



SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY WORKSHOP REPORT

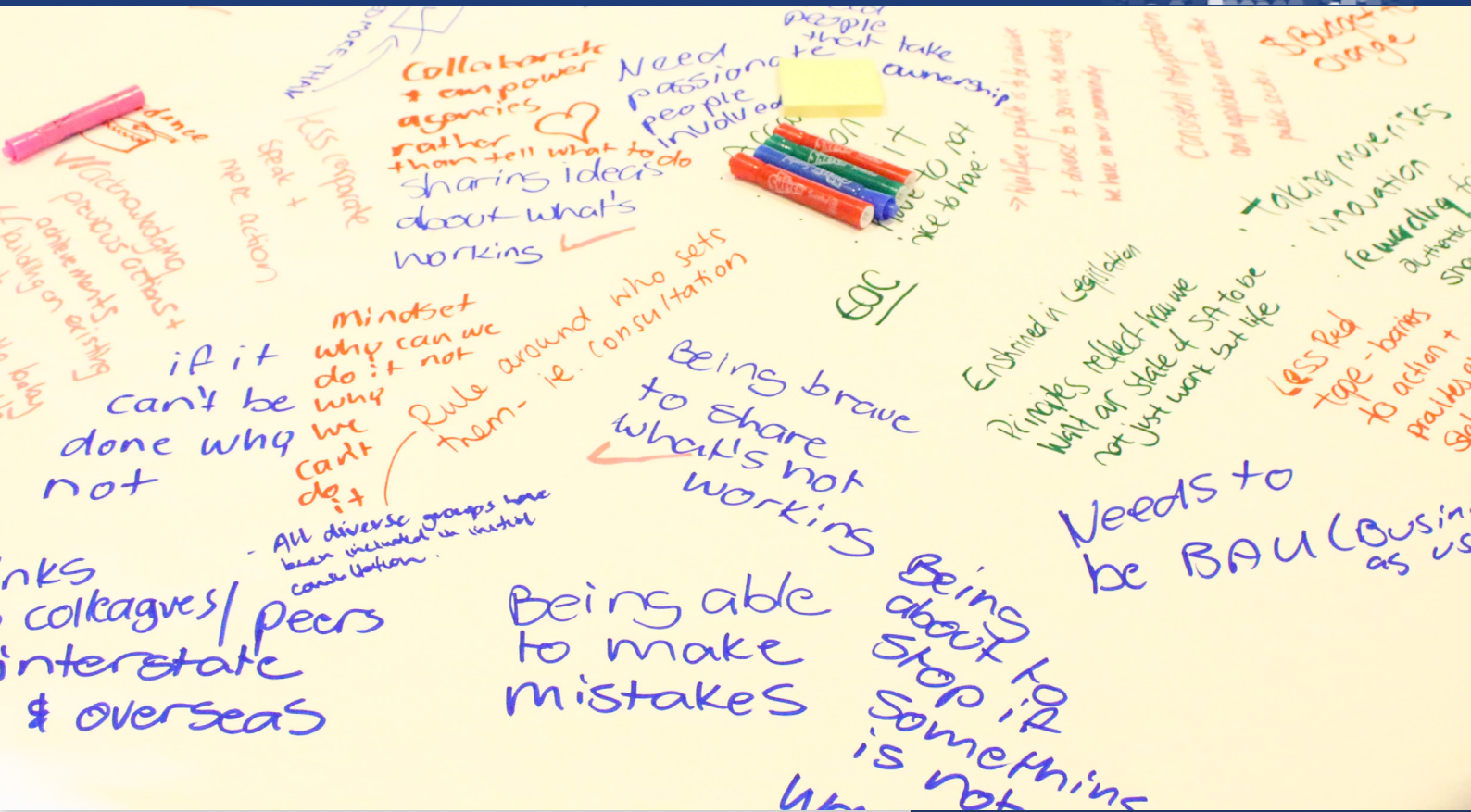


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Executive Summary

Overview

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) wishes to adopt an innovative approach to the development of the new diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy, one which in itself reflects key principles of inclusion, respect and engagement. UGM Consulting (UGM) was invited to submit a proposal outlining how OCPSE might engage meaningfully with a significant number of stakeholders across all agencies through a structured idea sharing event, using the World Café methodology.

Since the intent of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop was to give voice to the participants, this executive summary is intentionally brief since a more detailed summary would not only dilute contributions that participants made but also provide insufficient context. The table of contents is intentionally detailed to serve as a quick overview of the report's contents.

Process

140 participants, in 22 self-organised table groups, took part in four rounds of conversation relating to a whole-of-government South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Main ideas from each round were captured by each table group and this output was transcribed, collated and analysed into themes using grounded-theory research methodology. The result is this summary report.

Themes from Round 1: Principles that will guide D&I strategy development and implementation

The 9 principles for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategy development and implementation in the South Australian Public Sector that emerged from the process were:

1. Inclusive: Any strategy that is generated should be inclusive in nature and, to be congruent, should also be developed in an inclusive way.
2. People-centred: Any D&I strategy will be people centred, in the way it is developed, in what it contains, and the manner in which it is implemented.
3. Values-based: D&I strategy development and implementation should align with the South Australian Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework and principles in this section.
4. Collaborative: The development and implementation of D&I strategy should be collaborative.
5. Strategic: The approach to D&I should be strategic.
6. Evidence-based: The D&I strategy is evidence-based and data-driven.
7. Experimental orientation: The D&I strategy should have an experimental orientation.
8. Evaluation-focussed: All aspects of the D&I strategy will be measurable and subject to ongoing evaluation.
9. Accountability-driven: The D&I strategy, along with its implementation, should clearly identify associated accountabilities.

Themes from Round 2: Simple Rules that will support effective decision making and implementation around whole-of-sector D&I strategy

Four major themes were identified and these are listed below.

1. Inclusive: The item/action under consideration demonstrates that it is inclusive, both in respect of approach and intended outcomes.
2. Evidence-based and outcomes-focused: The item/action under consideration demonstrates that it is evidence-based and outcomes-focused.

3. Accountability-driven: Items/actions will be accountability-driven – they will be supported, resourced and responsibility will be assigned.
4. Integrated and contextualised: D&I items/actions will be contextualised to environment where they are used and, as far as possible, be integrated into everyday business.

Themes from Round 3: What we will do 'more of' or 'less of'

A wide range of actions were named and these were grouped into the following themes.

1. Collaboration
2. Communication
3. Transparency
4. Action
5. Accountability
6. Experimental approach
7. Monitoring and evaluation
8. Celebrating differences and progress
9. Calling out

Themes from Round 4: What first steps we might take in the next short while to contribute to sector-wide D&I success

To support action, it is useful to identify clear first steps. To this end, participants outlined a wide range of potential first steps which are listed below.

1. Take action
2. Across government working group
3. Develop 'Public Sector portal'
4. Communicate the vision and credible case for change
5. Consultation with all stakeholders
6. Buy-in at executive level
7. Take accountability for change
8. Establish and share baseline
9. Set goals and develop a plan
10. Embed principles/practices in each department
11. Align decisions with D&I strategy
12. Celebrate small wins
13. Additional actions that may not be first steps

Concluding commentary

Based on UGM's expertise in a range of fields including D&I and strategy and change, and informed by outcomes from the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop, UGM offered a range of concluding observations. These highlighted that whole-of-government strategy is more likely to be a meta-strategy than a higher-level clone of a strategy that might be found in a large agency. The output from the SA Public Sector D&I Strategy Workshop provides Principles, a set of Simple Rules, prompts of what to do 'more of' and 'less of' and also a variety of 'first steps', all contextualised for the SA

Public Sector context. These will form a robust, evidence-based platform for embarking on and navigating the journey towards a high-level D&I strategy for the SA Public Sector.

