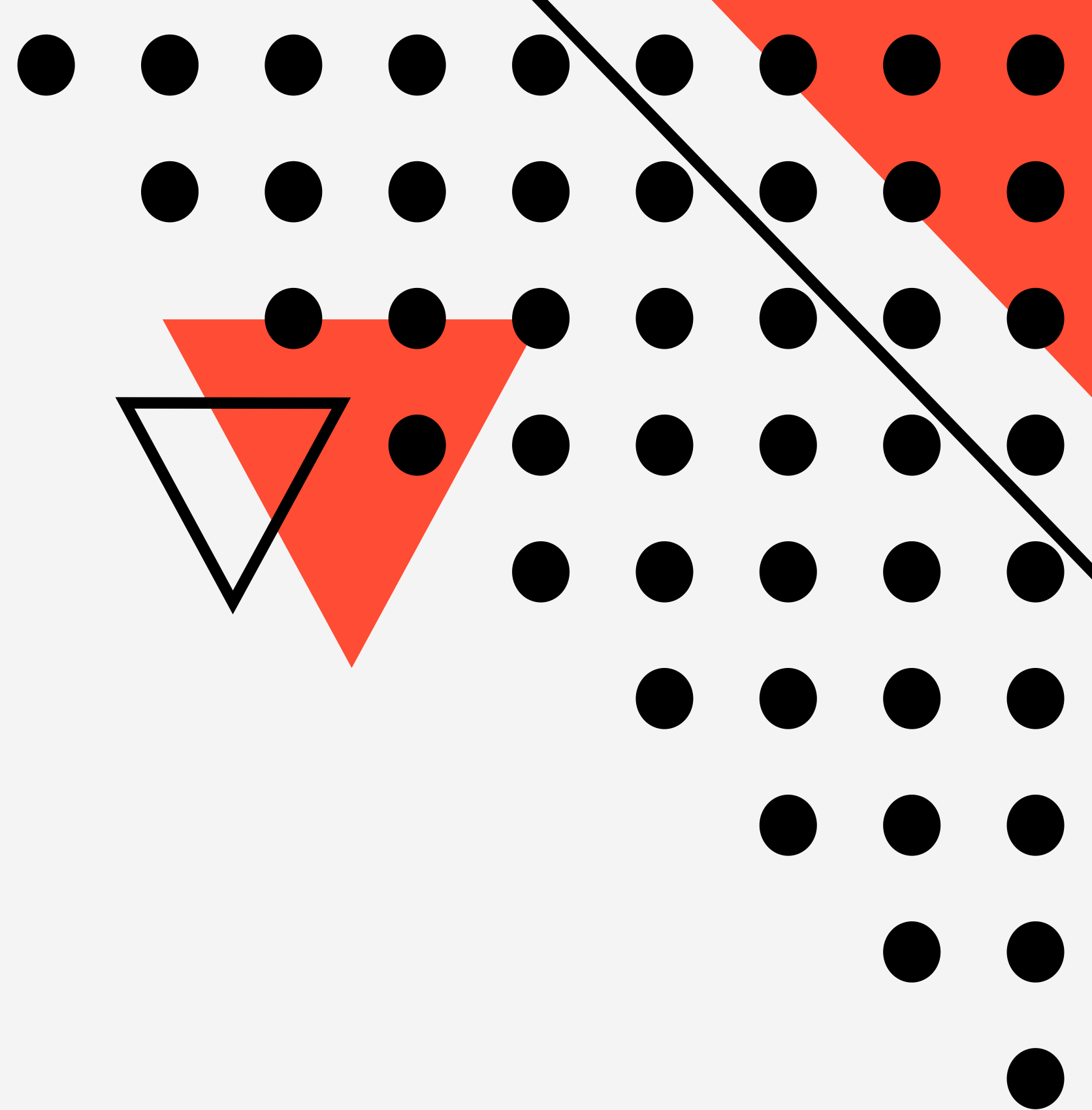
EDI often not
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Continuous EDI Learning & Training

Solution:

Continuous Learning, Inclusive Culture.

To make real progress, organisations need to approach EDI training as an ongoing journey rather than a one-off project. Continuous, bite-sized learning helps deepen understanding and create a sustainable culture of inclusion. Instead of limiting training to sporadic sessions, EDI should become a core part of your talent and performance management processes, for example, providing inclusive recruitment training to hiring managers before they undertake any recruitment, ensuring it is delivered in a timely manner.



Continuous EDI Learning & Training

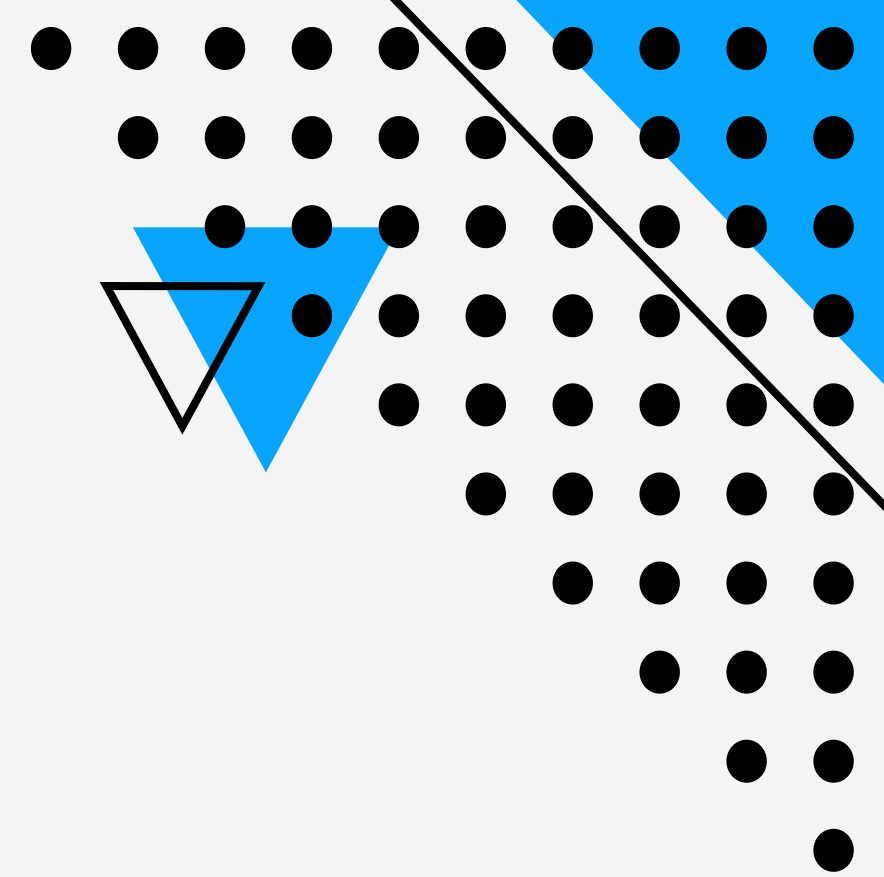
Actionable Tips:

Improve EDI training by:

- Explore and define why EDI is important for your charity: Communicate how EDI will address your unique workplace-specific challenges. Link EDI back to your organisation's values, vision and purpose. Using real stories and examples to show how EDI helps to achieve your charity's mission.
- Consider who is delivering the training: Create opportunities for your team to hear from lots of voices, beyond typical EDI advocates, to broaden reach and move from the belief that EDI is a responsibility for HR alone. This includes working with or creating ERGs, local community groups and charities, and external speakers with lived experience as well as professional competency.
- Prioritise In-Person EDI Training: Opt for live, interactive EDI sessions over pre-recorded ones to foster deeper, more meaningful discussions, engagement and avoid box-ticking, making training more impactful.

