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Gender

- Some workforces may have a balanced ratio of male–female staff, while other organisations may have more male or more female staff.

Language

- While English is the major language in most Australian workplaces, English may not be the first language for many employees.

Family arrangement

- Staff may be married, single, in a de facto relationship or separated. They may be a single parent, have children or have no children. They may also have other carer's responsibilities, such as caring for elderly parents.

Diversity in a business context

Organisations must by law integrate workplace diversity principles into their workplaces and ensure that these principles underpin all aspects of workforce management. This means that diversity characteristics should be considered in all business operations, such as planning, selection and recruitment, leadership, performance appraisal, training and development, career progression opportunities, workplace health and safety (WHS) and industrial relations. For example, translating safety signs and organisational information into different languages ensures that WHS information is available to all.

To help organisations to manage the diversity in their workplaces, there is a range of relevant laws and regulations that all businesses must comply with, including anti-discrimination, harassment and equal employment opportunity legislation. These ensure that no person is disadvantaged because of their background, experience or differences in age, gender or sexuality.

You have a responsibility to understand what diversity means and the extent to which your organisation is embracing the concept of respecting and valuing all forms of difference in individuals.



Qualitative measures in action

It is important to be aware that qualitative methods may produce comments that are biased and prejudiced. However, you must respect the right of people to hold their views. Your job as a team leader is to promote the benefits of diversity and to resolve any problems that team members may have with one another. While the responses may not be what you have hoped for, the results may indicate the need for further training on the benefits of diversity, which in itself is a positive outcome from the survey as it gives you specific action items to work on with your team.

Questions to ask

- How diverse is the team in which you work? Give examples.
- How does your team utilise the differences among people?
- In what ways do you enjoy or not enjoy working with people from different backgrounds?
- How fairly do you feel that you and others are treated at work? Provide an example illustrating fair or unfair treatment in your workplace.
- What can be done to improve your team's approach to including different types of people in the workplace?
- What do you think about your organisation's approach to handling discrimination complaints?
- How would you suggest that your organisation improves its handling of discrimination complaints?
- What are three things that you think your workplace does well to encourage diversity?

1B Identify the benefits of workforce diversity

Management needs to ensure that the diversity of their workforce benefits the workplace and that everyone works harmoniously. Having a diverse workforce means: there is a range of abilities and skills to draw on; people can learn from each other's different experiences and skills; new ideas and innovation are generated; and people learn tolerance, compassion and how to view situations from perspectives other than their own. Staff enjoy a culture that is dynamic and varied.

A reputation for diversity can also enhance an employer's business, as it may raise the organisation's profile within the community. People are also more likely to want to join an organisation that demonstrates that it values diversity and different contributions.

By encouraging workplace diversity, an organisation shows that it respects and values all forms of difference in individuals.

Here are some of the benefits that a diverse workforce brings to both an organisation and its employees.



Organisation benefits

- A range of abilities and skills to draw on
- Productive staff who generate new ideas
- Ability to open up new markets and opportunities
- Increased customer base
- Attraction and retention of talented staff as an employer of choice
- Increased creativity and innovation
- Community support and enhanced image



Employee benefits

- Increased job satisfaction and engagement
- Increased morale and motivation
- Improved equity of access to career development opportunities
- Increased understanding of different cultures, points of view and opinions
- Learning from each other's different experiences and skills
- A workplace free from harassment, discrimination and bullying

Race, nationality and ethnicity

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

This Act underpins Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.

Sex and family status

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

This Act recognises the need to prohibit, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding or family responsibilities.

Human rights

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

People of all backgrounds must be treated equally and have the same opportunities. Discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin is unlawful.

Gender

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)

This Act legislates to improve and promote equality for both women and men in the workplace in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and family care arrangements.

Privacy

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

This Act deems personal information (such as health, memberships, religion, political or sexual orientation) to be sensitive and only to be handled by authorised personnel.

Example: diversity policy

Diversity policy **Westfield Business Solutions**

Philosophy

We appreciate the value of a diverse workforce that demonstrates a range of factors: age, gender, race, cultural heritage, lifestyle, education, physical ability, appearance, language and other factors. We value the differences between people and the contributions that these differences make to our business.

Above all, we are committed to ensuring that all employees are treated with respect and dignity, and we endeavour to provide a workplace free from harassment, discrimination and bullying.