A. Overview - Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop

I. Rationale

The South Australian Public Sector is committed to growing the state's prosperity and wellbeing. It is the state's largest employer, with a workforce of more than 100,000 people, drawn from a highly diverse range of backgrounds. Values of respect and inclusion are accepted by all agencies, with the aim of creating a shared culture where every employee feels they belong and can contribute of their best. In this context, The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) is seeking to recalibrate the whole-of-government South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The intention is to embed the overarching and unifying principles of Inclusion and Equality within each agency, in such a way that clarity and consistency across the sector are achieved, while appreciating different agencies' contexts and circumstances.

OCPSE wishes to adopt an innovative approach to the development of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, one which in itself reflects key principles of inclusion, respect and engagement. UGM Consulting (UGM) was invited to submit a proposal outlining how OCPSE might engage meaningfully with a significant number of stakeholders across all agencies through a structured idea sharing event, using the World Café methodology. UGM is a boutique management consulting business which has completed a number of well-regarded projects for OCPSE previously.

Aims of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop included:

- Functioning as an exciting launch of the new South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and its development process
- Demonstrating alignment between the principles behind the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (what we are doing) and the process of developing it (how we are doing this)
- Engaging stakeholders in thoughtful conversation about the recalibrated South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy using an innovative approach that encourages collaboration, challenge, debate and attentive listening
- Securing shared ownership of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy from the outset, minimising the risks of any future roll out of initiatives being dismissed as 'not belonging to us,' while building commitment and conviction

The interactive South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop took place at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 11 December 2018. Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, Erma Ranieri, opened the event which was attended by 140 contributors from across the South Australian Public Sector as well not-for-profit agencies involved in supporting diversity and inclusion.

2. Approach

Since the focus of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop was diversity and inclusion (D&I), maximising inclusion was a primary design consideration. An important element, subsequently acknowledged in post-event feedback, was providing people opportunities to contribute their perspectives. For this reason, beyond providing a basic framework to promote participation and quality discussion, facilitators intentionally limited the extent and manner in which they personally engaged with table groups. Consequently, what emerged from the process was not simply

rubber-stamping of a predetermined view, but rather a highly actionable, shared perspective on South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy development in a form not previously available. A grounded-theory approach to post-event data analysis, where themes emerge from the raw data, further contributed to this report representing the voice of contributors rather than simply rubber-stamping preconceived ideas.

2.1. Design principle: Complexity 'friendly'

The second primary design element focused on the best way to ensure the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is suitable for its context (diversity and inclusion and whole-of-government). In consultation with OCPSE, it was agreed that any such strategy is necessarily complex, both in formulation and implementation. For this reason, it was agreed to adopt a complexity-oriented perspective for the rounds of workshop conversation, rather than taking a more linear approach (for example, what are our goals?, what are the obstacles?, and what action will we take?). The linear approach is more common, but it is also rapidly losing support since it doesn't cope well with complex contexts which necessarily require less linear approaches. Less linear approaches are proving more successful in complex contexts because such contexts are characterised by degrees of volatility (rapid change), uncertainty (low predictability), complexity (many interrelated factors) and ambiguity (factors and interrelationships often not clear cut). The term VUCA is becoming increasingly widely used to label and think about today's organisational (and societal) contexts. Successful strategy development and implementation needs to take complexity into account.

2.2. Principles

Context is always critical. Since every organisation is unique, even if only in subtly different ways, a one-size-fits-all mindset is not a useful approach – it simply doesn't recognise and accommodate the variance in different complex systems which impacts outcomes. That said, where some coherence among systems (organisations) is desired, a set of overarching, guiding principles can provide a useful, yet suitably flexible, framework that accommodates (and promotes) acceptable self-organisation. A key point is that OCPSE is essentially developing a meta-strategy for D&I, which can then guide the development and implementation of more specific strategies suitable for individual agencies. Thus providing a starter set of guiding principles, developed during an inclusive process, was seen to be a valuable outcome of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop. It is likely that these principles will endure, perhaps with minor adjustments, outlasting changes in office holders (political and Public Sector) or even changes in the D&I field itself that might result in strategy adjustments. The principles will ensure continuity at foundation level. The South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop deliberately used the term 'principles' rather than 'values'. A principle is broader and more versatile as a construct. For example, 'value for money', 'return on investment' or 'data-driven' can be important principles that inform planning. But they cannot strictly speaking be said to be values. In this way, principles illuminate the fundamentals seen as important, as well as guiding both decisions and behaviours. This distinction proved to have considerable appeal to participants and supported their thinking, as will be seen below.

2.3. Simple Rules

Decision making is often challenging, even when contexts are not complex. In complex (VUCA) contexts the degree of difficulty is amplified. In a linear context, holding off in the hope of finding 'the' solution might have value. However, in VUCA contexts, there are few times when 'the' single solution will suffice. In fact, it is likely that any perceived solution will need to be adapted during implementation due to unforeseen factors (this is a fundamental principle of complex systems). For this reason, it is useful to adopt a more experimental approach, testing multiple solutions simultaneously, and focusing on those that deliver better outcomes and discarding or paring back those that are less effective. This approach requires continual

assessment and decision making, often quite rapidly at all levels, including at the front line. To this end, developing and applying a set of Simple Rules in VUCA contexts can help cut through the noise and help identify salient points that result in better decisions and, ultimately, better outcomes. A handful of carefully selected Simple Rules (see handout distributed to participants), fit for context, helps navigate chokepoints and speed up decision making. This is especially important in an experimental context with short plan-implement-review cycles. Simple Rules necessarily align with the overarching principles and are effective by being limited in number and focused on chokepoints. Simple Rules are likely to change more frequently than principles.

2.4. 'More of...'Less of'

Strategies that are more 'complexity friendly' recognise that their aim is to maintain or change states, rather than achieve absolute outcomes. For example, 'more representative senior leadership' is an aim that is concerned with changing the current state. This in itself would be further defined in a particular context by using multiple proxy metrics to measure and indicate progress, rather than, say, set an absolute target for all of '50% female CEs by 2020'. This approach recognises that organisations/communities are more like ecosystems than machines. They are – as in the SA Public Sector – at different stages of development or maturity in respect of any specific diversity aim. In Complex Adaptive Systems, it is also difficult to know, for certain, the impact of any particular action. For this reason, a more effective approach is to treat every action as an experiment. Taking this perspective requires greater tolerance, even expectation of failure – failures is a metric that the thinking and actions aren't sufficiently innovative! This also requires a no blame approach, so that people feel safe taking safe-to-fail risks in the interests of making progress. Where an action results in a movement towards the desired state, then it can be amplified. If instead the outcome is a move away from the desired state, then it can be dampened or even extinguished and other actions trialled. Put simply, organisations and individuals will do 'more of' or 'less of' particular actions to move towards the desired state. Including this as a round of conversation, and intentionally framing it rather broadly, maximised the ability of participants to interpret the question in their own terms. This contributed to surfacing issues identified as important, without predetermining the responses. It also ensured that collaborative discussion would help surface the most important issues generally.

3. Process

The Café process involved participants being self-organised in 22 table groups of between 6 and 8 people and participating in four rounds of focused conversation. In each round of conversation, people moved in order to ensure widespread sharing of ideas. The first round involved home table groups considering the principles upon which the whole-of-government South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy would be based. Round 2 considered the handful of 'Simple Rules' that would help make decision-making more effective and efficient, given the complex context in which this occurs. Following on this theme of operating more effectively in a complex context, Round 3 focused on what there would need to be 'more of' and 'less of' (compared with the past) to design and implement an effective South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. To help promote early post-workshop momentum for the strategy initiative, in Round 4 participants decided what 'first steps' they might take to facilitate the design and implementation of an effective South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Having discussed the four questions, participants returned to their home tables and decided on the items they felt were most important responses to each question. These were captured on 4 separate posters which were then displayed around the venue for all participants to be able to review and comment on. During the closing 'Thoughtful Journey' phase participants were invited to comment individually on these group outputs. This led to many further comments being added to the 88 posters, including endorsement, reinforcement, clarification or additional ideas.