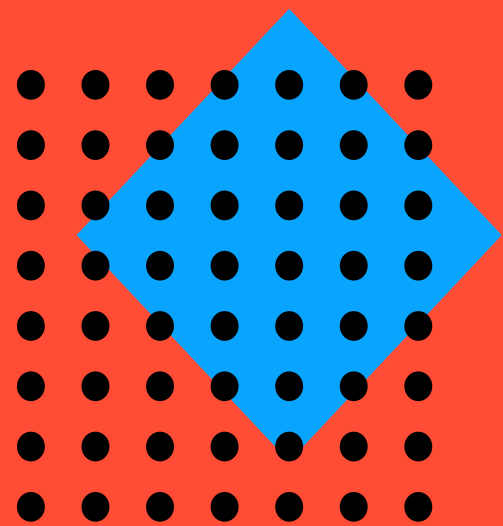
Topics include:

- How to be an effective ally
- Privilege, power dynamics and coliberation
- Cross-cultural and inclusive communication
- Unconscious bias and outdated stereotypes
- How to give feedback and radical candour
- Being an active bystander



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Widening your talent pool and using inclusive recruitment processes



Problem:

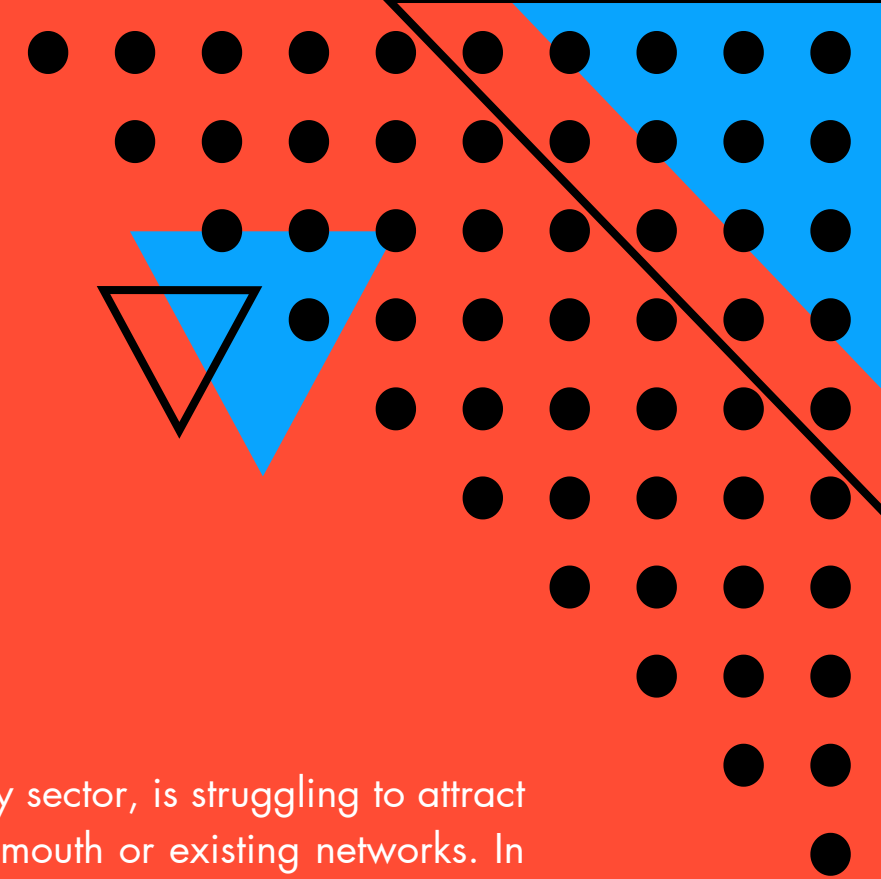
Narrow recruitment limits diversity.

A common challenge I hear from organisations, especially in the charity sector, is struggling to attract a broad range of applicants. Too often, recruitment relies on word of mouth or existing networks. In fact, **90%** of trustees are recruited this way, which tends to mirror the current makeup of boards, typically White, middle-income, older, and university-educated.

When hiring happens through familiar routes, it can unintentionally reinforce what's already there - compounding a similarity bias that we have. As highlighted in ACEVO's report on Racial Diversity in the Charity Sector, many charity leaders "unintentionally favour candidates who resemble their existing teams," which can "perpetuate a lack of diversity within organisations."

A heavy emphasis on "culture fit" can also reinforce these patterns, filtering for similarity rather than difference. The result? Teams that lack variety in backgrounds, perspectives and lived experience, that miss out on the innovation, creativity, better problem-solving and insight that diversity brings.

To shift this, recruitment approaches need to move beyond comfort zones, opening up new channels, rethinking criteria, and actively seeking out potential that may lie outside the usual networks.



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Widening your talent pool

Impact:

Inconsistent diversity practices, limited inclusivity.

While **42%** of organisations always integrate diversity considerations into their recruitment processes, another **42%** do so only sometimes or rarely, limiting efforts to build a genuinely inclusive workforce. For senior positions, the consistency varies, with:

- **42%** always include diversity considerations
- **33%** often include diversity considerations
- **8%** sometimes
- **8%** rarely
- **8%** never

Practical recruitment strategies, such as diverse interview panels and job adverts and descriptions that reflect inclusive language, are essential. However, many organisations struggle to apply these practices consistently, which hinders the progress toward an inclusive workplace.

Many organisations struggle to apply diversity practices consistently, which hinders progress toward an inclusive workplace.

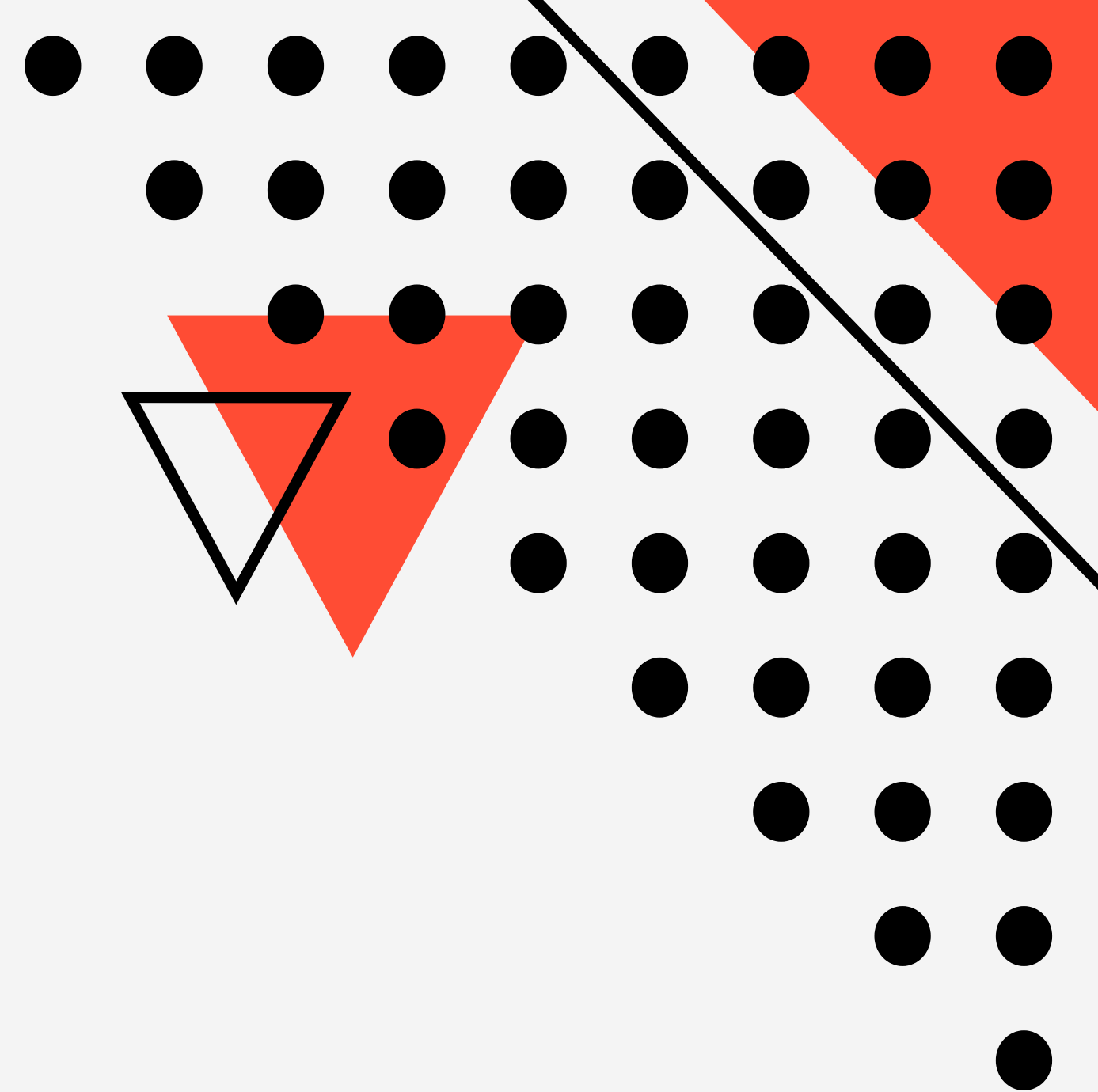
Widening your talent pool

Solution:

Inclusive, values-based recruitment strategies.

Actionable Tips: To broaden your talent pool and ensure fair, consistent hiring, consider these practical strategies:

1. **Diverse Interview Panels:** Involve people from varied backgrounds and teams to mitigate bias.
 2. **Structured Interview Process:** Use standard, competency-based questions and a grading scale (0 - poor/no evidence to 5 - very good/excellent) to evaluate candidates objectively. Tools like Fireflies (an AI note-taker) can help record meetings and summarise candidates' answers, allowing the panel to remain fully present.
- **Memory Aid:** Taking notes helps you remember specifics about each candidate, even across multiple interviews and helps with giving feedback later.
 - **Consistency:** Notes and rubrics allow for consistent evaluation of candidates against the same criteria, reducing bias.
 - **Documentation:** Written records provide transparency, supporting hiring decisions and serving as a reference if needed.

