

# How to Guide – Building Diversity in Senior Succession

## Developing Diverse and Inclusive Succession Practices

D&I succession practices goes further than backfilling key positions, it supports the identification and development of future diverse talent within your organisation.

## OBJECTIVE

To develop a strategy to deliver a robust pipeline of diverse talent and increase representation at senior levels.

### 1. Defining the Succession Plan Strategy

A senior succession plan should provide a framework for developing capabilities of potential leaders to move into new positions, as well as developing the people and positions that advance the company.

- Decide if the succession plan should include every position and employee or only upper management and other important leadership positions.
- Are there particular vulnerabilities, such as a large percentage of retiring employees, or a lack of representation in a particular area?
- Is there a spread across succession candidates or an over reliance on the same individuals to fill all roles
- What skills might be key for future leaders of the organisation?
- What's the ultimate goal of the succession plan? What outcome is the organisation hoping for?

### 2. Creating a Succession Plan

- Engage and train leaders so they understand what to look for when identifying potential and future successors including awareness of potential bias.
- Consider unconscious bias training for those involved in identifying successors.
- Identify mission-critical positions and any current or impending talent gaps. Which jobs and skills are must-haves?
- Identify a diverse group of employees who have the potential to assume greater responsibility.
- Start an alternative plan to buy in or market scan for external talent if a diverse group is not currently available
- Explore bottle necks, areas or grades where representation reverses? What is happening at these levels?
- Establish a process for revisiting and revising the succession plan as conditions change.

### 3. Setting Representation Goals

- Create a set of goals for diverse workforce representation in the pipeline for key senior roles - goal setting should be based on methodology, such as:
  - Using a 3:1 cover test for each role
  - National/ regional market data
  - Number of diverse groups available in the workforce for each particular function/role or industry
  - % demographic represented across the business units
- Track progression from successor to new role, monitoring the proportion of diverse candidates that are successful in making the transition
- Where a goal will not be met based on current potential talent – develop a plan to address in the short and medium term e.g. build diverse talent or be prepared to buy in diverse talent if available in the market

### 4. Developing Successors

- Encourage meaningful investment in a training and development program for high-potential diverse employees.
- Assign growth opportunities and stretch assignments.
- Ensure development initiatives are properly supported with access to informal and formal mentoring and coaching.
- Increase visibility of employees by providing access to senior leaders and exposure to key internal and external networks.
- Be prepared to invest in building talent at each stage of the pipeline if it is not available in the marketplace at senior levels

### 5. Reviewing Progress

- Create diverse succession plans and measure progress rates and the time it takes to execute plans.
- Profile internal case studies, showcasing positive career stories and allowing underrepresented groups to see themselves represented at more senior levels
- Ensure succession plan strategy aligns with talent acquisition, talent management and leadership development activities.
- Review succession targets, goals and strategy on a regular basis – use the 3:1 cover test as your benchmark and continue to highlight high risk areas, functions, key roles.