Poster content (from all 88 posters) was transcribed, collated and analysed by UGM, resulting in this summary report. Posters relating to each round were collated, identifying common themes. Unsurprisingly, there was also substantial between-round topic/concept coherence. Additionally, post-event scrutiny of each of the 22 ‘table cloths’ (the raw information-capture documents, developed during the exercise by participants sharing and recording their ideas as they arose) confirmed that all obviously significant ideas had been captured by the posters. There is further detail on this in the Appendix.

4. Post-event feedback

Prior to presenting outcomes of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop, it is appropriate to note that participants were invited to provide their feedback after the event and we include some of that here. Although more detailed feedback is available elsewhere, by including some of the data at this point the report can provide valuable participant perspectives of the event experience. Of the 62 respondents, 56% (35) *strongly agreed* that “the process enabled me to share my views”, with 42% (26) *agreeing* with the sentiment. 98% support is an exceptional level of endorsement.

“The format provided valuable and insightful conversation with many different people. The format encouraged this.”

“The process used was most appropriate to the purpose of the workshop.”

Almost one third (32%/20) of respondents *strongly agreed* that “I was able to gain useful insights”, and a further 63% (39) *agreeing*. Again, only one respondent felt they didn’t gain useful insights.

“There was an eclectic group of people in the room who challenged, confirmed and provided great conversation.”

“Having different rounds of questions and requiring participants (‘travellers’) to move to different tables was good, and listening to other viewpoints was interesting and illuminating.”

A few of the key takeaway messages/insights from respondents are included below:

“There are a lot of people who want to make a difference, if we can break through some barriers, collectively we can make some real differences.”

“That short-term plans with incremental, achievable goals are more relevant today than large-scale, 10-year plans, as the rate of change is such that long-term plans become obsolete well before their timelines have concluded.”

“There is still a large lack of knowledge around inclusive practices in State Gov.”

“We are all responsible for making this happen. Action is needed.”

B. Analysis and outcomes of each round

This section presents the collated outcomes of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop. To maximise participant voice, we have intentionally included participants’ direct comments from the posters, indicated by quote marks. In places it doesn’t make for a smooth sentence,

but that is less important we felt than conveying the participant record as accurately as possible. Sometimes it was necessary to make a slight adjustment to make sense in context and, where this has occurred, adjusted or added words are indicated by square brackets []. In places where UGM drew on best available research findings to elaborate and further explain perspectives the text has been italicised, to make it distinct from participant voice.

I. Round I: What 10-12 principles might guide our whole-of-government D&I strategy development and implementation?

Round I involved identifying principles that might guide the development and implementation of a whole-of-government approach to diversity and inclusion. As part of the orientation to the question, participants were shown how principles could more flexibly and effectively guide strategy development and implementation than the more frequently used 'values'. Principles illuminate the fundamentals seen as important and guide behaviours and decisions. Usefully, in a changing context, where goals and plans will likely start and finish, principles remain constant.

Nine reasonably discrete but nevertheless interrelated principles emerged during analysis of the outputs from this round. Although some principles may prove more important than others, together the set is likely to provide guidance from a variety of perspectives. Listed in no particular order, the principles include: inclusive, people-centred, values-based, collaborative, strategic, evidence-based, experimental-orientation, evaluation-focused, and accountability-driven. In their current format, these high-level principles provide a solid foundation that a working group might wordsmith for best fit within the SA Public Sector context.

1.1. Inclusive

Any strategy that is generated should be inclusive in nature and, to be congruent, should also be developed in an inclusive way.

There was general recognition that taking an inclusive approach (the actions and behaviours) will likely prove more effective than focusing on diversity itself (i.e. the statistics), a view which is also supported by the most recent literature in the field. As a starting point, a number of table groups suggested that "inclusion is a basic human right" and should be the basis on which any D&I (and all others, for that matter) strategy is formulated. This, as one group put it, would involve "mainstreaming and integrating diversity and inclusion". Inclusion success would "focus on engagement, sense of belonging, job satisfaction and well-being." It was felt that "embrace[ing] strengths, diversity and different working styles and diversity of thought" will result in a context where people can "participate, contribute and succeed" and organisations would enjoy "innovation and better business outcomes".

It was noted that, currently, not all organisational cultures are suitably inclusive of the various sub-cultures (diversity groupings in the broadest sense) and stakeholders, requiring D&I efforts to ensure there is "no discrimination", "equity of opportunity" and "full participation". Inclusion implies "participation at all levels", including having "diverse voices at the highest levels". "Voice", another group clarified, is associated with "listen" and "be heard". The importance of "transparency" was also highlighted by many table groups, with one suggesting "transparency in accessibility" as a way to facilitate "culturally inclusive space". A related sentiment was that accessibility meant "keep[ing] it real, simple, clear language." Inclusive organisations would also work in "adaptive and agile" ways, displaying "flexibility".

1.2. People-centred

Any D&I strategy will be people centred, in the way it is developed, in what it contains, and the manner in which it is implemented.

A D&I strategy should contribute towards a “fair go for everyone – with people in the centre”. Given the context, the strategy will necessarily be policy and planning oriented, as it should. It will also, very clearly, be people-centred – “people are the most important part of the solution”. A large number of participant comments highlighted the role of the community at the various stages of strategy development and implementation.

Efforts should “reflect and represent the community as a whole”. Having a people-centredness ought to ensure that “diversity and inclusion is a social and community initiative” and should have “no political attachment”. It is essential to “ensure the new D&I strategy can operate effectively within the short/longer term political cycle and policy constraints i.e. lives beyond Liberal/Labor government”. Being people-centred would also value those who have “lived experience”.

Additionally, there was mention that, while the focus is often on different diversity groupings, the complexity of individuals gives rise to “intersectionality”. Although drawn from feminist literature and used in the context of compounding sources of oppression of excluded groups in society, this term is also a reminder that people have multiple, interconnected social categorisations (identities). Being people-centred helps ensure that individual interests are not overlooked, in the pursuit of particular sub-cultural interests. This includes showing “respect for difference in relationships, knowledge and ideas and walking in others’ shoes”.

1.3. Values-based

D&I strategy development and implementation should align with the South Australian Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework and principles in this section.

D&I ought to be “part of normal business, integrated in our modern workplace”. Consequently, “Public [Sector] Values should be enacted and visible (day to day)”. The “Whole of Government Values” should inform process, “practice” and behaviour.

1.4. Collaborative

The development and implementation of D&I strategy should be collaborative.

Collaboration would be “engaging”, “transparent” and “accessible” (“clear communication, getting language and meaning right”). It would likely start with “co-design”, an indicator of “real stakeholder consultation”. Collaboration would also “include people in decision-making” both “internal” and “external”. Internally, this would involve “employee/staff engagement at all levels”, involving “listening to understand and inclusion of people with lived experience”. Externally, engagement (and collaboration) would be “multi-industry/multisector - i.e. outside of own walls” and include the “private sector, NGOs and other jurisdictions”.

1.5. Strategic

The approach to D&I should be strategic.