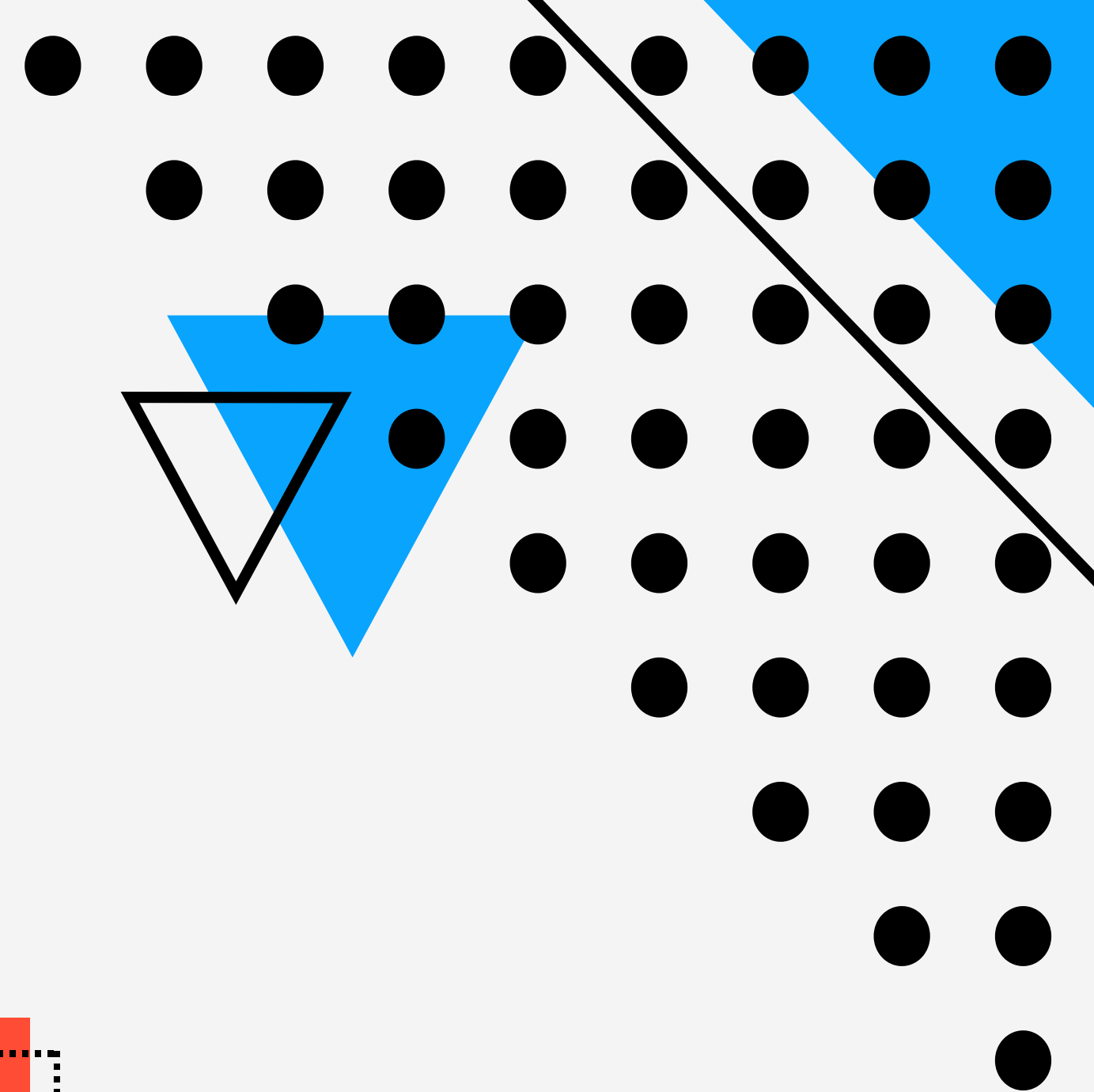


Widening your talent pool

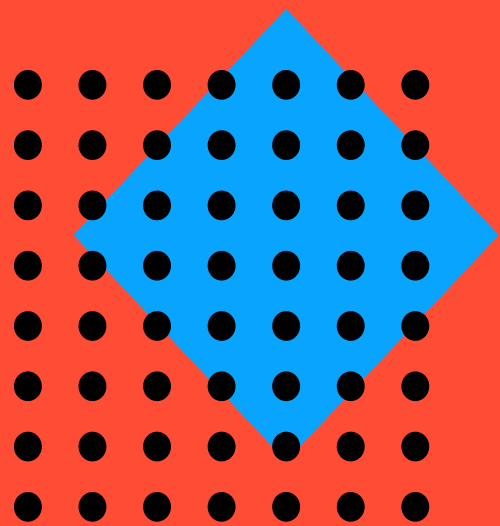
- 3. Evaluation Rubrics:** Develop clear criteria for evaluating candidate responses to ensure objectivity and fairness.
- 4. Wider Job Ad Distribution:** Expand your reach beyond LinkedIn or your immediate network. Consider specialised platforms such as Evenbreak (for disabled candidates), The Black Leadership Job Board, LGBTJobs.co.uk, Flexa and local community and interest groups to reach a broader audience.
- 5. Culture Add vs. Culture Fit:** Shift from hiring solely for “culture fit” to “culture add.” Use values-based recruitment to assess how candidates would contribute uniquely to your organisation’s values, behaviours and mission. Prioritise recruiting 'culture contributors' - individuals who align with the organisation's values but bring fresh ideas and experiences to enrich and evolve its culture.
- 6. Tackle Accent Bias Proactively: 29%** of senior managers admit a candidate’s accent influences their perception (Sutton Trust, 2022). An effective tactic is to add a line at the top of your interview notes: "Focus on content, not accent, be mindful of bias."

Actionable Tips for Inclusive Interviews:

- **Set a Debriefing Session:** After interviews, hold a debrief with the panel to discuss each candidate objectively. Talk candidly about implicit biases that the interview panel may hold about candidates that they met.
- **Provide Constructive Feedback:** Offer honest – with care – feedback to candidates, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Equal Application Process for Referrals:** Any employee referrals should go through the same application and selection process, ensuring fairness and avoiding nepotism.



Career Development Plans



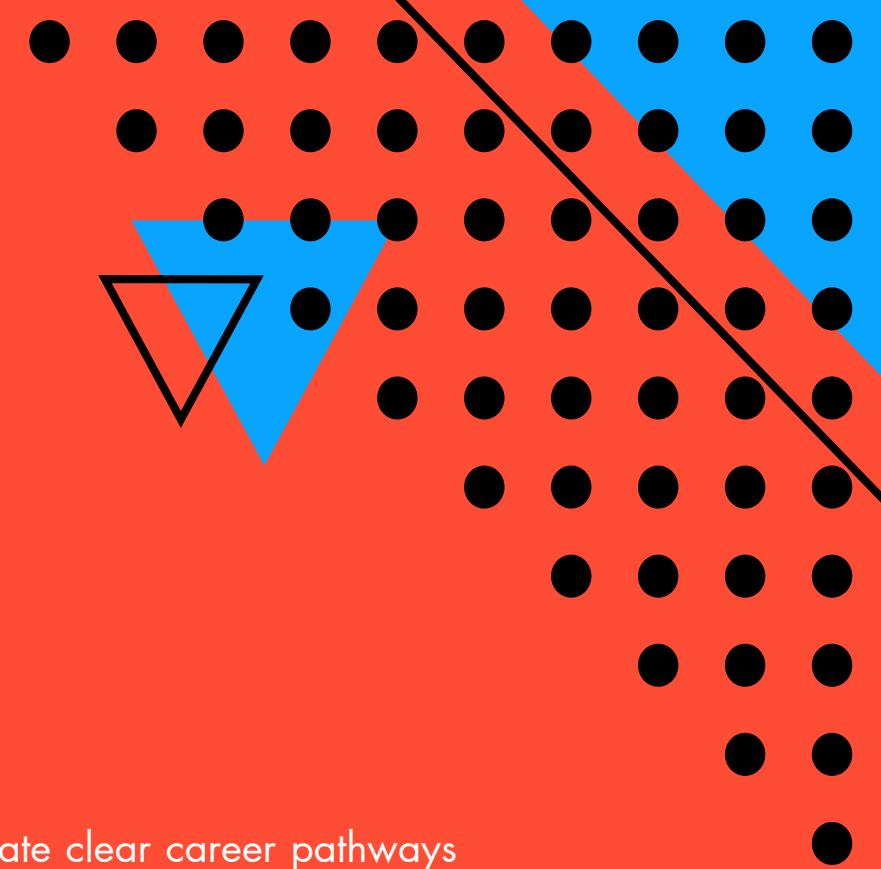
Problem:

Lack of Inclusive Career Development.

