

HR, People & Culture





HR, people practices, and team culture shape how staff experience inclusion every day. This includes how people are recruited, onboarded, supported, and progressed within the organization, as well as how psychological safety and respectful communication are maintained. An inclusive HR approach recognizes diverse needs and removes barriers that can affect participation or performance.



This section brings together practical ways of strengthening recruitment, feedback, performance management, and everyday team interactions.

Areas that are covered in this section

- Inclusive recruitment and onboarding
- Inclusive performance management
- Team culture & psychological safety

Practical Considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Reduce bias in hiring and promotion.
	LGBTQIA+	Ensure HR systems respect identity and confidentiality.
	Disability	Normalize and streamline accommodation requests.
	Neurodivergence	Provide clarity on expectations and communication styles.

Group		Key Considerations
	Ethnic minorities	Recognize diverse communication norms in feedback.
	Rural or Remote	Offer remote-friendly onboarding and learning pathways.







Inclusive Recruitment & Onboarding

Recruitment systems often carry unintentional bias - not through deliberate exclusion, but through design choices that favor particular communication styles, educational backgrounds, or networks. Addressing this requires changes to both process and criteria.

Key practices

- Shift to skills-priority hiring by defining role requirements and competencies rather than credentials or prior pedigree.
- Use structured, evidence-based scorecards with consistent criteria applied to every candidate - Seedstars' Global Experience shows this approach is associated with significantly higher acceptance rates for underrepresented candidates.
- Introduce blind review at early application stages to remove name, gender, and other identity cues from initial assessments.
- Offer multiple application formats, such as written, video, and voice notes, to accommodate different communication styles and accessibility needs.
- Assemble diverse hiring panels drawing from different backgrounds, regions, and levels of seniority to counter single-perspective bias.
- Standardize pay bands and remove individual salary negotiation from early hiring stages to prevent systemic pay gaps from compounding over time.
- Actively review job descriptions for exclusionary language, gendered terms, unnecessary qualification requirements, or cultural assumptions embedded in how roles are described.

Identity-specific considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Prepare job descriptions for gendered language; ensure hiring criteria do not unintentionally penalize career gaps linked to caregiving.
	LGBTQIA+	Use inclusive language in all recruitment materials; avoid assumptions about pronouns, family structures, or relationship status in interview processes.
	Disability	Proactively ask all candidates whether they require any adjustments for the interview process; do not wait to be asked; provide materials in accessible formats in advance.
	Neuro divergence	Offer alternative assessment formats where possible; structured interviews with questions shared in advance allow candidates to demonstrate capability without being disadvantaged by the format itself.
	Ethnic minorities	Review whether networks and channels used for recruitment systematically exclude certain communities; consider partnerships with organizations that reach underrepresented or marginalized groups.
	Rural or Remote	Ensure that application and interview processes are accessible remotely; avoid requiring in-person stages that create unnecessary geographic barriers.

Adapted from [International Labour Organization \(2022\), Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments: A practical guide](#); [International Labour Organization \(2019\), General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#).



Inclusive Performance Management






Performance systems can unintentionally disadvantage people whose working styles, life circumstances, or access needs differ from an assumed norm. Inclusive performance management focuses on outcomes and growth rather than visibility or conformity.

Key practices

- Track attendance and performance data disaggregated by demographic group to identify patterns that may reflect design barriers rather than individual capability.
- When performance issues emerge, ask first whether the system or format is creating the barrier - not whether something is wrong with the individual.
- Adapt formats and tasks when accessibility barriers are identified – performance often normalizes when the design barrier is removed.
- Use monitoring and evaluation as a real-time adaptation tool rather than an endpoint measurement – spot patterns early and adjust accordingly.
- Shift from activity-based metrics to outcome and barrier-based metrics that reflect real change rather than mere participation.
- Use engagement and inclusion surveys disaggregated by identity group to track whether inclusion is experienced equally across the organization.
- Collect and track data regularly and review organizational progress annually.
- Apply accountability tools such as gender markers to track progress against inclusion commitments.