A strategic approach to D&I would encompass having “a clear vision of the ‘future state’” (“a vision about future workforce”). The strategy should be “evidence-based” (see separate principle) and “evaluated regularly”. It will demonstrate “openness” and “more flexibility, less rigidity”, avoiding a “cookie-cutter”

approach and enable organisations to be “adaptive and agile”. “Adaptability and flexibility” would mean there is a common, “overarching strategy” which is then “tailored” for each agency. It is worth reiterating that it should be a “strategy that outlives/independent of [the] political agenda”. A “measure of success” is that, as a result of changes, the “strategy becomes obsolete”. Ultimately, ensure there is accountability so that “everyone responsible for the strategy”.

1.6. Evidence-based

The D&I strategy is evidence-based and data-driven.

Any D&I strategy should be “evidence-based/data-driven”. Expressed another way, it should be “knowledge driven (arising from the data)”. Simply put, “it should be informed by evidence - ‘show your working’ – why you think a policy will work and make a difference”. It should involve “research and apply best practice (within context)”.

UGM might raise, in the spirit of this very principle, that evidence suggests where there are many interdependent variables and relationships (i.e. a complex system), it is more appropriate to focus on ‘good practice’. Seeking ‘the’ best practice has a linear orientation, possibly adding unnecessary constraints, such as delayed or more complex decision-making. Provided there is an experimental approach and regular evaluation (two additional principles in this section), ensuring there is always ‘good practice’ will likely deliver consistently good quality outcomes over time.

It is also useful to note at this point that the D&I sector, in Australia and internationally, has made very slow progress, despite in some places significant resources having been applied over many years now. A major reason has been the sense that something had to be done, so quick action was taken. However, since it is a politically-charged, cultural arena, there was also little calling out (or even sharing) of information about failed actions. For example, pursuing well-intended stand-alone initiatives that raise awareness but do nothing to change the culture that supports the status quo. Finally, there is a sense now that while quick action is desirable, it should also be accompanied by ongoing evaluation. There is no shame in trying things that don’t work; it is shameful, however, when organisations persist with initiatives that don’t work. The huge opportunity cost to the community is the chance of trying something else that may work more effectively. This issue concerned a number of participants who were seeking improved outcomes from investment of resources. This also reinforces the value of the experimental approach (next principle), where multiple actions (rather than one only) are piloted, evaluated and adjusted based on efficacy.

1.7. Experimental orientation

The D&I strategy should have an experimental orientation.

Developing and implementing a new, whole-of-government South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy acknowledges that the current situation can be improved. While there are already “good examples in place” and “it’s not ground zero”, there is nevertheless room for “building/enhancing” on current provisions. To achieve this, “we need more risk-taking”. Put differently, “risk-taking versus risk aversion”, “dare to fail”, “failure is learning”, “take risks and be prepared to fail”. “Learn from successes and failures”. In the context, “if not, why not...a bias for yes”.

One way to achieve progress is to make “continuous [D&I] improvement part of the fabric, not an add on.” Latest evidence suggests that continuous improvement (and even strategic breakthrough) in complex contexts (complex systems) is achieved by taking an experimental approach, strongly associated with the “risk-taking” and continuous learning sentiments expressed by many table groups.

In this less linear approach, different small, safe-to-fail experiments test aspects of strategy. Instead of going with one big punt (with a long lead time to implementation and a long lag time before efficacy is known e.g. going with unconscious bias training as 'the' solution), multiple small experiments (with short time horizons) are quickly initiated and closely monitored. Those initiatives that move the organisation towards the desired outcomes are amplified, while those that are less successful are quickly dampened or extinguished.

Failure of some (or parts of) initiatives is anticipated as a normal cost of innovation. The dividend comes from initiatives that are much more effective than taking a less risky, but less impactful, 'safe option'. Almost every major initiative undertaken is the sum of multiple smaller experiments that are continually assessed and adjusted (or stopped, without penalty, if they don't work) for the duration of the project. Taking small (next adjacent) steps, that are quickly assessed and adjusted, has an extremely positive impact on risk profile. Such an approach is also highly congruent with the other principles in this section, namely being strategic, evidence based, evaluation-focused and accountability-driven.

1.8. Evaluation-focused

All aspects of the D&I strategy will be measurable and subject to ongoing evaluation.

A D&I strategy should “create measurable pathways”. “Continual evaluation” will support a “continuous improvement [approach] that is part of the fabric, not an add-on”. There should be “transparent evaluation and outcomes”. Evaluation also supports an “evidence-based approach, linking to incentives and monitoring relevance of [the] strategy”. Evaluation gives a sense of progress, including informing “when will [the] project stop?” This latter sentiment links to the notion that some projects wastefully run their course simply because they were initiated, even when they are known to be underperforming or failing. Evaluation is an important contributor to accountability, the final principle in this section.

1.9. Accountability-driven

The D&I strategy, along with its implementation, should clearly identify associated accountabilities.

A D&I strategy should include “accountability and ownership”: “Own it, do it!” “Accountability is key [to action]. [There is a] need to create targets/measures”, where the focus is on “people plus systems”. Even the best D&I strategy is likely to fare poorly in the absence of accountability for the quality of its implementation.

While different people might have particular accountabilities, there was also a sense that everyone should “hold ourselves and each other accountable”. “Not just KPIs but personal responsibility”. This accountability is “for own actions, to the community and to our stakeholders, for authentic results”. Accountability will be served by “transparency”. It will also be supported by “recognition and reward (PDPs)”.

One table group felt there may be benefit in having accountability for D&I “enshrined in legislation”. Another suggested that the system should “stop rewarding bad behaviour of turf protectors”.

2. Round 2: What Simple Rules will support effective decision making and implementation around whole-of-sector D&I strategy?

Principles (to which a whole set of values are added in this case) provide useful guidance to ensure that a broad range of matters receive attention in the strategy and in implementation generally. However, continually assessing multiple, ongoing initiatives against the principles could slow decision making in ways that impact outcomes. To this end, where bottlenecks in decision making may occur in particular, a set of

Simple Rules (that change over time, based on emergent conditions) can make that task a lot more efficient and effective.

In this way, employees at all levels and in all role categories, including at the front line, would be able to draw on a set of Simple Rules to assist their day-to-day decisions and choices. What they do (and choose not to do) then becomes a consistent and reliable reflection of this guidance. As an example, during their conversations, 10 of the 22 table groups mentioned the need to constantly review recruitment processes to ensure that what is happening embodies D&I principles. Having a set of Simple Rules would assist all involved to 'run a ruler' over each process step and make adjustments as needed, without waiting for a whole-of-agency review. Simple Rules enable employees to be responsive and proactive, helping them to bring the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to life in their own contexts.

Table groups identified four major themes that should inform the design of this first set of Simple Rules: inclusive; accountability-driven; evidence-based and outcomes focused; and integrated and contextualised. Simple Rules must align with the Principles, so additional clarity on the Simple Rules is available in the Principles section.

2.1. Inclusive

The item/action under consideration demonstrates that it is inclusive, both in respect of approach and intended outcomes.

"Is what we're doing supported by diversity and inclusion principles?" will be continuously asked in respect of any strategy or initiative. The process of arriving at the strategy or initiative needs to be inclusive, starting with engagement. Engagement is "honest and transparent", involving "community [and stakeholder] consultation" and "collaboration". "Different perspectives are embraced" and "people affected by the decisions are included in the process". There are "open communication channels" that include "listen[ing] for understanding" and "feedback loops". Language is "inclusive". There is "transparent public domain info (govt)" and "transparency re: decision making – what goes ahead and what doesn't".

2.2. Evidence-based and outcomes-focused

The item/action under consideration demonstrates that it is evidence-based and outcomes-focused.