Organisations that excel at retaining and advancing diverse talent will create clear career pathways and development plans. Without inclusive development pathways, organisations miss the chance to build a diverse talent pool for future leadership positions. Many organisations lack structured career development programs that support all employees.

Data shows that:

- 58% do not offer any career development programs.
- 25% provide a program accessible to all employees.
- 8% have a program, but it's accessible only to some.
- 8% have a program open to all, but it lacks diversity.



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Career Development Plans

Impact:

Restricted progression.

When an organisation has clear career pathways accessible to all that include the skills and behaviours listed needed to advance, there is less room for bias (including racial and gender) to inform promotion decisions. This transparency fosters a more equitable environment where employees understand the skills, competencies, behaviours and steps needed to move into higher roles.

Solution:

Structured and Transparent Career Paths.

Actionable Tips:

- **Define Career Pathways:** Document clear steps from entry-level to senior roles. Identify the skills, competencies, behaviours and experiences needed at each stage, giving all employees a roadmap for advancement.
- **Equip Your Line Managers:** to articulate the career pathways, and how people can move from entry-level to higher-wage roles within the organisation.
- **Leverage Training Resources:** Make training and professional development resources accessible (there are many available on LinkedIn learning), with a focus on supporting all employees in gaining the necessary skills for career progression.
- **Make Space for Learning:** Growth doesn't happen without time. Encourage your team to block out regular slots in their calendars, weekly if possible, for focused learning and development. Having protected time signals that development is a priority, not an afterthought.

**Clear and accessible
career pathways
available to all, mean
less room for bias.**



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Addressing Technology Barriers

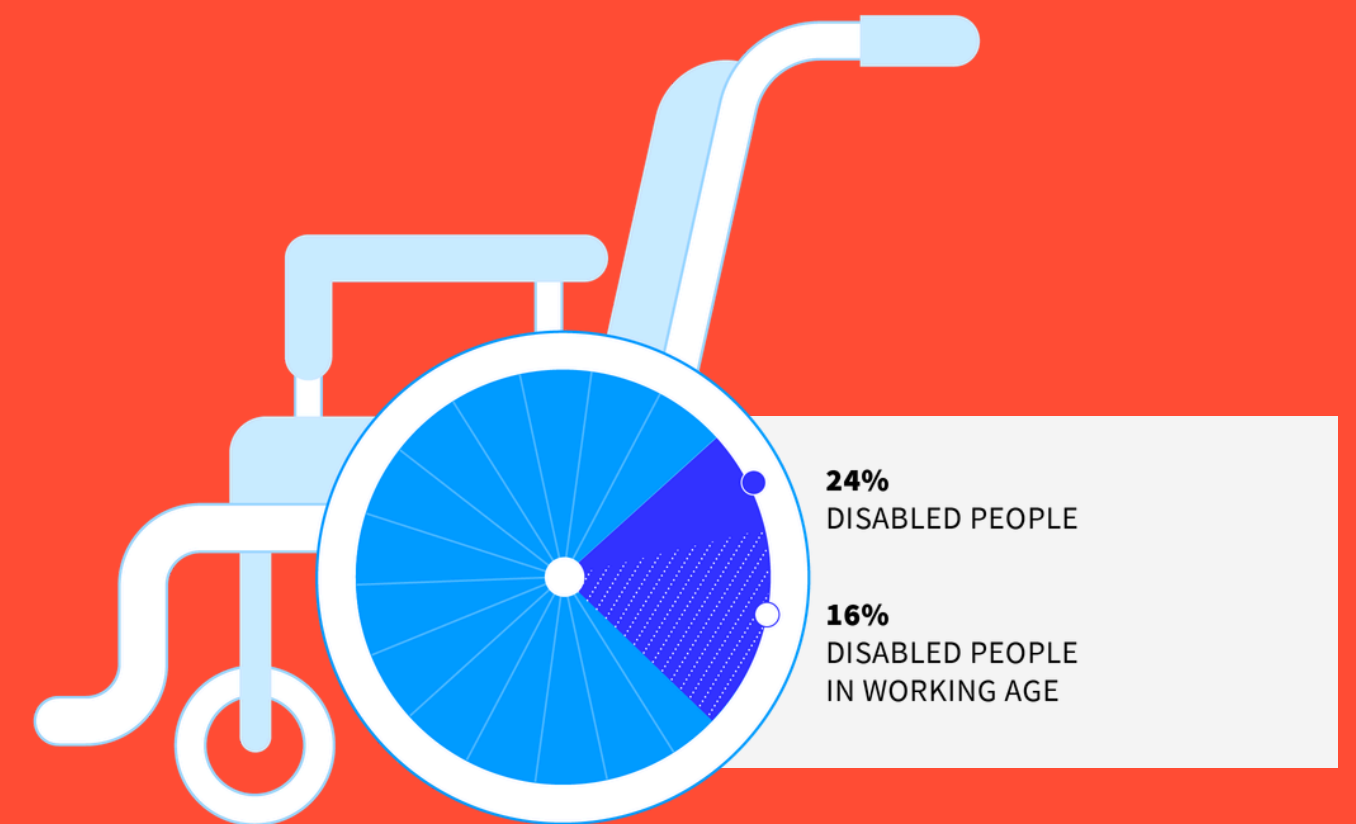
Problem:

Inaccessible Technology Limits Inclusion.

In the UK, **24%** of people are disabled (and **16%** are working age adults), including mental health conditions (for example, anxiety and depression), neurodivergence (for example, Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia), and long-term health conditions like long COVID. Certain conditions are immediately protected under the Equality Act 2010, such as:

- Cancer
- HIV
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Visual impairment
- Progressive conditions (e.g., Alzheimer's, motor neurone disease, spinal muscular atrophy,
- Parkinson's)
- Severe disfigurement

However, **58%** of organisations do not systematically address technology barriers for disabled employees or those with access requirements. This lack of attention makes it crucial to audit existing technology regularly to identify and remove accessibility barriers, ensuring an inclusive workplace.



Addressing Technology Barriers

Impact:

Accessibility Gaps Create Exclusion.

When organisations do not address tech accessibility, disabled employees or those with accessibility needs face significant barriers, impacting productivity, engagement, and well-being. Basic tools like screen readers or voice recognition software, if absent or inefficiently implemented, can hinder someone's ability to perform tasks independently. Without proper training on digital accessibility, other team members may lack the understanding needed to support colleagues with impairments.

- **58%** of organisations have not systematically reviewed the accessibility of their tech.
- **70%** of organisations are unsure whether their careers site meets accessibility standards.
- Only **10%** are fully compliant with accessibility standards (like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and have plans to mitigate against any future issues.

A lack of attention makes it crucial to audit existing technology regularly to identify and remove accessibility barriers, ensuring an inclusive workplace.

Addressing Technology Barriers

Solution:

Accessible Tech and Supportive Culture.