We believe that embracing workplace diversity is everyone's responsibility.

Managers' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all managers to create an environment where:

- there is tolerance of difference
- appropriate behaviours are modelled
- the ability to contribute and to access opportunities is based on merit
- inappropriate attitudes and behaviours are confronted
- diversity complaints are responded to promptly
- any breaches of the diversity policy are dealt with promptly
- the safety and health of everyone is valued and protected.

Staff responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- treat other team members with respect and dignity
- attend training on topics, including diversity training
- raise any diversity concerns with their manager (or, if this is not appropriate, to their manager's manager)
- follow the organisation's grievance procedures when making a formal complaint.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the workplace discrimination and harassment policy.

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

For further information on this policy, contact your manager or human resources.

Diversity procedures

Procedures specify how an organisation intends to achieve the diversity policy's aims; they define the specific strategies, actions and step-by-step instructions necessary in order to carry out the tasks to implement the policy. It is the responsibility of team leaders and supervisors to ensure that diversity procedures are understood and are followed by their team and other members of the workforce.

Gender

- Implement appropriate workplace policies that prevent harassment and discrimination.
- Develop and work towards workforce targets or quotas based on merit; for example, fifty per cent of senior leadership roles to be held by women.
- Implement targeted skill or career development programs to help to upskill selected staff.

Language

- Remove or reduce use of overly technical terms or jargon (or provide an explanation of these terms).
- Communicate via a number of methods, such as using verbal instruction and written instruction to convey the same message.
- Pair an English-speaking person with a team member who needs support with the English language.
- Communicate important information in languages appropriate to the workforce.

Family arrangements and carers' responsibilities

- Provide flexible working arrangements, including part-time work, flexible work times, working from home opportunities, and options to work longer hours on some days to 'time bank' or gain time-in-lieu.
- Note: strategies that promote access for some people may reduce access for others. It is good practice to develop a range of options that enable access for a range of people.

Sexual orientation

- Implement clear policies that promote respect and diversity.
- Implement clear promotion and career development policies that ensure equity of access.

Description	Act
This Act recognises the need to prohibit, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding or family responsibilities.	
This Act states that people must not be treated less favourably on the grounds of their age.	
This Act prohibits discrimination during employment, the termination of employment and when negotiating enterprise agreements (subject to some exemptions).	
This Act underpins Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its major objectives are to promote equality before the law for all people and to make discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin unlawful.	
Discrimination occurs when people with a disability are treated less fairly than people without a disability. All states and territories have established bodies to deal with disability discrimination issues under the legislation they administer.	

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sophie is a mature-age woman who has recently started a new career in the real estate industry. One day she walks into the client meeting area to see a group of three male colleagues. One of them, David, is overtly hostile to her, saying that because she received a traineeship, one of his mate's sons missed out. He says, 'It's unfair that you get treated better than everybody else, just because you're a woman. And to make it worse, I can't believe they put on an old trainee, what a waste of time...' Sophie responds by saying that she is excited by this new career direction and that she just wants to be treated like anyone else. David continues to harass her, saying, 'You're too old to make it in this industry and women don't make good real estate agents. You're going to have to prove yourself to me.'

The Sales team leader, Scott, intervenes and says to David, 'I know you're new here, David, and you may not know about our diversity policy, but those comments are not acceptable. Sophie doesn't answer to you.' Scott adds, 'You need to understand that our clients are from a range of backgrounds and ages. I'm sure Sophie will treat our clients well and as long she can do her job, it doesn't matter about her age or gender, or anything else for that matter.'

Turning to Sophie, Scott says, 'Sophie, I'm sorry those things were said to you. We are confident in your ability to do this job and think you'll bring a lot of experience and contacts to this role. This company values and respects diversity because it's the right thing to do and because we know it makes business sense.'

Consider people's skills and knowledge

Consider a person's skills and knowledge when allocating tasks so that you incorporate the positive contributions of a diverse workforce into your work plans.

Examples of using the diversity of your workforce

- A person's ability to write may be used for developing reports, making submissions, preparing correspondence or editing other people's work
- People with technology skills may be used to format reports, develop promotional material or troubleshoot computer problems.
- Mathematical ability can be harnessed for budgets and analysis.
- Language skills can be used to help customers who speak a language other than English or in translating organisational information.
- Communication skills can be valuable for interviewing, making presentations and motivating other team members.
- Team members with experience and understanding in cultures and traditions of countries other than Australia can contribute to ideas for improving products, marketing and communication.