Evidence-based

Items/actions should be associated with an "evidence-based business case". Use "quality data to identify baselines, set targets and monitor progress". Every action/initiative should be made in the spirit of "testing, trialling, evaluat[ing], amplify [ing] what works". This will involve a hypothesis based on evidence (for example, from "actual lessons learned"), that something will work. "Experiment/prototype" – "accept failure and learn from lessons". "If it doesn't work, change it". The focus is on "incremental steps – small wins". There is "continuous monitoring through measurement and data – continuous improvement". There should be a "validation of strategies", including "review[ing] life after projects". "Embed 'stop rules' in all projects".

Outcomes-focused

Items/actions should be associated with a purpose, principles and goals - a "vision/scope and plan to achieve". "Set targets and take regular measurements" "(small/realistic/timely)". Include "benchmarks and timeframes". Use "rules not as limiters (restrictive) but rather as guidelines (liberators)". As far as possible, "KISS – keep it simple stupid – if it's working, keep it".

There should also be opportunities to "celebrate success". "Commit to a small number of easy wins and then look at the big picture". Essentially, "prioritise quick wins for impact" - "start small with achievable

chunks/targets”. “Encourage and reinforce positive examples”. “Celebrate success – use failures as learning”. “Celebrate success more often” than at present.

2.3. Accountability-driven

Items/actions will be accountability-driven – they will be supported, resourced and responsibility will be assigned.

Supported

It is essential that items/actions have support generally, including “top level support and alignment to strategy”. As per other Simple Rules, they will also be “supported by diversity and inclusion principles”. At strategy level, efforts will be made to “future proof: changing Public Sector/governments do not impact negatively on this program”.

Resourced

Initiatives/actions “must be resourced – human/people and budget”. Appropriately, they should also be “fiscally responsible”, with “realistic budgets”. “Sharing/valuing resources” through collaboration (formal and informal) is identified as a valuable component of resourcing.

Responsibility

Taking an inclusive approach means “everyone is accountable ([for example], we challenge inappropriate behaviour”, and “for upholding behaviour”). People should also assume responsibility based on the “accountability framework” in operation. “CEs”, ultimately, carry accountability for “change at all levels” within their agency, though there should also be responsibility for individual items/actions.

2.4. Integrated and contextualised

D&I items/actions will be contextualised to environment where they are used and, as far as possible, be integrated into everyday business.

Contextualised

Items/actions will be “adapt[ed] to [the] context” of the environment in which they are used i.e. similar initiatives might look slightly different based on the conditions within each agency. While they will align with overarching principles, they will also “be responsive to [a] changing environment” over time, being updated as required. This will imply “flexibility (or adaptability) to stop, start or change”. This includes “practices (systems) and processes”.

Integrated

“Include diversity in decision-making and discussion – at the table not on the menu”. “Actively integrate diversity and inclusion”, “make it systemic, not an optional extra”. “D&I [is] embedded in rules and the workplace culture e.g recruitment/induction etc.”. In respect of agencies and items/actions, embed as needed in “policy, strategy, and plans”. Items/actions are developed and implemented in ways reflective of these sentiments.

Whole-of-government

It is important to acknowledge that this topic area frequently referenced a whole-of-government response (i.e. more holistic than agency level alone). Rather than complicate these Simple Rules, this matter is discussed in greater detail at appropriate places within the remaining two sections.

3. Round 3: Moving towards our desired whole-of-sector D&I strategy outcomes, what will we do ‘more of’ and ‘less of’?

A powerful, appropriately less-linear, approach to managing outcomes in complex contexts is deciding ‘what works and what hasn’t worked’ and then responding accordingly. In an organisational context (especially in a multi-agency context, as is the case in the South Australian Public Sector), do more of what proves effective in moving towards the desired state and do less (or none at all) of what has the opposite effect, or no positive outcomes. Solving problems in complex contexts will likely involve a portfolio of solutions, rather than being able to rely on a single ‘silver bullet’ – and this is certainly true too of the complex arena of D&I. This section outlines a range of suggestions for doing ‘more of’ and ‘less of’ (based on participants’ current perceptions) with respect to D&I. The various ideas are best handled in terms of theme areas, which also makes it easy to cross-reference with earlier discussion around the same or similar themes.

3.1. Collaboration

Many table groups highlighted the need for more “collaboration” in relation to D&I. This meant “more [“meaningful”] conversations on engagement”, which involve “listening/consultation”, including “more listening actively to those impacted”. There ought to be more effort to “flatten hierarchies” and fewer “hierarchy barriers”. Ultimately, the aim is more “meaningful communication and consultation” that results in “more effective collaboration”.

There was also a fair bit of commentary about the need for more “collaborative decision-making across government”. There were suggestions for more: “information sharing”, “learning from others – sharing what works”, “sharing of best practise” (note the earlier reference to ‘good practice’) and “sharing success stories/case studies across the Public Sector”. While there may also be room for “less detractors”, there is value in more “expressing of failure” (not to criticise, but to learn) rather than less, as one group suggested.

Using “more networks (i.e. how ‘clusters’ approach works now)” is considered helpful. Research evidence suggests that networks are to complex organisations what organisational charts were to traditional hierarchies. So, the networks suggestion is especially pertinent for dealing with D&I within and across multiple agencies.

3.2. Communication

Communication, rather unsurprisingly, emerged as an important topic area, with a number of suggestions for ‘more of’ and less of’ actions. At its essence, there ought to be more “meaningful conversation and consultation”. More “listening and hearing” was mentioned by a number of groups. Communication would be supported by more “structured communication”, including “more adult conversations” and “more plain English”, “internal and external”. This could be achieved by “less divisive language”, “buzzwords” and “rhetoric”.

3.3. Transparency

A number of groups wanted to see “more transparency”, including “in decision making”, and sentiments in this ‘more of’ – ‘less of’ round of conversation were nested expressions of the focus on transparency in other rounds. Additional insights on transparency in the context of the workshop may be found in the discussion on the first (and core) principle, inclusion.

3.4. Action

Quite a large number of the ‘more of’ – ‘less of’ comments focused on action. Given the volume, they may be further categorised into assumptions, consistency, outcomes focus and implementation support.

Approach

A range of comments were made about taking action. In terms of the type of action, the view was that there should be more of a “person first” approach, with “more compassion,” as well as “more trust, and safety to take action”. There should be less “fear of failure” and “risk aversity” and “more playing to strengths”. Essentially, participants advocated for more of a “yes if, if not why not?” approach.

The approach should also be more “proactive (less reactionary)”. There should be “more diversity of thought”, along with “less assumptions and more informed decisions”. There should be “more action, less talk”, as there ought to be more “making tough decisions” and “discussion [that] results in outcomes”. This would mean less of a “conservative approach”, “less rigid management” and “process”. This linked with a desire for less “tick and flick”, “ticking the box” approach and less of the current “narrow focus”.

Some participants felt there should be “more questioning of assumptions” and “less ignoring the issue/acceptance of the status quo (silence)”. There should be “more action, less talk”. There should also be “less lip service”, fewer “glossy brochures” and fewer “tokenistic actions”.

Consistency

Another strong sub-theme, in this round and others, was achieving “more consistency across government”. This might be achieved by “more role modelling of positive behaviours/actions” and more “shared, simple tools for action/implementation”. “Less of silos”, including less of a “silo approach to diversity” and “decision making” was seen as helping.

Implementation support

There ought to be “more recognition of diversity, and understanding that it’s complex”. This would mean implementation that allows “more space/flexibility to adapt for agency needs”. It would be helpful if there was “more focus on role capability in relation to inclusion and diversity”. As well, there should be less focus on “quantity” and “less budget cuts to this priority areas”.

There should be more focus on “actionable outcomes” and “less action based on non-evidence” and “doing things how we have always done [them]”. Also, there should be “more support to achieve outcomes”- goals” and “KPIs”. This may include “more on the ground, practical help for mid-level managers (not just training but troubleshooting support too)”.