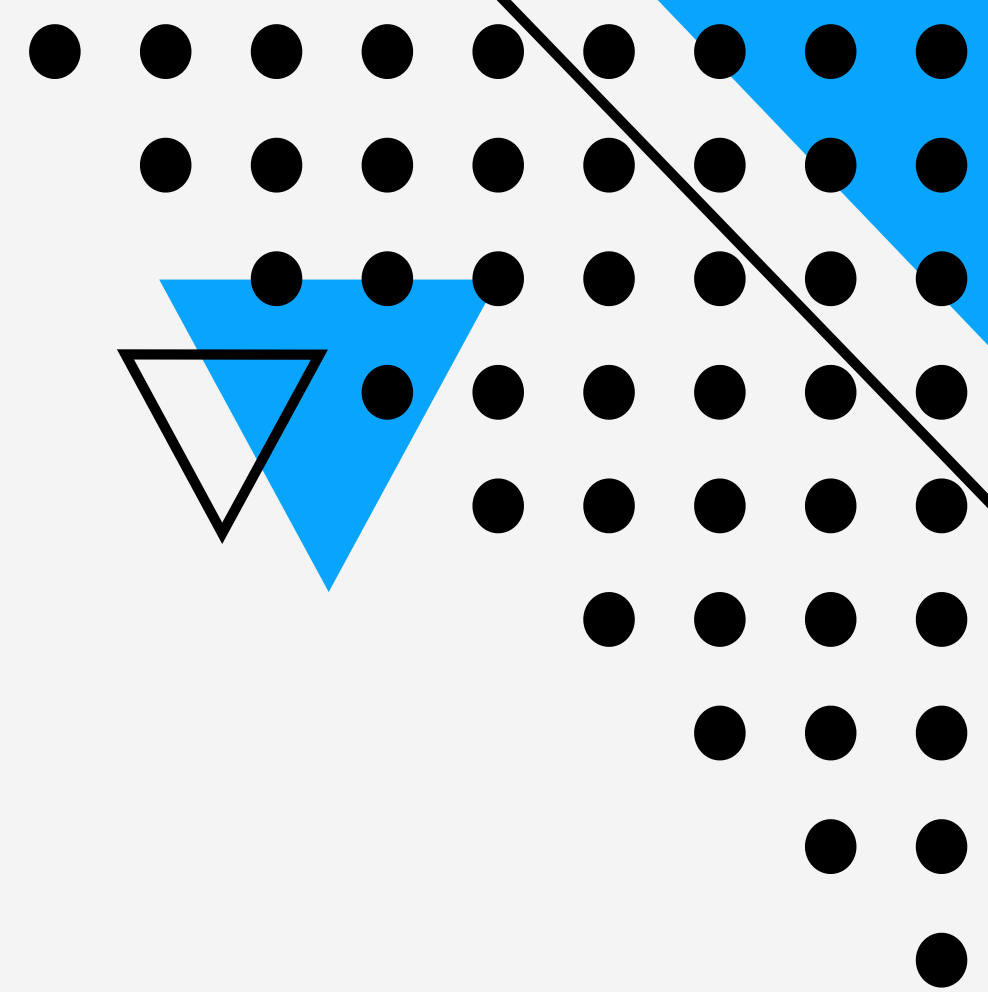
Actionable Tip: Talking about barriers starts with a simple question, for instance, when you are next hosting a 1:1 ask your colleague, “What is slowing you down or what is getting in your way?”

Actionable Tip: There are a number of apps which can assist people, e.g. if you live with ADHD and related difficulties. These include:

- To-do list reminders / scheduling apps (e.g. **Todoist, Habitica, Notion**)
- Aids if reading and writing are a problem, for example, text-to-speech software (e.g. **Read and Write Gold**) and speech-to-text software (e.g. **Dragon NaturallySpeaking**)
- Note-taking apps (such as **FireFlies AI**)

However, these are not a ‘magic fix’, so the key is to talk to the employee about what would help them within their particular work context and try things out. If an employee is unsure they could have an assessment/consultation with an accessibility specialist or occupational health representative who can signpost them to the best resources, adjustments and assistive technologies available.

Actionable Tip: Offer flexible work where possible to support your team, including disabled people, caregivers, those experiencing menopause, and neurodivergent individuals, helping them balance their needs and work effectively.



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Creating a Budget for EDI

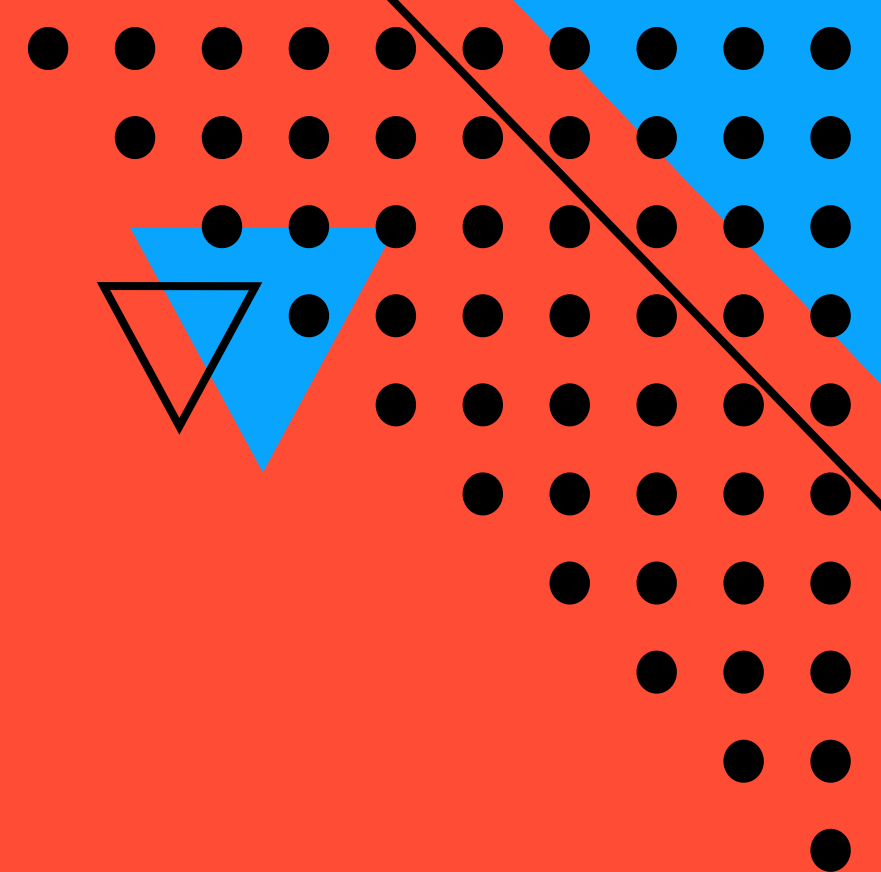
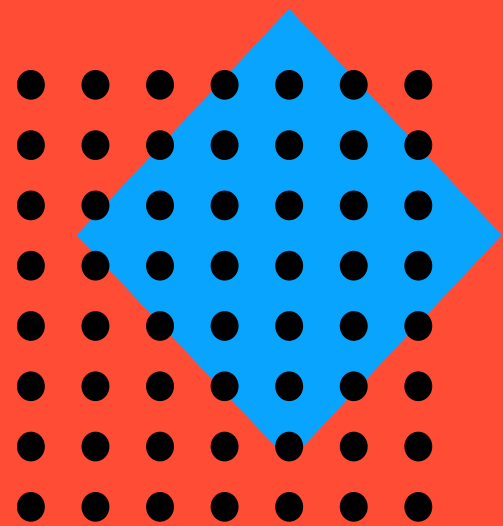
Problem:

Lack of budget.

EDI cannot be left to chance or good intentions. Just as you wouldn't expect a fundraising team to meet ambitious targets without a clear strategy, dedicated campaigns, and a defined budget, the same applies to equity, diversity, and inclusion activities. EDI requires investment to succeed. Yet **70%** of organisations still do not have a dedicated EDI budget, revealing a major gap between EDI ambitions and available resources.

Does your organisation have a dedicated budget for internal diversity and inclusion initiatives, and if so, how satisfied are you with its adequacy for making the desired impact?

- **70%**: No, we don't have a dedicated budget
- **10%**: Yes, but we are unsatisfied – We need a larger budget to effectively meet our goals
- **10%**: Yes, and we feel neutral – Our budget is adequate, but additional resources could enhance our efforts
- **10%**: Yes, and we are satisfied – We have what we need to meet our objectives



Creating a Budget for EDI

Impact:

Funding Gaps Limit Progress.

An EDI budget is a specific allocation to support and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within an organisation. With a dedicated EDI budget, organisations can signal a genuine commitment to making positive change. Like any organisational priority, EDI needs to be properly governed, project-managed and resourced with adequate people and funding. For organisations serious about promoting EDI, establishing a dedicated EDI budget is essential.

Organisations with robust EDI programs consistently outperform their peers:

- **35%** more likely to outperform competitors if diverse and inclusive (McKinsey)
- **63%** of employees across generations prioritise EDI programs when choosing employers, with **73%** of Gen Z and **68%** of Millennials sharing this preference (EY)
- Diverse teams are more innovative, with research showing they have a **20%** higher rate of innovation compared to homogeneous teams. (CMI)
- **2.3 times** more cash flow per employee at inclusive companies (Josh Bersin)
- **83%** more engaged Millennials in inclusive companies (Deloitte)

Does your organisation have a dedicated budget for internal diversity and inclusion initiatives, and if so, how satisfied are you with its adequacy for making the desired impact?

