

What Are the Stages of A DEI Maturity Model?



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In previous years, commitment was all that was required for an organization to be considered a leader in **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**. It was seen almost as an act of courage. This then shifted to measuring 'effort', and specifically what actions an organization was taking to drive change. Now, the focus is firmly where it should be: on impact.

This move from commitment into action into impact are the stages each organization must go through in measuring its **DEI** maturity. It doesn't matter where you start. What matters is that you make a start in the first place and keep up the rhythm of transformation.

A **DEI** maturity model is a barometer for organizations, a framework that measures an organization's progress in achieving equity. This could be focused on a binary view of gender or on intersectional gender equity, which also considers race/ethnicity, gender identity, working with a disability, LGBTQ+, nationality, and age.

When organizations make a conscious decision to progress their **DEI** maturity, some will naturally be further along their journey than others. This will be due to external factors such as industry, geography,

public policies and regulations, **DEI reporting requirements**, and local culture.

For example, an organization operating in a country where **gender pay gap reporting** is mandated will be able to assemble an action plan on pay equity sooner than an organization collecting this data from scratch. For this reason, there may be nuances for global organizations – different offices and divisions may be at different stages of their **DEI journey** depending on where they operate.

Though starting points vary, every organization must pass through the same three stages to achieve **DEI** maturity: demonstrating commitment, showcasing progress, and celebrating success.

1. Demonstrating commitment

Every organization's **DEI journey** should start with laying out the purpose of that journey: why is it important? What does this mean to the organization? It also starts with buy-in at the highest level. Senior leadership must be committed to the journey before it even begins.

The next step is to get the lay of the land. It is important to have an accurate view of where the



There's movement, and times have changed. Women are speaking out more, men are supporting us more than ever, and I think that's all going to lead to positive changes. Freedom and progress can go away immediately. You always have to know it's in a tenuous position and keep moving forward. We need every generation to be activists, and nowadays everyone's an influencer so you never know where the inspiration is going to come from. And if progress slows down again, well that will be another challenge we have to overcome."

- Billie Jean King, EDGE Certification® ambassador

journey is truly starting from because all the progress will be measured against this baseline.

What data does the organization already have available? What data isn't available but can easily be collected? If there is data that cannot be collected, you can always start with an anonymized employee survey: how do employees across the diversity spectrum identify themselves and what are their experiences in the workplace? Where do the opinions of different groups align and where they diverge?

At this stage, it is useful to assess whether your

organization has any **DEI policies** or practices already in place around DEI and whether you have made any public **DEI statement** on the topic, for example by signing the Women's Empowerment Principles. Also, are you ranked as part of any ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) benchmarking indices such as Equileap?

Lastly, commitment must come with transparency and accountability. Independent, third-party **DEI certification** will keep the organization honest and ensure the journey toward **DEI maturity** is rigorously measured. This will also allow the organization to communicate their progress and impact clearly and confidently – both internally and externally.

2. Showcasing progress

With a commitment firmly in place, organizations should now be taking action – working to improve **DEI** and demonstrating the first signs of positive impact.

To showcase visibly and credibly your **DEI progress**, internally and externally, a baseline must already be in place. Without third-party validation at the start of your **DEI maturity journey**, you cannot effectively measure how far you have progressed. However, with it in place you can move to this next stage of maturity by auditing the impact of your actions against this baseline.

3. Celebrating success

Commitment has been made; progress has been showcased. The third stage of **DEI maturity** happens when your organization can demonstrate success – when you have delivered on your action plan and made a significant and positive impact on your organization.



"I think we all have an obligation to continue to keep moving the needle forward, always."

- Billie Jean King, EDGE Certification®

To achieve DEI maturity, you must be able to demonstrate impact with both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Without this, you cannot credibly celebrate your success. It's not enough to tell your employee, investors, board members, customers, etc. that you have achieved workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion. Evidence is everything: you must be able to prove your success.

For this reason, independent, third-party validation is crucial. You deserve to celebrate how far your organization has come.

A word of caution: DEI maturity can, once achieved, also be lost if the positive results and impact are not sustainable over time. To maintain this level of maturity, your organization must be committed to maintaining the success they have achieved

through continual measurement and analysis.

Start your DEI maturity journey

EDGE Empower® is a comprehensive, software-based DEI solution that will guide you through your journey and support you to become eligible for EDGE Certification at the EDGE Assess, EDGE Move or EDGE Lead, with or without EDGEplus.

Try the DEI maturity assessment tool: <https://www.edge-cert.org/dei-maturity-assessment>

We're here to support you on this important journey.

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