



# Diversity Mark

**Accreditation Guidance Notes**



## Introduction

We are delighted that you have joined Diversity Mark on your organisation's ED&I (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) journey.

No matter where you find yourself in this journey, whether you're at the initial stages or making significant strides, we're committed to supporting your progress.

Before you dive into the process, we emphasise the importance of reading and reviewing these Guidance Notes. This step is crucial before setting any targets or completing the accreditation application form. Make sure to revisit these guidance notes throughout your journey, and again after creating the first draft of your accreditation application before submitting it to be assessed by the Diversity Mark [Independent Assessment Panel](#).

We also recommend utilising the [Resource Centre](#) on our website and reaching out to a Diversity Mark Buddy for extra support. Our team is ready to assist by facilitating an introduction to a Buddy, offering valuable guidance throughout your journey.

Integrating equality, diversity and inclusion at work isn't a tick box exercise – it's an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement that even the most dedicated businesses need to work on.



## Bronze Diversity Mark

The initial step in this journey is achieving the Bronze Diversity Mark accreditation, which involves submitting three targets for independent assessment to advance Gender Diversity within your organisation. You have the autonomy to establish your own targets, devise a strategy, and create an implementation plan. If you feel you have already made substantial strides in Gender Diversity, you have the option to select two Gender Diversity targets and one broader diversity target.

**Target 1** - Your first target should be **‘Develop an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy’** unless a strategy is already in place.

The objective of this initiative is to develop a living document which outlines the values, principles, and goals of the business when it comes to Gender Diversity and Inclusion. Your strategy should articulate the connection between Diversity and Inclusion and your company values, core operating model and growth strategy. *Please refer to the sample target on pages 5, 8 and 9.*

If you already have a strategy in place, a legitimate target might be to **‘Review and Refresh our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy’**. The assessment panel would expect you to focus on new data and survey inputs, with an increased or renewed focus on measurable outputs and outcomes - in particular, focussing on Gender Diversity.

You decide which additional targets to submit after analysing internal data and consulting with key stakeholders.

To retain the Bronze Diversity Mark, and work towards achieving Silver the Assessment Panel suggest that you consider the following points:

1. How will you measure progress?
2. What specific evidence and metrics can you use to report back each year?
3. How can you incorporate responsibility for Gender Diversity and Inclusion at all management levels in your organisation?
4. How can the leaders in your organisation be visible champions for Diversity & Inclusion?
5. How can you be an influencer within your sector and the wider community?



**Silver  
Diversity Mark**

After sustaining the Bronze Diversity Mark accreditation for a **minimum** of two years, organisations are eligible to apply for the Silver accreditation. At the Silver level, the assessment panel anticipates substantial, measurable progress in Gender Diversity. At this stage, you are required to submit two new broader diversity targets, bringing the total to five targets.

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**Gold  
Diversity Mark**

After maintaining the Silver Diversity Mark accreditation for a **minimum** of two years, organisations are eligible to apply for the Gold accreditation. At the Gold level, the assessment panel anticipates **significant, measurable progress** in Gender Diversity and wider Diversity.

The assessment panel will expect organisations to clearly demonstrate how they are champions of Diversity and Inclusion in the sector, and the wider community with a transformative culture shift since joining Diversity Mark.

The Gold application requires 7 creative targets demonstrating how you will continue to evolve and push the dial of culture change, with complex challenges and sustainability.

At this stage organisations will go through an independent internal audit & there will be a board level interview with the Diversity Mark Independent Assessment panel. The panel must believe that the organisation is a shining example of Diversity and Inclusion.

*Please refer to additional guidance notes for the Gold accreditation.*



## Target Guidance Notes

Please check your word count at each section to ensure you remain within the word limits

<b>Target:</b>	Is your target specific and measurable? For Example, Increase X by Y%																
<b>Date to be achieved</b>																	
MONTH/YEAR	Is the target completion date at least a year from now?																
<b>What is your rationale for choosing this target?</b>																	
<p>Please use bullet points and use this space to help the assessment panel understand your motivation and reason for choosing this target, why it is relevant at this stage on your journey and explain the current state of play.</p> <p>Does your rationale relate to your own company data or research? For example, you may wish to refer to any relevant data in the Gender Breakdown Table. If relevant, you may wish to drill down further and utilise role specific demographics, recruitment and promotions data or trends, staff survey results or feedback from underrepresented groups. It may also be useful to refer to historical data (if it is available) to look for trends and for comparison purposes.</p> <p><u>Example</u>            If an organisation’s target is to “<b>Increase applications from women for roles within software development by 15% by September 2024</b>” they may wish to add a table in this section to assist in painting a picture.</p>																	
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="padding: 5px;"><b>Software Development Roles</b></th> <th style="padding: 5px;"><b>Men</b></th> <th style="padding: 5px;"><b>Women</b></th> <th style="padding: 5px;"><b>Totals</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">In role at present (Jan 2024)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">27 (90%)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">3 (10%)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">30</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Left within the last 5 years</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">8 (54%)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">7 (46%)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Software Development Roles</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Totals</b>	In role at present (Jan 2024)	27 (90%)	3 (10%)	30	Left within the last 5 years	8 (54%)	7 (46%)	15					
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By completing an exercise like this you might spot trends which can assist in developing the target for example:

- What is the experience of the three women in a mostly male environment?
- Can the underrepresented woman within software development, and other women within the organisation provide feedback via a working group to assist in developing a more gender inclusive workplace?
- How can you involve the younger generation in providing feedback for example bring your daughter/niece/sister to workday, to help you in considering what the next generation will value when considering your workplace.
- How might you attract a higher percentage of applications from women? This could be a metric. Have you considered women on all interview panels, language and role models used, where you are advertising for jobs, education outreach, girls' schools, and colleges etc? Have you included your commitment to ED&I on your company website?
- With just 3 women in these roles and 7 having left employment within the last 5 years – what are the reasons for them leaving? Did the company carry out exit interviews? If not, this could be an action going forwards to look for trends.
- Have you carried out an anonymous survey within the organisation to understand the motivations, values of the workforce and any potential barriers?
- Have you considered a diverse working group, or employee led network to assist in identifying barriers, developing policies, and driving activity?
- Do men in the organisation understand the vast benefits of Gender Diversity for employees and the employer?