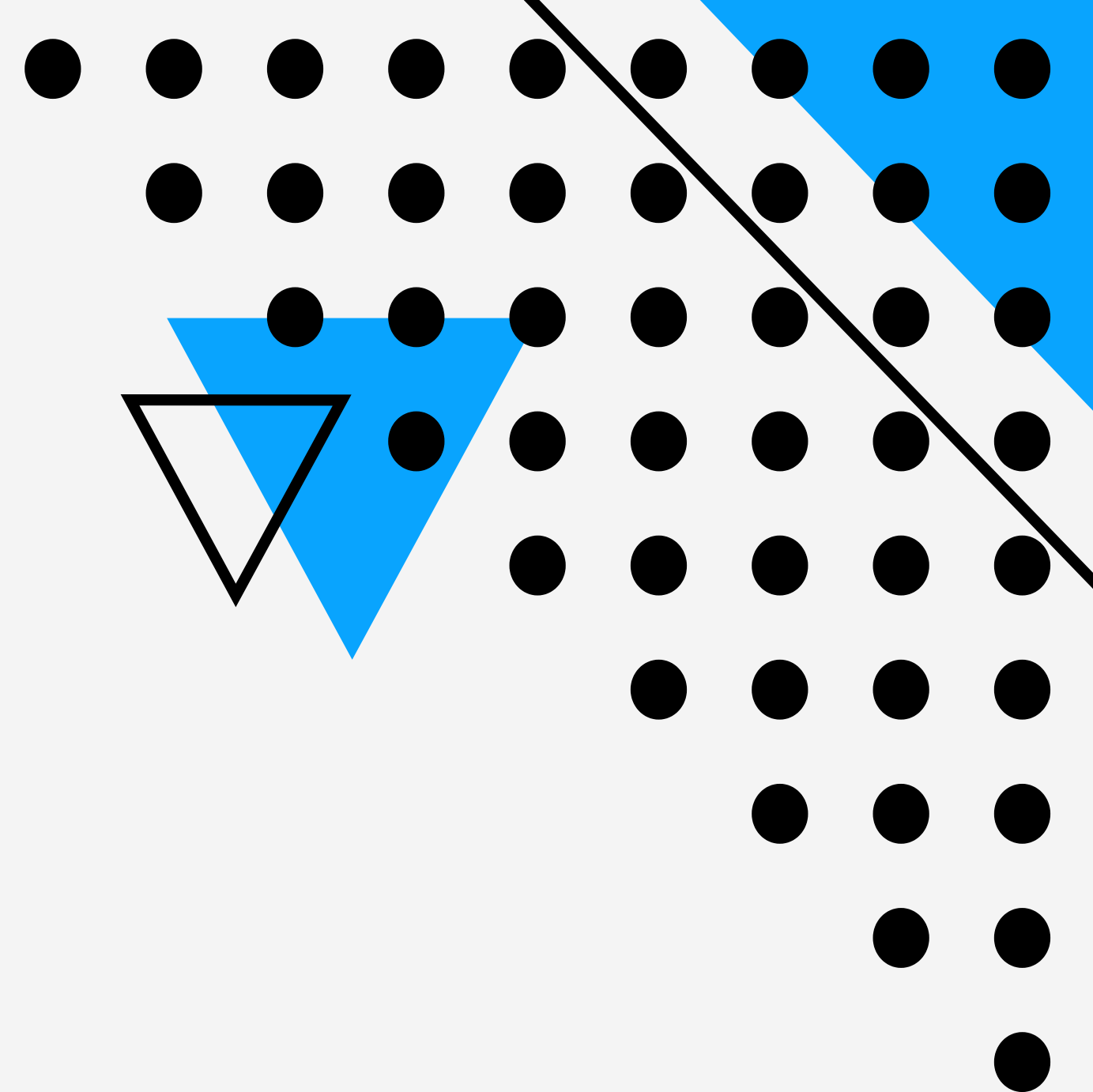
Creating a Budget for EDI

Solution:

Prioritise EDI Budget Allocation.

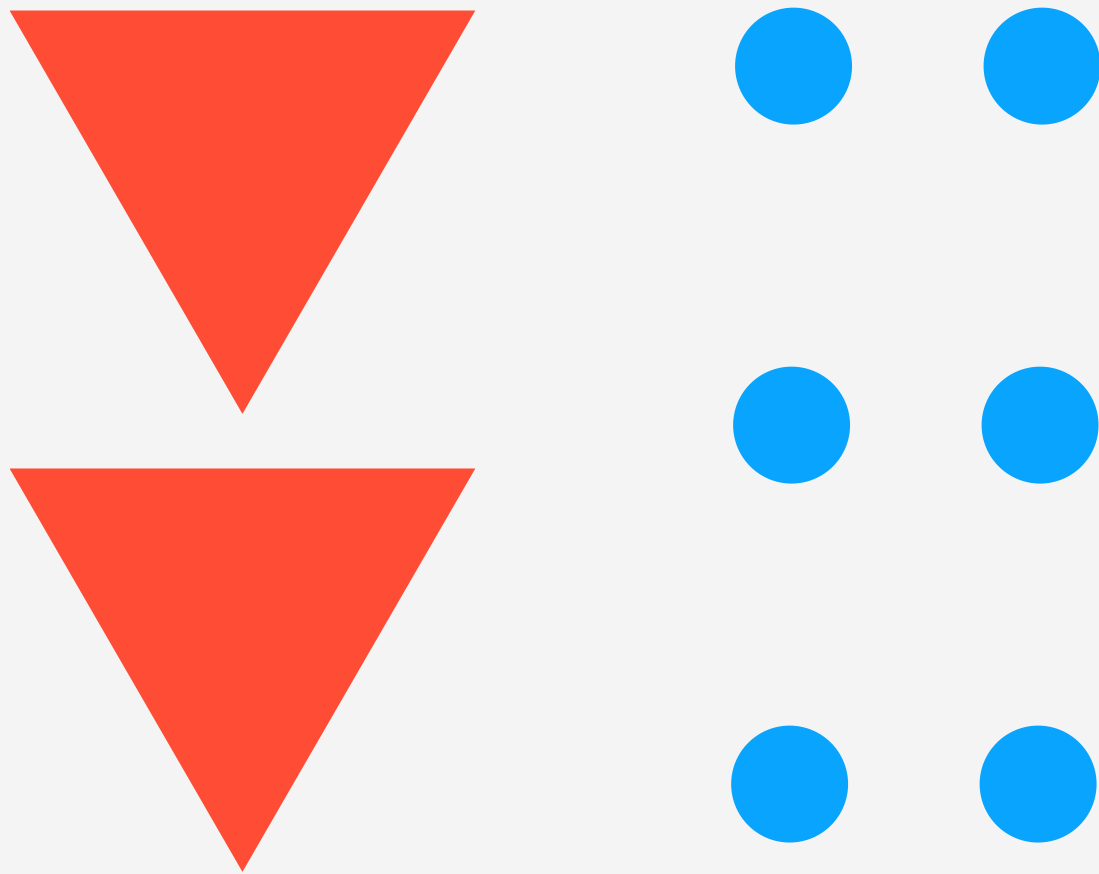
Actionable Tips:

- Collaborate with Finance Teams: Work with your Treasurer/CFO, finance and leadership teams to build your business case, outline EDI benefits and secure funding that supports impactful initiatives.
- Identify EDI Priorities: Focus your EDI budget on high-impact areas, such as EDI training, inclusive leadership coaching, or hiring a dedicated EDI manager.
- Align EDI with Core Objectives: Explore how EDI supports your organisation's Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), mission, and vision. Consider hosting an organisation-wide session to discuss how EDI contributes to overall success.



