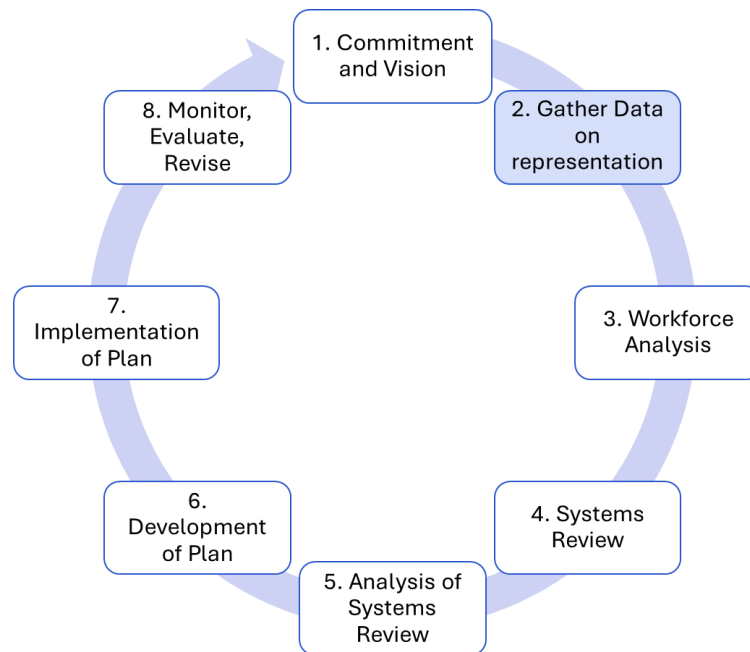




Employment and Human Resources Toolkit

Tool 5: HR Cycle – Gather Data on Representation



The first step in examining your workplace environment is determining how representative your organization is with respect to marginalized communities. A voluntary confidential self-identification survey should be undertaken by the organization, encouraging participants to disclose their identities such as racial, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc. This is very personal information for participants to reveal so gathering this data should be done very deliberately and cautiously.

For a voluntary survey to understand the actual representation in the workplace, it is important to get a high rate of responses. According to [Employment and Social Development Canada](#), 80% or higher is an acceptable return rate to the survey. Some organizations are perplexed as to why they do not get a high level of response when they have declared their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Here are a few of the common reasons why such surveys have low rate of response:

- Lack of a communication strategy on the roll-out of the survey, specifically purpose and how it will be used
- Lack of buy-in to the diversity and inclusion commitments (e.g., beliefs that it is being driven by a political agenda, that certain groups will get “special treatment” over others, that people should be hired on “merit” and not a “quota system”, that qualifications will be lowered if jobs are targeted towards workers from marginalized groups, etc.)
- Lack of adequate resources for the self-identification survey (e.g., the questions or language are not appropriate, it is only in one format such as email, it is time-limited, there are no pre-survey meetings and discussions with employees, etc.)
- Lack of trust that the information will be confidential and kept in a secure place away from staff.
- Fear of disclosed information being used against them and will prevent future opportunities.
- Confusion between a self-identification survey and an employee engagement survey measuring the environment of the workplace.

In contrast, a proper workplace self-identification survey should have the following elements:

- Resources allocated for a communication strategy and roll-out before, during and after the survey. Allocations of human and financial resources should be as specific as possible. Staff required to conduct the survey should have adequate time to (i.e., it should not be added as something to be done on the “side of their desk”).
- Resources allocated to ensure a confidential, statistically valid survey conducted by a trusted source – such as one person in the organization responsible for DEI/EE or a third party – that will ensure the information is stored and accessible to only people who require it for their work. It is important to have the expertise in conducting such surveys, how they are drafted and interpreted.
- A communication strategy should include stakeholder engagement and use of different formats (emails, townhalls, meetings, one-on-one discussions, etc.) to provide information on the objectives, confidentiality, voluntariness, and use of the survey, as well as, allowing time to answer questions. The communications before the survey are crucial in setting the tone for the actual survey. It is important to get buy-in and dispel rumors and myths about DEI/EE at the outset. It is also important to be aware that there may be resisters who do not want the survey to succeed and thus, it is vital that the communications be transparent,



honest, and accessible to ensure that all participants and stakeholders have the same information about the survey. Engaging stakeholders like unions can play an important role in getting buy-in and trust of participants.

- The text of the survey should include: a privacy statement, an explanation of the purpose of the survey, why the information is being gathered, where it will be stored, who will have access to it, and how that information will be used, as well as definitions of any words that may not be consistently understood (such as employment equity, diversity, and inclusion). Each equity group identified in the survey should have a definition so that people are clear about who fits within that identity.
- It is important for participants to know that they can change their responses at any time and that they can identify in more than one equity group.
- The survey should be offered in alternate formats to ensure that it is accessible to all participants.

Note that the identity questions are voluntary to answer. However, participants can be required to return the questionnaire even if they choose not to complete the voluntary identity questions. Having a mandatory question about their participation compels members to send back the survey, regardless of whether they filled out the voluntary portion or not.

As a cautionary note, there may be a temptation to do a “head count” of equity group members, especially if the identity survey results are lower than the expected results. The “head count” approach should be rejected at the outset. How one identifies is personal and should not be imposed on anyone. It is about identity and how one defines themselves, not how others define them.

The self-identification survey is a stand-alone survey only to determine representation. It is kept by the person responsible for DEI/EE and the information is not shared widely, except for the overall data, which can be included in reports that discuss the representation of the organization. It should not be used simultaneously with an employee engagement survey. The purpose of an engagement survey is to reveal how participants perceive their organization on various workplace issues. These surveys can include identify questions and thus, analyze how marginalized groups perceive their workplace compared to other groups; however, they should not be used to provide representation rates within the organization because participants are less likely to fill out the self-identification portion of the employee engagement survey if they feel that it could be traced back to them.



Other considerations for workplace data collection of personal identities:

- Job applications can also be used to gather identity data right from the outset. It is useful to gather this data because it allows organizations to track how applicants from marginalized groups do through each step of the recruitment, hiring and promotion processes.
- A survey should be given to new employees hired after the date of the survey to ensure that the data stays up to date.
- Subgroup data should be gathered if appropriate for the size of your organization. Subgroup data refers to sub-groups within equity groups, for example, different identities of racialized people or different types of disabilities. For years, marginalized groups have been arguing that they are not homogenous groups and that within equity groups, there much diverse lived experiences of oppression and discrimination. As well, some subgroups within equity groups may be well represented and yet others within another subgroup are not. For example, persons with severe or multiple disabilities are under-represented in most workplaces and yet, there may not be an under-representation of persons with disabilities as a group.
- Consequently, there has been a push to move away from overarching categories such as racialized, Indigenous, women, persons with disabilities, or 2SLGBTQIA+ groups. Instead, each group is broken down in subgroups as follows:
 - racialized groups include Chinese, South Asian, Black, non-white Arab or Middle Eastern, etc.
 - Indigenous groups include First Nations, Metis, and Inuit
 - 2SLGBTQIA+ include two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, etc.
 - Women include racialized women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, etc.
 - Persons with disabilities include seeing disability, hearing disability, speech disability, mobility disability, mental health disability, environmental disability, cognitive disability, intellectual disability, environmental disability, etc.
- The organization should consider the representation of clients or customers that come from marginalized groups if services are mostly provided to those marginalized groups (e.g., clients that are mostly racialized or Indigenous, etc.). Therefore, an identity survey could be sent to clients to fill out that is similar to staff survey (except that it may not be mandatory to return). It is important that marginalized client groups are reflected in the organization.