Possible actions

A range of possible actions that there should either be ‘more of’ or ‘less of’ are listed. Applicability will depend on context. Quite a few of these actions related to education and training, and are mentioned first.

There should be “more education and training at all levels”, including “awareness to support an inclusive culture” and “more building capability of employees and managers”. This would result in more “opportunities for development – support to succeed”. Initiatives might include “more mentoring and training”, “more investment in future leaders” and “more leadership opps” and support for “more EQ focused leaders”.

Participants also felt there should be ‘more of’ the following:

- “Normalising diversity and inclusion”
- “Promotion of benefits of D&I”
- “Equal representation”
- “Ethics and code of conduct”
- “Self-awareness checks across department”

- “Invest resources into the right priorities”
- “Living the values”
- “Life experience valued”

Participants indicated there should be ‘less of’ the following:

- “Old school recruitment” – “recruiting like”
- “Cultural bias”
- “Meaningless targets”

3.5. Accountability

Another popular theme in this round was accountability, linking with sentiments also expressed in other rounds of conversation. There needs to be more of a sense of “shared ownership of the problem and solution” and more “integrity”. Everyone should play more of a role. This would be helped by “less blame and complaining”, less “not my job mentality” and less [fewer] “‘Yes’ people”. There would be “more difficult conversations” and “encouraging of everyone’s voice (without repercussions)”.

For a leadership perspective, there should be more “accountability on leaders to be inclusive”. There should also be more “leadership commitment”, including “ownership by executives”. This would be helped by “more delegation of responsibility” and “less hierarchy barriers”.

It was suggested that the accountability should be closely associated with more of a focus on measures (discussed elsewhere). This would include “more due diligence” and “make [D&I] accountability [more formal] under EO Acts”. It would also help if there were more D&I “champions at all levels”.

3.6. Experimental approach

A number of the suggestions in this round related to taking an experimental approach – essentially being more venturesome. First, there is a need for “flexibility” and, correspondingly, a “less restrictive environment”. This would involve “more questioning/challenging the status quo”, including more “challenging stereotypes”, “removing barriers” and “challenging and dispelling myths about negative cost implications”. Many groups added that there needs to be “less red tape and bureaucracy”.

Being flexible requires “more outside the box thinking”, “less judgement and assumptions”, “and more informed decisions”. It would benefit from being “less risk averse” and taking “more calculated risks”. To achieve “less stagnation of ideas” there ought to be “more innovation and try[ing] new things”. There should be more placing “the idea first, before constraints”.

Action should place “more of a focus on previous lessons learned”, with more “learning from mistakes”. There should also be “more learning from others, more sharing what works”.

3.7. Monitoring and evaluation

The ‘more of’ - ‘less of’ round also elicited a number of comments in relation to monitoring and evaluation. Along with a generic call for “more monitoring and evaluation”, there were comments including “regular reviews”, “more checking goals against progress (milestone reviews)”, “more evaluation and communication”, “more briefing up” and “more self-evaluation”. There should also be “more project end dates and more project improvement” and “more support to achieve KPIs”. It was suggested there ought to be “less meaningless targets”, “less generic quotas and KPIs” and, ultimately, “less action based on [a] non-evidence approach”.

3.8. Celebrating difference and progress

It would be helpful if there was “more celebrating diversity, and challenging and dispelling myths about negative cost implications”. There should be “more emphasis on differences”: “celebrate and embrace difference” – “simultaneously don’t erase difference”.

D&I progress was also seen as benefiting from more celebration of success. There should be more “celebrating success stories”, “celebrating wins” and “celebration of diversity success”. There should be “more showcasing” and “more sharing success”

3.9. Calling out

Quite a number of comments were made in relation to “more calling out” of “unacceptable”, “inappropriate”, “poor” behaviours at all levels”. “Challenge bias” and “challenge assumptions”. One group commented that “everyone is accountable, we challenge inappropriate behaviour”. There ought to be “more trust in staff to challenge the norm and take risks”, “more discrimination incident reporting” and “more difficult conversations”. There also needs to be “better investigation process – no cover-ups by HR management”.

4. What first steps (behaviours and actions) will we (all agencies and individuals) take in the next short while to contribute towards sector-wide D&I success?

With such a large group, representing a diverse constituency, it is understandable that many different ‘first steps’ were suggested. First steps will be dependent on current context. And that will differ from agency to agency. That said, quite a number of common themes emerged and these are listed below.

4.1. Take action

One theme focused on taking action. Two related comments were “do something with feedback” and “demonstrate action”. There was a suggestion to “start small – spread big”. An example might include the first step of “flexibility for all – if not why not?”.

4.2. Across government working group

There were a number of comments relating to whole-of-government action, one of which was establishing an “across government working group which is inclusive in its representation”. Another was a little broader, suggesting “interagency working groups” - so recognising that the scale of the task ahead may require a coordinating group as well as sub-groups that focus on specific aspects or contexts. The suggestions “networks: agency/department/whole-of-government” and “creation of networks/working groups” usefully make reference to ‘networks’, a structure that research shows is well suited to operating in complex contexts. Although they would develop over time, laying the foundation for intentional, widespread networks between and within agencies would be a powerful first step. This would facilitate another first step suggestion of “interdepartmental communication – sharing information, experiences among different agencies”.

Areas that coordinating groups may consider as first steps include “define vision”, “goals and behaviours”, “agree on principles” and “establish an aim/goal”. This could be supported by other first steps such as “examine best practice globally” (see reference earlier to ‘good practice’ instead), “finding out what the barriers are” and “identifying common ground/issues across agencies, with OCPSE to coordinate”. There is a priority need to “identify resources/funding to help achieve these goals and champion the cause and include operational change management resources”. Another suggestion is “identifying champions and expertise”.

Other first steps that might be included in a remit of an across-agency coordinating network relate to “review[ing the] authorising environment to cut red tape”, “review[ing progress]” and providing “guidelines around implementation”.

4.3. Develop ‘Public Sector portal’

A valuable first step would include “develop[ing] a ‘Public Sector portal’ with resources, info, events, training and access to cultural competent panel members”. A ‘Public Sector Portal’ would facilitate “interdepartmental communication – sharing information, experiences among different agencies”. This could also support “more accessible documents, with user centred design”.

4.4. Communicate the vision and credible case for change

“Communication” was seen by many as an important first step. Focal areas include “communicat[ing] the vision” and outlining a “credible and clear case for change”. This would facilitate a “consistent message across [the] Public Sector”. This could also involve “promot[ing] the outcomes of [the] workshop”. There was an encouragement to take first steps and “talk to the people, to create the right environment”. It might also include “sharing experiences (real life stories) and celebrating our diversity loudly and proudly”.

4.5. Consultation with all stakeholders

Another important first step involves “establishing real consultation for actions and change”. This might involve “contact[ing] all internal and external stakeholders” and engaging in “more extensive consultation across the sector”. This process “include[s] people (end-users) in decisions that affect them” as well as “more consultation beyond people already in the camp”. “Respect”, “working together” and “feedback loops” are important.

4.6. Buy-in at executive level

“Buy-in at executive level – need to effectively LISTEN” was also recommended as a first step, promoting “engagement and ownership from senior leadership linked to strategy”. This may include “educating our leaders on the ‘why’”, and “directors/managers [doing] self-awareness check[s] re-diversity and agency”. It was further suggested that diversity is a “SMC standing item” and there is “executive accountability across agencies – one fails, all fail”.

4.7. Take accountability for change

Another first step is “hold[ing] ourselves and each other accountable”. This would be supported by “accountable and well-equipped managers and leaders”. It may require “acknowledgement of past failure – “repentance – transformation”.