Conclusion

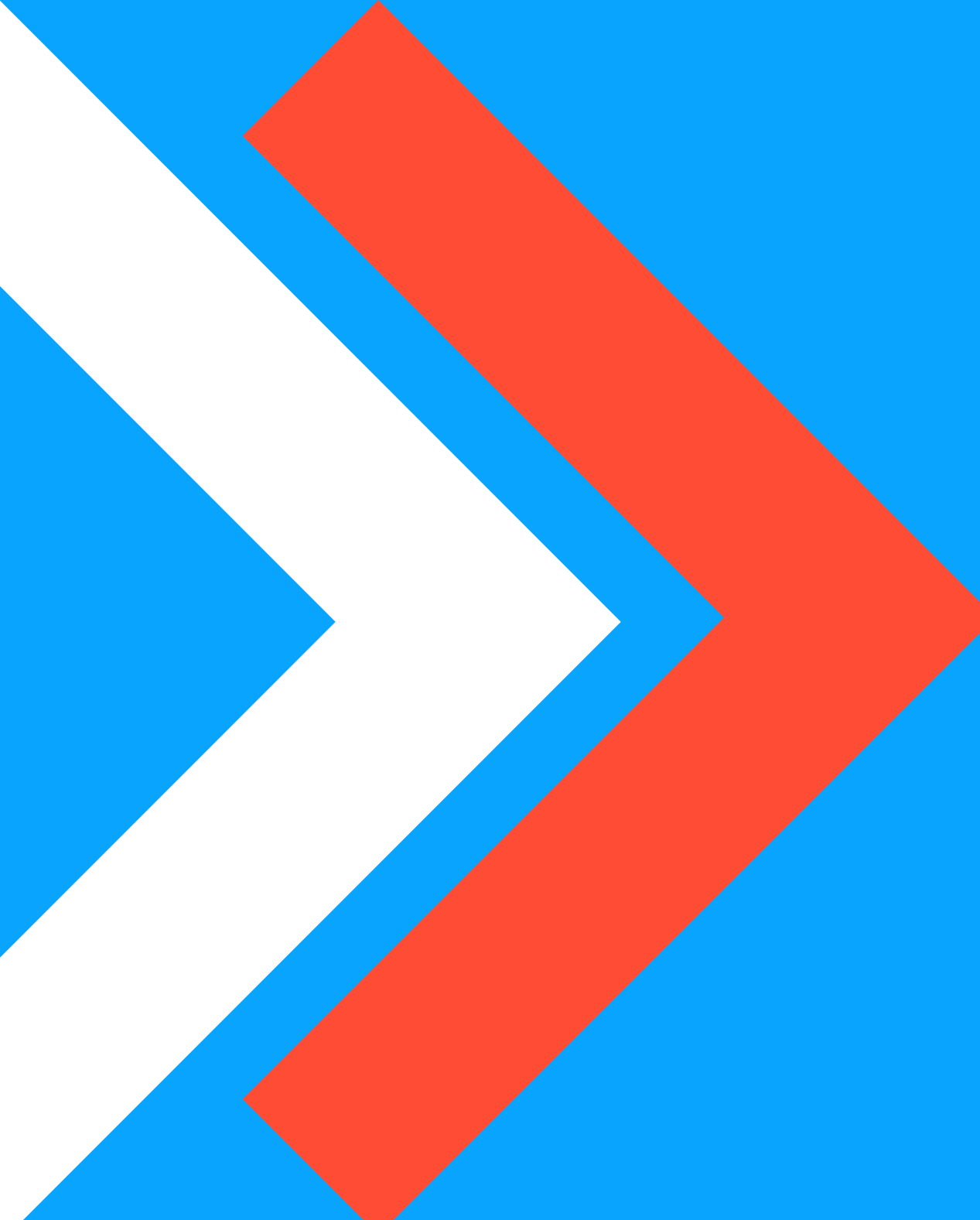
Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the charitable sector requires more than statements of intent. This report highlights that while commitment to EDI is often expressed, action, consistency, and resourcing remain lacking. Without visible leadership accountability, structured strategies, inclusive policies, continuous learning, and dedicated budgets, progress is slow, fragmented, and at risk of stalling.



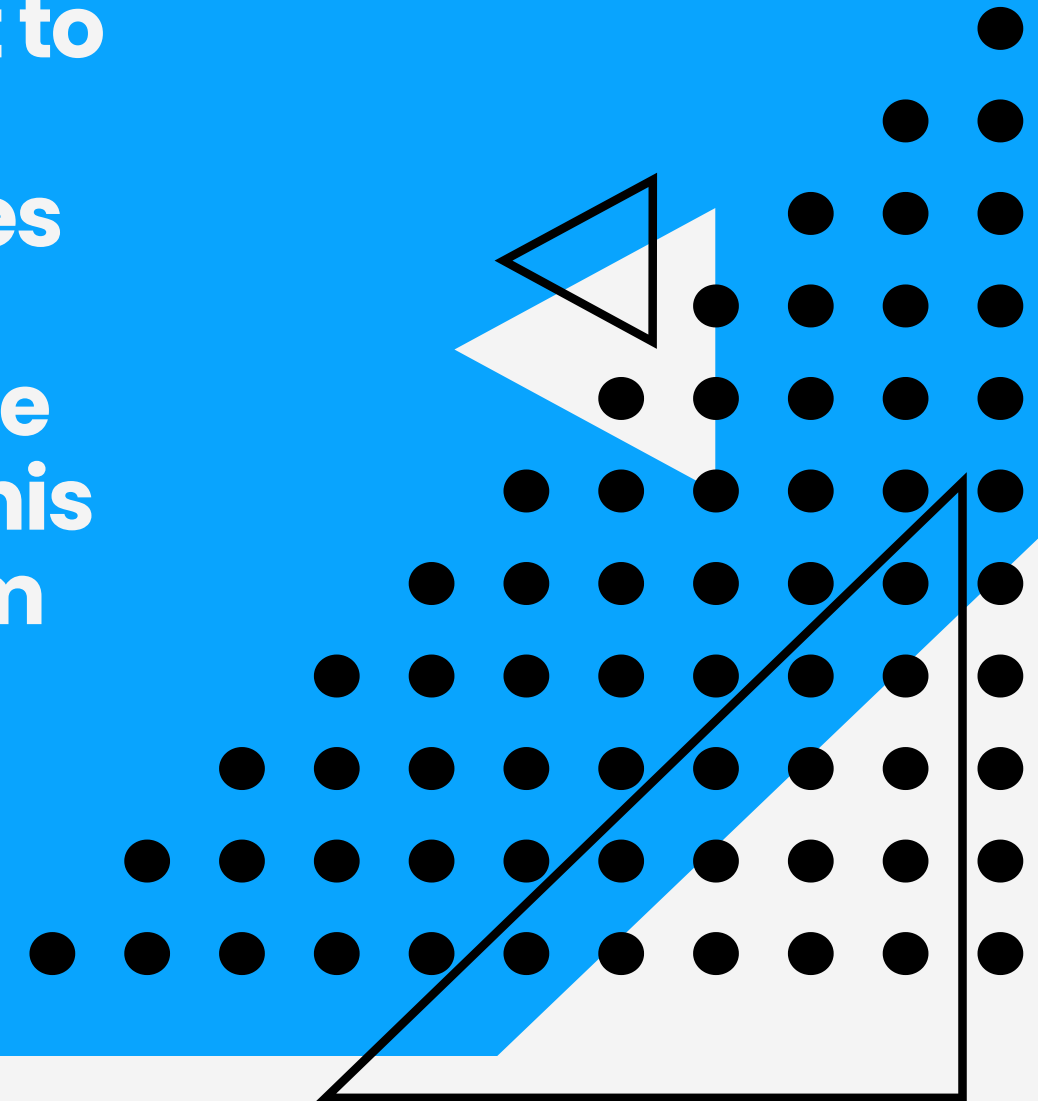
To close these gaps, charities need to:

- Embed EDI into leadership behaviours and decision-making, with senior figures modelling inclusion.
- Develop and implement long-term, data-driven EDI strategies that track progress and address systemic barriers.
- Create policies that are relevant, practical, and informed by lived experience.
- Invest in continuous learning and development that equips all employees, trustees and volunteers to practise inclusion confidently.
- Broaden recruitment approaches to attract and retain diverse talent.
- Build transparent career development pathways that mitigate against bias in progression.
- Remove accessibility barriers in technology and workplace design.
- Allocate dedicated budgets to resource meaningful, sustained EDI work.





The charitable sector's mission is rooted in fairness and social impact. By applying the same focus, planning, and investment to EDI as to core programmes, organisations can create cultures where all people feel valued, supported, and able to contribute fully. The recommendations in this report offer a practical route from good intentions to measurable, lasting change.