Identity-specific considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Track promotion and progression data disaggregated by gender; investigate and address patterns where women are progressing more slowly than peers despite equivalent performance.
	LGBTQIA+	Ensure performance processes do not inadvertently expose individuals who have not chosen to disclose their identity; be cautious with peer feedback structures that could be misused.

Group		Key Considerations
	Disability	When staff or participants appear to underperform, investigate whether the format or system is creating an accessibility barrier before drawing conclusions about capability; adapting the format has been shown to normalize performance outcomes.
	Neuro divergence	Consider whether standard performance formats such as lengthy written self-assessments or high-pressure review meetings accurately capture contribution; offer alternative formats where possible.
	Ethnic minorities	Examine whether informal networks and sponsorship systems that support progression are equally accessible to staff from minority backgrounds.
	Rural or Remote	Ensure remote workers have equal access to visibility, development opportunities, and progression pathways; actively counter proximity bias where in-person staff are more likely to be noticed and promoted.
	Age Diversity	Ensure performance criteria do not favor particular career stages; recognize the value of both experience and adaptability across different age groups.

Team Culture & Psychological Safety







Psychological safety - the sense that one can speak up, ask questions, make mistakes, and be oneself without fear of punishment or humiliation - is a foundational condition for inclusion. Without it, policies and practices have limited impact. Research by Amy Edmondson (1999) emphasizes the role of psychological safety in creating inclusive, high-performing teams. Similarly, frameworks from the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO 30415) highlight the importance of structured, inclusive HR practices.


Cited from Edmondson, A., 1999. Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. Administrative science quarterly, 44(2), pp.350-383.

Key practices

- Establish multiple channels for raising concerns – anonymous surveys, peer advocates, one-on-one meetings, and written feedback options – recognizing that not everyone feels safe giving direct feedback.
- Offer multiple ways to provide input such as written responses, voice messages, and one-on-one calls, recognizing that people may feel unsafe giving direct feedback through standard channels.
- Send meeting agendas and materials at least 48 hours in advance with clear objectives, allowing participants to prepare and engage meaningfully.
- Use multiple communication methods during meetings – verbal discussion, chat functions, written responses – to accommodate different participation styles.
- Rotate facilitation and speaking roles in meetings to distribute airtime and signal that all voices are valued.
- Establish clear timelines for addressing concerns raised and provide regular updates on progress.
- Create structured processes that actively seek diverse perspectives before making decisions.
- Build in specific checkpoints to identify whose voices are missing and create pathways for meaningful participation.
- Respond visibly and consistently to reports of exclusion, discrimination, or harassment – the speed and seriousness of organizational response shapes whether people feel safe to raise concerns in future.
- Make decision-making systems visible and accessible to people from different backgrounds and identities.

Identity-specific considerations

Group		Key Considerations
	Women & Gender	Address cultures of interruption, credit-taking, and informal exclusion from decision-making networks that can undermine women's sense of belonging even in formally inclusive organizations.
	LGBTQIA+	Create explicit signals – such as visible ally networks, inclusive language in communications, and clear anti-discrimination policies – that the organization is safe for LGBTQIA+ staff; do not assume safety is felt without actively building it.
	Disability	Ensure that requesting accommodations or disclosing a disability does not carry career risk; this requires both policy protection and visible cultural normalization; provide materials in advance and in accessible formats to allow extra processing time.
	Neurodivergence	Recognize that standard professional norms around eye contact, small talk, or meeting participation may not reflect neurodivergent communication styles; create space for different ways of engaging and contributing.
	Ethnic minorities	Acknowledge and address experiences of microaggressions, tokenism, and cultural erasure; ensure that staff from minority backgrounds are not expected to represent or educate on behalf of their entire community.
	Rural or Remote	Guard against remote workers feeling invisible or excluded from informal culture and decision-making; intentional inclusion in team communications and social rituals matters significantly.

Group		Key Considerations
	<p>Age Diversity</p>	<p>Ensure that both younger and older staff feel equally empowered to speak up; avoid cultures where seniority silences junior voices or where younger staff dismiss the contributions of more experienced colleagues.</p>