4.8. Establish and share baseline

A major theme that emerged in all rounds related to having an evidence-based approach, along with “key milestones” and “accountability”. In support of that, there is a need for “benchmarking”, including an “audit [of] demographics across government [which is] shared”. This may include a “baseline survey to identify best practice” and an “annual assessment to understand our workforce”. Usefully, individuals might also take part in a “self-evaluation and [consider the] state of [their own] team”. There might also be benefit in obtaining “case studies of inclusivity and reconciliation principles”.

4.9. Set goals and develop a plan

There should be a “strategic framework [with] review mechanisms”. Goals and plans are a vital first step. “Set clear, measurable goals”, as well as “KPIs and proxy measures for all staff including executives and management at all levels.” Also, focus on “top-down and bottom-up integration – measures, KPIs, targets and agency accountability” and “team level actions that will create a safe workplace”.

4.10. Embed principles/practices in each department

“Transfer and apply to agencies”. “Every agency must have a diversity and inclusion action plan and strategy” for “embedding principles and practices in each department”.

4.11. Align decisions with D&I strategy

There should be “alignment [of] decisions with strategy e.g. reduction of funding in interpreters versus increasing inclusion and diversity”.

4.12. Celebrate small wins

“Celebrate success”, including “celebrat[ing] smaller wins”. For example, “one action achieved in the first defined time period (three months)”.

4.13. Additional actions that may not be first steps

Numerous items were mentioned among the first steps that may instead be ongoing actions or actions that may occur after an initial boost in progress. To be inclusive and give them voice, they are noted here in dot point form.

- Education and training related to D&I (many comments), including “create whole-of-government education / training program (e.g. diversity)”
- “Emphasise D&I in induction process”
- “Ensure diversity in recruitment” / “inclusive recruitment process” / “understand the blockers of the recruitment process – data gaps and what do we prioritise including outside the Public Sector”
- “Establish system to deal with inappropriate behaviour (e.g. allowing whistleblowers)”
- “Expanding avenues for job adverts on different accessibility and attraction techniques”
- “ICT – increase capability to promote access and flexibility”
- “Improve diversity data in human resources”
- “Remove inconsistencies (in practice) in all departments”
- “Volunteering (skill-based) in orgs to foster understanding/recognition of diversity”

C. Concluding Commentary

Based on UGM’s expertise in a range of fields including D&I and strategy and change, and informed by outcomes from the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop, we are pleased to offer the following concluding observations.

- Agencies will necessarily have their own D&I strategies, including goals, metrics and plans that best fit their own context.
- Rather than trying to mimic the plan of a larger agency, or another organisation, a state-wide strategy will more effectively develop a meta-strategy that guides the development of agency strategies and approaches. Essentially the ‘what’ of the meta-strategy is the strategic, high-level

'how' for agencies. This high-level 'how' will promote a consistent purpose and alignment, while allowing agencies to develop 'fit-for-context' strategies that reflect their own unique conditions.

- Public Sector Values are already in place and will be an important point of reference for strategy development generally, though they're not targeted to D&I specifically. To that end, a set of guiding principles, developed specifically with D&I outcomes in mind, would support the development of aligned, fit-for-context, D&I strategies within the many different agencies.
- Decision making can often delay progress. A set of Simple Rules, developed for purpose, can be helpful in achieving strategic consistency, even when the focus is on different aspects. It is also likely to speed up decision making and support action at all levels.
- Another area of focus is reflecting on what there needs to be 'more of' and 'less of' to progress towards a desired state. While actions will vary according to conditions within an agency, the long list developed during the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop provides a valuable resource for consideration, even if only as a prompt for thinking about what's helping the cause and what is hindering it in different agencies.
- Finally, to prompt action, it is useful to be clear on first steps and then take them, evaluating progress and adjusting action in context. The South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop generated a wide range of potential first actions that are worthy of consideration and adaptation as required.
- Taking a strategic view of all the data, there is a clear sense that there is still plenty to do with respect to Diversity and Inclusion. In principle (without any sense of specifics) there was strong support for a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. A key perspective was ensuring a generally consistent approach across agencies, while recognising for, best outcomes, strategies will be contextualised for the agency. It would seem as if a meta-strategy, that guides D&I strategy and implementation within agencies, is considered worthwhile.
- Another important aspect of the conversation related to whole-of-government communication and coordination of D&I. The suggestion of an across-government coordinating group was well supported. The idea of a much broader network underneath also received support. Given the vast amount of work that needs to be done, along with the principle of inclusion, it seems as if an interconnected network of working groups may be a powerful means of achieving progress in this complex context.
- There was also recognition that providing a whole-of-government portal ('Public Sector portal') would be useful in sharing information and resources. Depending on uptake, this may be a major catalyst for more centralised education and training resources, more efficient in the long run than the quite widespread duplication of effort (and expense) invested in developing material. Having a central source would mean that some of the savings could be directed towards keeping the material up to date, both in terms of progress in the field and local SA experience.
- Inclusion emerged as a major theme, undoubtedly a sense that this is the way to achieve genuine and enduring diversity. Given the many interest groupings, each advocating for better outcomes for their constituency, it was not surprising that there was also a sense that some perspectives and behaviours tended towards more exclusive perspectives. To achieve greater inclusion this will need to be monitored and addressed as needed.
- Taking an evidence-based approach was also very well supported, with acknowledgement that initiatives have not always been evidence-based, whether upfront to support action or in an ongoing way as a result of continuous monitoring and adaptation through the life of a project. Funding is also often allocated to a project and spending continues until the end of the project term, even if outcomes are not as anticipated. This is a challenging circumstance as the funding is often associated with employment. Ways need to be found in which confidence can be expressed in the purpose of a project (and those responsible for delivery) but allow for within-term variation to deliverables, moving away from actions that are less effective and towards actions that appear more likely to deliver desired outcomes. This point is especially important given the complexity of D&I as an organisational issue: it is often impossible to predict at the outset whether an initiative is going to succeed. There are always too many variables that will impact on a project as it is being implemented.

- An evidence-based approach also implies that monitoring will be continuous and evaluation frequent. Also, multiple options might be trialled to determine which is best in the current context. This involves a substantial shift away from a more linear regime of one plan at a time. This shift requires that metrics are suitable for a more adaptive, experimental approach. Instead of only a few lagging metrics (evaluated at major milestones), there need to be many more metrics focusing on shorter term actions. These support the continuous 'more of' and 'less of' decision making that is required in today's more agile climate.

D. APPENDIX

Tablecloth themes

All 22 tablecloths were read with care in order to capture an overall impression of the conversation themes and concerns that seem to have been the focus at each table. This provides a useful check against the poster data, ensuring that nothing of major significance was missed when participants drew up their summary posters in the final round of the South Australian Public Sector Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Workshop.

The notes below are not intended to be a comprehensive capture of the talk at each table. Instead, they are intended to convey a general sense of the Big Ideas that were discussed then logged on the tablecloths. In this way, the data from the tablecloths enriches and reinforces the four summary posters from each table. These posters accurately reflect participants' top priority considerations, drawn from their wide ranging conversations over the whole morning.

TABLE 1

Among other matters, this table mentioned what they would like to see more of. This included more collaboration and connection, as well as more action and measurement. They wanted shared goals across agencies, along with regular program checks to determine both what is working in each agency and also what's working elsewhere that could be useful across the sector. They see proxy metrics playing a supportive role in achieving this, helping to build on success.

TABLE 2

Those at table 2 mentioned they would like to see the same strategic rigour that is applied to agency business planning also applied to diversity and inclusion. They would like an evidence-based approach, with much more testing, trialling and evaluation. To this end, they'd like to see metrics more closely aligned to the outcomes sought. They see all this are helping agencies to embed a D&I mindset into everything they do. Among other issues, Table 2 also saw benefit in sharing experiences regularly.