By drilling down into data, you will probably think of new actions which will inform further targets.

At present you might not have a system for monitoring and tracking data enabling you to easily identify trends. If not, you may wish to consider a method of tracking data moving forwards – this could inform a target at the start of your journey.

Companies have been most successful in driving diversity when they utilise a diverse working group of energetic and enthusiastic individuals to help drive activities within the organisation. Individuals can take ownership of some of the actions (to achieve your target) which will also assist them with their own personal development.



How will you achieve this target?

**SMART Action Plan**

**When?**

**Who is Responsible?**

These actions must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

Each action should relate to the individual target.

You should include milestones to be achieved in the months/quarters leading up to your target completion date and who is responsible, to be reviewed regularly with your Diversity working group.

For example, if you just say...‘Focus on.....’ the panel will want to understand how you intend to focus.

**VISION**

**What does good look like?**

Paint a picture of your vision.

**How will you measure success?**

Use metrics referring to the current state of play and the output or result that you hope to achieve.

For longer term targets you might wish to include milestones here with what you hope to achieve each year up to the target completion date.

**What is your long-term aspiration of the impact of this target on Gender Diversity?**

Have you included your thoughts and aspirations on how this target will move the dial?

Be specific on your thoughts, for example ‘we will have a more diverse leadership team’ is a generic statement. You may wish to consider being more specific to help paint a picture for the assessment panel.

*‘We know that by improving diversity in our leadership team we will make better decisions resulting in increased innovation. Our ambition, therefore, is to have 40% women representation at SMT & Board level by 2025.’*

This will not be set in stone, but it will give the panel an understanding of your motivation and senior level buy-in.



## Sample Target

<b>Target 1</b>		
Develop an EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Strategy		
<b>When do we want to achieve this by?</b>		
12 months from now - by Jan 2025		
<b>Why have we chosen this target?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have never prioritised diversity and inclusion, and it is not on the agenda at board level.</li> <li>We do not score well in the D&amp;I question included in our employee engagement survey at 68.1 (this along with the work/life balance question would be the lowest scores).</li> <li>We want a shift in culture so that everyone in our organisation (from entry level to board) understands and values the importance of Diversity and Inclusion.</li> <li>We want to achieve a positive gender balance across our organisation - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Men are currently underrepresented below management level - 78% women</i></li> <li><i>Women are currently underrepresented at Management level and above - 82% male</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>This target will help us lay the foundations, understand our internal data, and understand any barriers to underrepresented genders/groups.</li> </ul>		
<b>How will we achieve this target?</b>		
<b>SMART Action Plan</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Who will lead this action?</b>
1) Appoint one person at board level to be the Diversity Champion - responsible & accountable for Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I Champion)	Feb 2024	CEO
2) Diversity and Inclusion to be a Board meeting standing agenda item	Feb 2024	CEO
3) Meet with the Equality Commission for guidance on our strategy	Feb 2024	HR Director
4) Data analysis project (see Target 2)	Project begins Mar 2024	Head of IT
5) Employee led ED&I working group (see Target 3)	April 2024	Diversity Champion





6) Anonymous survey to understand what is of value to our employee base – when it comes to ED&I	May 2024	HR Team
7) Review data and survey results with key stakeholders (Board, HR, Staff Working Group, Management)	July 2024	Diversity Champion
8) Allocate resourcing and budget for diversity working groups	August 2024	FD, Diversity Champion
9) Draft strategy to be reviewed with all stakeholders	Sept 2024	Diversity Champion + HR Director
10) Final strategy sign-off	October 2024	CEO
11) Internal and external communication of strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- CEO diversity strategy video</li><li>- Internal event - workforce</li><li>- Add strategy and video to website</li><li>- Promote on all social media channels</li><li>- Send newsletter to database</li><li>- Staff newsletter</li></ul>	Nov/Dec 2024	Head of Comms
12) Implementation of the strategy	Year 2	Board & Diversity Champion



## VISION

### **What does good look like?**

- Our strategy will be easy to communicate and will include the following:

Our purpose and how this links to our company values

Our gender equality/ EDI vision for the organisation

It will link to our growth strategy

Include measurable objectives linked to practical goals

It will promote active and inclusive leadership

- By the end of the year we will have identified three new effective targets taking us into year 2 on this journey.

### **How will we measure success?**

We will review our employee engagement survey results focussing on the Diversity & Inclusion question 'How much of a priority is diversity and inclusion to senior leaders at this company?'

This scored 68.1 in 2022 and 67.2 in 2022 – we are hoping to see an uplift to 75 in 2024 and 80 in 2025.

### **What is your long-term aspiration of the impact of this target on Gender Diversity?**

Effective delivery of this target will result in us moving forwards with some valuable initiatives to achieve a positive gender balance at all levels within our organisation and create an environment that is inclusive for everyone.

By 2028 we hope to achieve a gender balance of at least 70/30 at all levels (*this figure will be reviewed after implementation of our strategy*).

You can access reports and resources [HERE](#) to assist you on this journey.

[www.diversity-mark-ni.co.uk/further-reading/](http://www.diversity-mark-ni.co.uk/further-reading/)