Consider people's characteristics

When identifying opportunities to use diversity, acknowledge the features of the person's character that make them valuable to the organisation and the team.

Think of the characteristics that are the basis for differences between people. What challenges have people had to overcome to accept their own differences or to have their differences accepted by others? What skills or qualities have been gained through overcoming these challenges and experiences that can contribute to a more effective workplace? Often the very fact of the person's difference from others shows you how to assess their strengths.

Ask yourself which people:

- make good planners, communicators, decision-makers and problem-solvers
- are creative in their problem-solving
- can counsel and mediate between employees
- are persistent and determined in getting the job done
- strive to succeed against all odds.



Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)

The *Fair Work Act 2009* gives employees the right to request flexible arrangements and to decline a request to work overtime when carer's responsibilities are involved. When preparing the work plan, consider each team member's situation and make sure that tasks are allocated fairly. In some situations it is permitted for a recruitment advertisement to ask for a person with a specific physical requirement in order to perform required tasks.

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) and various state-based legislation require workers to wear personal protective clothing and to use manual-handling aids as they carry out their tasks. When allocating tasks, make sure these aspects are included in task information.

Anti-discrimination Acts

Anti-discrimination Acts identify the need to be inclusive in recruitment, promotion and task allocation to ensure that workers are not discriminated against because of their age, gender, sexual preference, marital status or abilities. Legislation provides for specific circumstances where discrimination is allowed due to the nature of the role, such as advertising for a female-only social worker for a domestic violence shelter.

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)

The aim of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) is to improve gender equality. It does not mean that a certain number of women must be employed or that women must be given jobs over more skilled or better qualified men, but rather encourages equality of opportunity for women in the workplace and equal remuneration between women and men for the same role. A recruitment and promotion process that selects the best candidate based on merit is important to comply with these requirements.

Follow recruitment processes

Recruitment processes are a key strategy for incorporating and maximising the benefits of diversity.

An organisation may make a commitment to encourage a diversity of applicants by advertising in various formats, including local community languages. Accepting applications by mail or in person, as well as online, helps to mitigate the limitations imposed by accepting applications via the website only and assists people who struggle with computer use because of disability, language or skills gaps.

Recruitment processes may also encourage applications from older people, women with specific experience and expertise, or people with backgrounds that align with the local community.

Make sure that recruitment processes incorporate inclusive language in job advertisements and in interview questions. Always ask yourself whether someone's age or gender is something that needs to be known.



Legislation and recruitment processes

Sometimes, in specific circumstances, recruitment processes are allowed by legislation to discriminate on selected grounds where there is an inherent requirement of the role that the successful applicant does or does not have certain characteristics.

The use of discrimination on selected grounds should always be used with caution and must be because there are specific requirements of the role that require it. Before making any decisions that exclude certain categories of people, it is best to conduct your own research or to speak to an adviser such as an employer association or government agency.

4. When developing or revising work plans it is important to seek feedback from the team. List five ways to encourage feedback from your team members, remembering that different people prefer different communication styles.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sarah, the owner of Something's Brewing cafe, sees the following job advertisement:

Position vacant – kitchen hand @ Mean Beanz

We are looking for a hard-working kitchen hand. To get this job, you must:

- be young and energetic
- be able to lift heavy boxes (males preferred)
- be prepared to work all hours
- speak English – no foreigners.

To apply, drop your resume into Mean Beanz cafe, 100 Main Street.

Sarah believes the advertisement is discriminatory and breaches legislation, so she decides to discuss this with her team and ask them how to do it better. She wants to utilise the skills of her team members; two are excellent writers and others have had poor recruitment experiences. Sarah hopes that they will bring their experience and expertise to improving recruitment processes at Something's Brewing and building a diverse team.

The team members raise the following suggestions:

- Review the cafe's policies, processes and procedures to make sure they are diversity-friendly.
- Remove any discriminatory aspects of job advertisements and use inclusive language to encourage a diversity of applicants.
- Ensure that the reason for a specific ability relates to the requirements of the role, not the person.