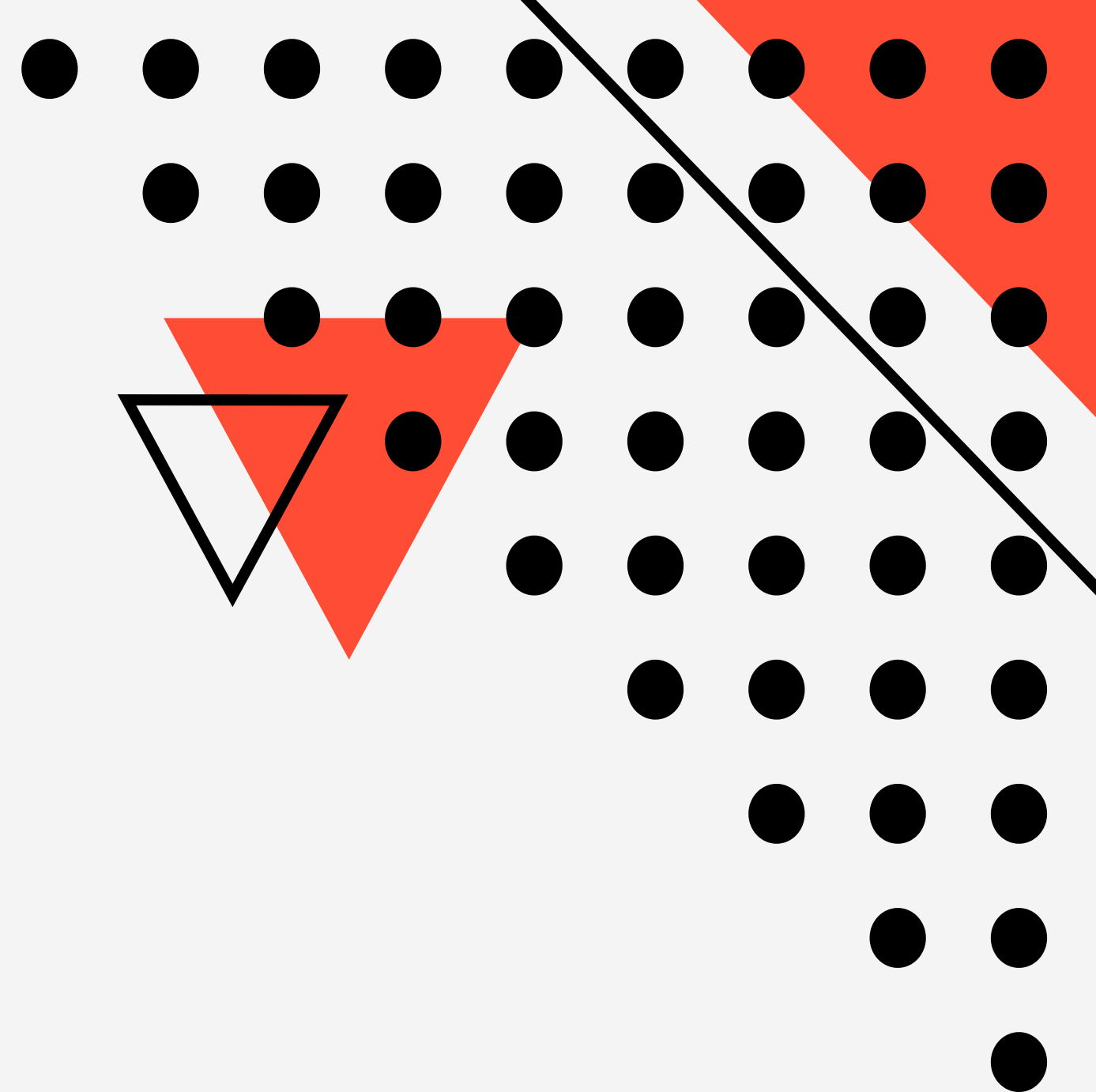
Methodology

Between January 2024 and June 2024, Mildon conducted research involving 20 respondents from the charity sector across Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Asia, and Africa. The study utilised two online methods, an anonymous survey and recorded conversations, to gather a mix of quantitative and qualitative insights into equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the charitable sector.

Recorded Conversations

In addition to the survey, participants were invited to take part in recorded online conversations. This method facilitated in-depth discussions, offering a platform for participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and insights on EDI in the charitable sector. The qualitative data gathered through these conversations provided nuanced perspectives to complement the survey findings.

This mixed-method approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the current state of EDI within the charitable sector, enabling a deeper exploration of challenges and opportunities.





Online Survey

The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data through an, anonymous questionnaire. Designed around Mildon's 7-Step Inclusive Growth Framework, the survey aimed to capture diverse perspectives on EDI practices and challenges within organisations. Each participant received a personalised assessment of their organisation's position on its EDI journey, outlining strengths and areas for improvement to support their next steps.

If you wish to receive your own scorecard and results report, you can do so on charityedi.scoreapp.com

The survey is designed to be brief and anonymous, focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion within the charitable sector. You'll receive a personalised assessment of where your organisation stands on its EDI journey, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Your insights will contribute to ongoing research shaping inclusive practices across the sector.



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Terminology

It is important that we do not forget the role of language and communication in the context of inequality. Listed are a few of the changes I have made in the report.

Key Collaborators instead of Stakeholders

In this paper, I have used the term "key collaborators" instead of "stakeholders." This decision stems from Karen Catlin's 5 Ally Actions newsletter, where she highlighted the colonial connotations of "stakeholder." The term can evoke the historical practice of settlers "staking" claims to land that was not theirs, often displacing Indigenous peoples.

Given the focus of this paper on EDI within the charity sector, it felt important to use language that aligns with the values of respect and inclusivity. "Key collaborators" better reflects the cooperative and inclusive ethos central to the charitable sector and the principles of EDI.

EDI instead of DEI

EDI is used over DEI to prioritise equity. Because creating fairness and addressing systemic barriers is what makes true inclusion possible. Organisations that focus on diversity first often face pitfalls, as diversity should be the outcome of equitable and inclusive practices, not the starting point.

For further reading on inclusive language tailored to the charity sector, I recommend [Oxfam's Inclusive Language Guide](#)

Equity vs Equality

I use 'equity' over 'equality' because equity recognises that everyone has different needs. Equality assumes the same approach works for everyone, but equity means adjusting support based on individual circumstances to ensure fair outcomes.



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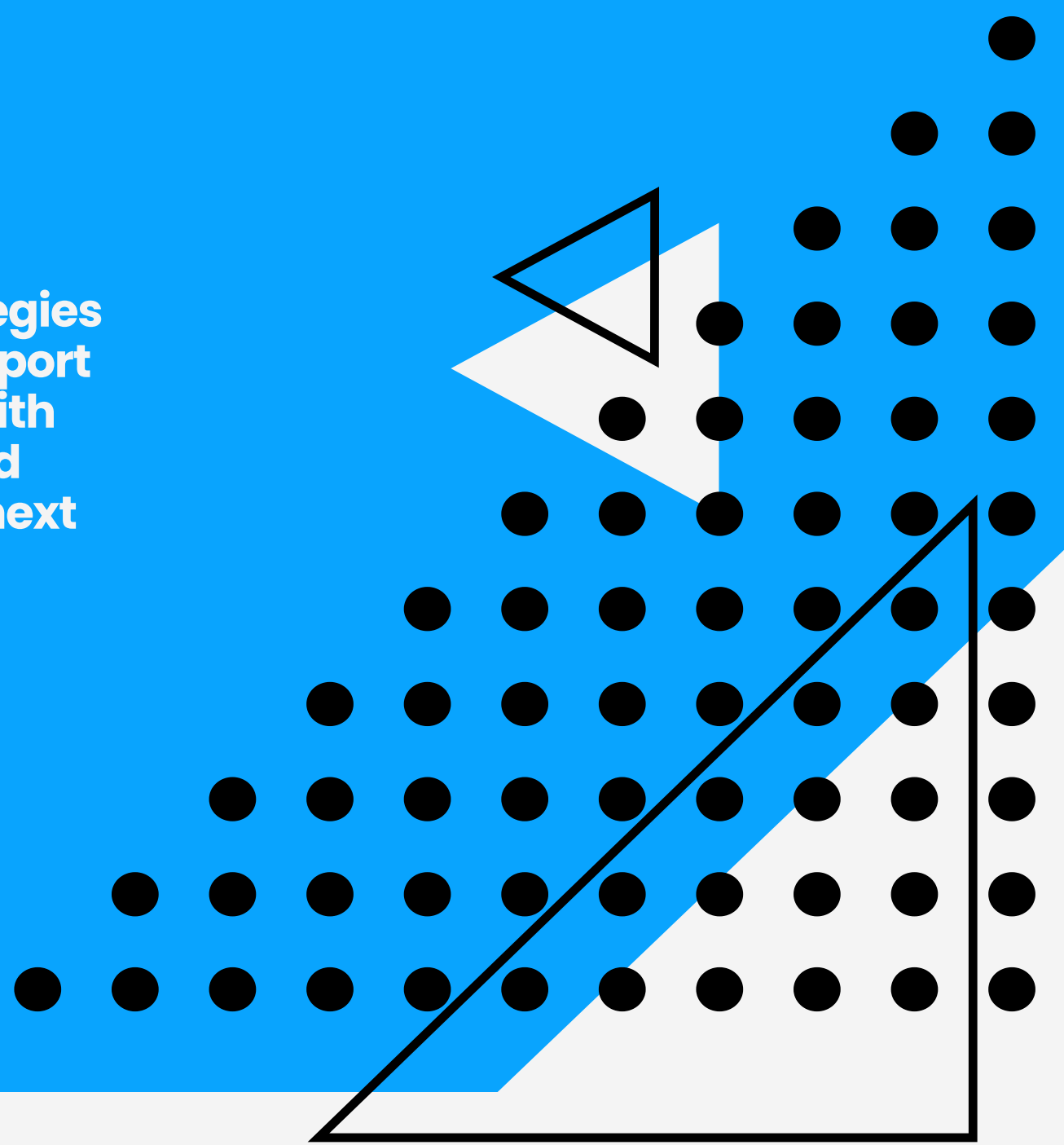


Ready to build a more inclusive workplace?

Whether you have questions about EDI strategies or want to explore how our expertise can support your goals, we're here to assist. Book a call with the Mildon team or fill out the form below, and we'll respond promptly to help you take the next step toward lasting, positive change.

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