TABLE 3

Table 3 took a pragmatic approach. Their reflections included that they'd like to see fewer buzzwords and more focus on everyday behaviours such as kindness. In support of this, they'd like to see D&I woven into all that happens in every agency, including leadership training, so that it becomes the norm. They mentioned, for example, that initiatives should be solution-focused not problem-oriented. They felt that achieving these outcomes might be supported, even accelerated, if agencies learned from each other's achievements and failures.

TABLE 4

At table four, there were comments about the need to take more risks, try new things and simply have a go, if we are to move beyond the current status quo. Clear and unambiguous goals and metrics, together with strong accountability, were seen as offsetting the potential downside of taking some risks. To that end also, they saw identifying and sharing lessons learnt at the close of each D&I project could be supportive.

TABLE 5

Table 5 mentioned that recruitment processes and practices need to be scrutinised. This table was another one that wanted agencies to share their stories and examples of success and failure for the benefit of all. They discussed the need for executives to be appointed who have an inclusive mindset and that those with team responsibilities need to be trained in how best to lead and manage today's complex, diverse workforce.

TABLE 6

At table 6, there was mention of the importance of defining the behaviours we want to see and then embedding these in senior managers KPIs. Among other matters, people at this table wanted to see more consistency across agencies, such that it was easier to share and compare what they called “pockets of excellence”. They also mentioned the usefulness of encouraging questioning and making it safe to do so. They wanted to see a reduction in the barriers to career progression and felt that recruitment and promotion processes could be reviewed in order to more effectively support this goal.

TABLE 7

Among other matters, those at table 7 discussed the importance of clear, shared goals across agencies and the provision of support to take some risks in shaking things up a little. In support of this, there was a discussion of the need to relentlessly question and challenge barriers, including recruitment and promotion processes.

TABLE 8

At table 8, there was a discussion about the need for high level D&I insight and skills. This would require ramping up leadership training to better equip executives to be effective champions. They felt that a stronger sense of accountability and real stakeholder consultation would deliver a better return on social investment from D&I efforts. They believe there is currently insufficient consistency across agencies.

TABLE 9

This table noted the importance of shared principles and coordinated efforts, including sharing data and metrics, but with adaptation and adjustment to suit each agency’s own context. It would be better, they felt, to start small but ensure scalability, so that something successful could be implemented more widely if desired.

TABLE 10

At table 10, there was mention of the need to take into account a wide range of identity dimensions. Recruitment practices need to be more inclusive and innovative, if this is to happen. They also talked about the need to allow for (and indeed expect) some failures if we are to try new things and encourage risk-taking. There was agreement that diversity is complex. No one knows everything. This means that minorities also need to build insight and awareness about other groups beyond their own.

TABLE 11

This table was another that mentioned the need to review recruitment practices to ensure they are as diversity-sensitive and innovative as possible. They see a disconnect between the diversity of the workforce and the lack of diversity at senior levels. Challenging and removing barriers to career progression was another way forward that was talked about. Overall, the theme was ‘less talk and more action’. But in this effort, it was agreed that people need to feel safe to call out things they notice that run counter to D&I goals

TABLE 12

At table 12, among other topics, there were comments about the importance of respect as a principle and how this could be translated into everyday behaviours, such as simply getting people’s names right, active listening and checking for understanding. The need for a strong D&I leadership culture also came up. Table 12 participants mentioned they would like to see leaders properly equipped to be effective mentors, models and champions of D&I.

TABLE 13

This table mentioned the idea of establishing a community of practice across agencies, in order to share processes and practices that deliver positive outcomes. This links to their identification of the need to ensure outcomes are visible. They saw this as a useful way of maintaining motivation and focus. In these efforts, they would also like to see a greater use of technology. They stressed the importance of questioning but for this to work, they agreed, people need to feel safe to speak up. Finally, the need to review recruitment processes was mentioned.

TABLE 14

People at this table mentioned, among other things, the importance of coordinating and collecting data from each agency in order to provide a snapshot of the current D&I state of play across the system. They felt there needs to be a collective footprint and a whole-of-government approach to support monitoring and evaluation. This evidence-based and data-driven approach should inform all strategies and actions, with continuous evaluation pushing continuous improvement. It was also felt that this sharper approach would ensure 'no lip service, and no BS'. Finally, there was conversation about the need to simplify recruitment processes to make them more diversity-friendly.

TABLE 15

Those at table 15 mentioned the need to make tough decisions, with specific action plans for targeted hotspots and problem areas, so that needs can be addressed, including a better understanding of blockers. Establishing the current state of play across agencies, then sharing this would help these efforts. But for this to be useful, the view was expressed that D&I data needs to be consistent and of better quality. This was seen as essential facts and data need to inform what is done, thus enabling better monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

TABLE 16

In discussion at table 16, the idea of a community of practice was raised to enable agencies to learn from each other. Data, knowledge, successes and failures could be captured as resources for all. There were comments that "we are currently a bit subjective and we need to become more objective and data driven". It was mentioned that technology could assist this. D&I training should be for everyone so that those who would not generally opt in get included. Some people mentioned that CEs need to set the right 'tone at the top'. They need to be informed, up-to-date and accountable.

TABLE 17

Table 17 was another one that discussed, among other matters, the need for greater flexibility in recruitment processes in order to achieve greater alignment with shared D&I principles. As part of this, they mentioned the benefits of encouraging greater movement in and out of the Public Sector, as well as across agencies. They felt that sector wide sharing of 'success cases' would help to change the current D&I mindset from negative (i.e. problems, difficulties) to positive (i.e. solutions, outcomes).

TABLE 18

People at this table mentioned the need to adopt an action orientation. They felt that sharing resources and learning what others are doing out there, both in South Australia and beyond, would help to make D&I a mainstream issue. They want agencies to set easy, achievable goals, with nothing grandiose. There were some comments about clarifying behaviours and expectations for everyone being helpful. As well as D&I KPIs for senior managers, collaboration, sharing and experimentation would enable success, people noted.

TABLE 19

At this table, people felt “we just need to get started, without overthinking”. They mentioned the importance of getting everyone involved, not just preaching to the converted. There was also discussion about the fact that, in many instances, cultural awareness training currently does not include the diversity of cultures in the workforce. It needs to reflect the full range of migrant cultures represented among employees these days. Another theme was making sure that our systems are diversity friendly, for example using simple, accessible language in our recruitment processes.

TABLE 20

Some at this table commented that they’d like to see a positive, encouraging approach to D&I, with a focus on our commonalities as human beings, rather than dwelling on our differences. To this end, they mentioned the need for clear goals and clear outcomes, so there can be a focus on growing together. This would support working across agencies not in silos. This would help to embed D&I principles and behaviours as no more than ‘business as usual.’ Finally, it was mentioned that recruitment needs to be reviewed to ensure it is ‘blind.’

TABLE 21

During a wide-ranging conversation, people at this table commented that there needs to be more inter-agency conversation to increase collaboration and transparency. By sharing ideas, evidence and data, projects could be better designed and ensure value for money. All this should flow through to CE’s KPIs and keep efforts directed more towards inclusion, rather than diversity only.

TABLE 22

The conversation at table 22 stressed, among other matters, the need for a clear vision of a positive D&I future that can be shared with others more easily. The view was that we can build on what we currently have, for example by using the current Code of Ethics as a starting point. But to make it work, there would need to be a collaborative, inclusive approach to D&I, one that involves all agencies, stakeholders and policy areas. It was mentioned that projects should be data-driven and time-limited.