Sarah and her team create a template job ad that can be used in the future and incorporates this feedback. Here is the revised job advertisement.

continued ...

- Ensure that your body language matches your message. If your body language does not reflect what is being said, this can create confusion; for example, smiling when giving negative news.
- Respect people's traditions, such as bowing when greeting, having personal space between people when speaking and addressing people correctly, such as by their title, first or last name.
- Translate workplace policies and procedures into other languages and check that workplace signs use universally understood symbols.

Use appropriate language

Always use language in line with the diversity context. Be a positive role model in using appropriate language and correct any team member who uses unsuitable terms or disparaging expressions.

It is important to note that language and society both change continually, so terms deemed acceptable at one time may no longer be acceptable, either because the language itself has changed or because the communities referred to have objected to some terms used to describe them. Working with diversity means that you have a responsibility to refer to people with respect and consideration, and this means using terms that are acceptable to them. For example, the best general reference for Indigenous Australians is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Characteristics of appropriate language

Clear and straightforward with minimal use of technical terms, jargon or acronyms, or, if these are necessary, then they are clearly explained

Non-discriminatory; instead of using 'him' or 'her', use 'they'

Free of sexist language and stereotyping such as 'He's behaving like an old woman'; avoid terms that are demeaning, such as referring to women as 'love' or 'dear'

Free of sexist terms; for example, avoid 'tradesmen' and 'chairman', using 'tradesperson' and 'chairperson' instead

Inclusive and respectful of the audience; do not use derogatory words such as 'loony bin'; use terms such as 'people with a disability' rather than 'disabled people'

Reflect on your own beliefs and values

Diversity makes people think differently about the world around them and can challenge their assumptions. It is crucial that team leaders are fair, honest and unbiased in all their dealings with staff. You need to be accountable for your behaviour and your decisions. As a role model for your team, you must always demonstrate actions that are based on impartial, objective evidence and are free from prejudice.

How can you be confident that you are free of prejudice in your personal reactions? The best test is to consider your interactions with others. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Am I impatient with older people or children?
- How comfortable am I when talking to a person in a wheelchair?
- Do I make assumptions about people of a particular ethnicity because of one or two negative examples?
- If my child announced that they were in a relationship with someone of the same gender, how would I react?
- Are any of my friends of a different race, religion, ethnicity or sexuality to me?

Develop an unbiased attitude

Being aware of what we think about issues and why we think those things is an important part of becoming more aware of how we make decisions. By self-reflecting and considering our interactions with people different to ourselves, we can learn more about our own values and then work to change our attitudes, our prejudices and how we communicate with people.

Strategies for developing an unbiased attitude

- Acknowledge that you may be biased in a particular area.
- Recognise that biases and prejudices can be changed.
- Read material that challenges your present attitudes.
- Watch others you admire for their lack of bias and observe them interacting and making decisions.
- Learn about other cultures, religions, physical disabilities and personality types to help you to see things from other people's perspectives.
- Take extra time to make decisions and reflect on whether your decision includes any bias.
- Ask yourself how you would feel if you were treated this way or if you saw your partner, child, sibling or parent being treated this way.

Provide training



Organise formal training sessions on diversity, including induction programs for all new staff. Include the benefits of diversity; presentations from people of different cultures; handouts with tips for interacting with people from different cultures; and opportunities for questions. Model inclusive behaviours, such as applying this knowledge to work plans and processes.

Learn about other people's cultures



Discuss the cultures of team members at meetings or discussion sessions. Ask team members to compare their culture to those of others, comparing the similarities and differences. Ask team members who know about other cultures for advice. Focus on the values and beliefs and traditions that may affect the workplace.

Invite guest speakers



Hold special information sessions where people from different cultures in the community talk about their backgrounds. Arrange for people from specific cultural backgrounds to organise interactive displays of food, music and photographs to celebrate other cultures.

Undertake research

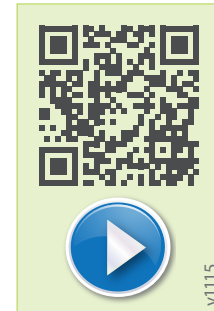


Encourage team members to find out about specific cultural behaviours they do not understand, so that interactions with others are sensitive to cultural differences. Provide resources on cultural competence in the workplace so that people can read books about culturally appropriate workplace behaviour or watch DVDs about different cultures. Research via the internet.

Provide training

Providing training can help existing team members to feel more comfortable when engaging with people from different groups. For example:

- Use presentations, DVDs and information booklets to train team members in cultural competence.
- Conduct role-plays that challenge staff members to manage situations involving potential incidents of non-compliance with the diversity policy.
- Prepare information sheets about the language that is acceptable/not acceptable in the workplace.



Implement continuous improvement processes

Improve operations by conducting regular reviews of organisational and team operations to make them more accessible to a diverse range of people.

Continuous improvement processes

- Write policy and procedures documents in plain English.
- Use symbols and pictures to improve the accessibility and communication of key information to those with difficulties understanding English.
- Incorporate suggestions from team members to improve work practices and make better use of people's skills, knowledge and backgrounds.
- Regularly review work plans and adjust these to meet diversity requirements.
- Conduct exit interviews as an opportunity to find out whether a lack of inclusive practices is why staff are leaving the organisation.

Topic 4

Support and encourage diverse workforce members

Providing support and encouraging staff to work collaboratively are essential responsibilities for team leaders, supervisors and managers. Support can be given at the broader organisational level, as well as at the team level. Be aware of the various strategies and techniques that you can provide to help people to adjust to the work environment, to overcome the challenges of a disability or language difficulty, and to learn new skills, so that you develop a productive and harmonious team.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 4A Provide workplace support and access to enabling services
- 4B Encourage, review and provide feedback to the workforce on a regular basis

Support for flexible working conditions

An organisation may have a specific policy to support work/life balance for those with various family commitments. Discuss these with team members so they are aware of what the organisation offers.

- Flexible working opportunities and conditions may be provided, including part-time, job-share and home-based work.
- Provisions in industrial relations documents (such as enterprise agreements) support employees with access to flexible working arrangements in order to balance work, family and personal responsibilities.
- Staff may be supported in their caring responsibilities through the provision of nursing breaks and access to breastfeeding facilities for nursing mothers who have returned to work.



Provide team level support

As a team leader, you need to be aware of the diverse make-up of your team and the opportunities and challenges this brings. Implement a range of strategies that help team members and provide access to the kinds of support they may need, in line with the organisation's diversity policy and procedures.

Here are some examples of access and inclusion challenges, and the specific support that you can provide to your team.

4B Encourage, review and provide feedback to the workforce on a regular basis

A key responsibility for a team leader is to encourage their team to embrace diversity and to provide feedback as to how well the team is following the organisation's diversity policy and procedures, and where improvements may be made.

Support may be provided by:

- encouraging team members to be inclusive
- reviewing the team's approach to work
- acknowledging the importance of feedback
- providing regular feedback to the team
- encouraging team members to provide feedback to you and to each other.



Encourage team members to be inclusive

Your team can benefit from the different skills, knowledge and experiences of the workforce. However, people must feel comfortable to share their perspectives. As a team leader, it is part of your role to foster an environment where individuals feel able to share these views. If there is a hostile environment or an environment where people do not feel that they can express themselves, this may affect work output or working relationships between team members. In many cases it is best to deal with issues as a whole team, rather than directing a warning to a single person.

Always be aware of enabling activities that you may need to implement if there are particular barriers preventing people from participating or providing feedback.

Strategies for providing regular feedback

- Have a standing agenda item in team meetings to discuss issues and provide team feedback.
- Organise informal discussions with the team when an issue arises based on a person's differences and provide positive feedback.
- Schedule an individual meeting; select an appropriate venue where there is some privacy if the feedback is sensitive.
- Discuss recent work together and provide suggestions or demonstrate areas for improvement.
- Conduct formal performance appraisal processes on a regular basis to provide feedback.
- Acknowledge and celebrate people's achievements as a practical and positive way of providing feedback.
- Explain any changes to anti-discrimination legislation.

Encourage the team to provide feedback

One of the benefits of having a diverse team is the range of points of view.

Encourage your team to provide suggestions on how the team's diversity may be affecting work output and workplace relations, and how the team can improve its practices. As team leader, let your team know that their feedback is integral to the success of the team.



Strategies for receiving feedback from your team include:

- team meetings
- brainstorming sessions and focus groups where team members provide their views on various policies, procedures and practices
- staff satisfaction surveys
- training evaluation forms
- exit interviews
- informal discussions.