

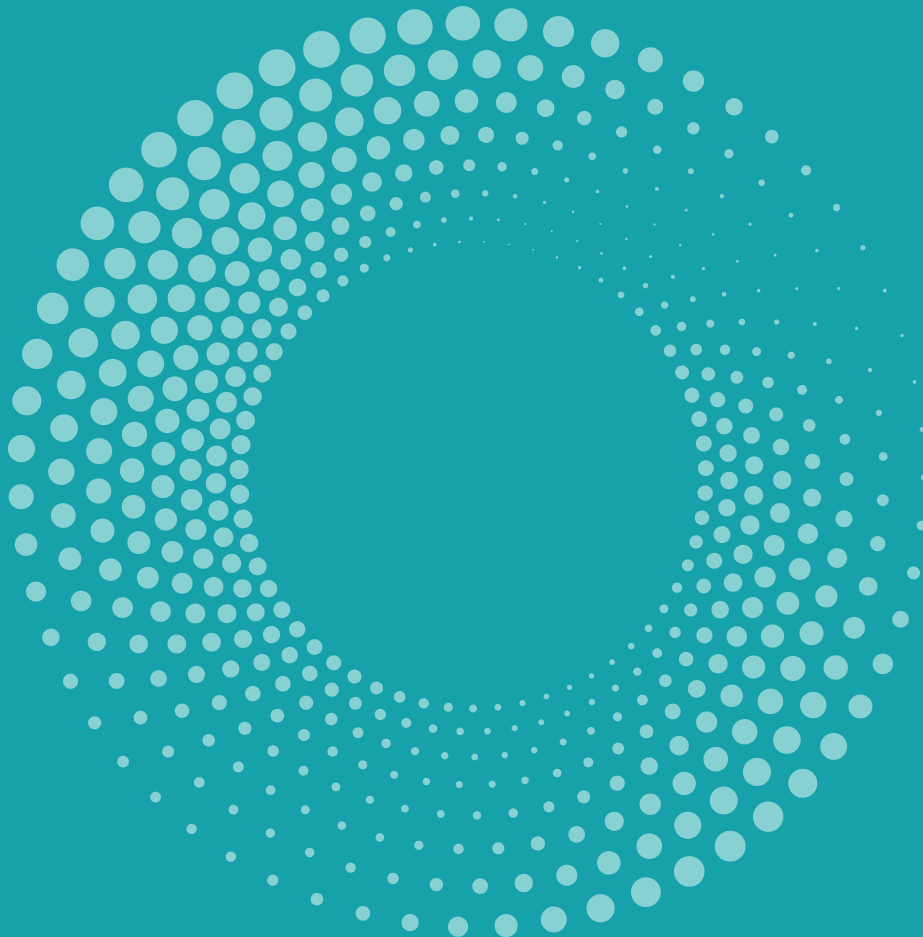
# SFI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Internal Strategy

## 2023-2028



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# Foreword

**I am delighted to share with you SFI's internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy.**

This strategy is underpinned by SFI's commitment to human rights and equitable inclusion and was developed after a series of staff consultations and engagement with external consultants with expertise on development and strengthening of organisational EDI. This Strategy is envisioned to go hand in hand with SFI's external EDI Strategy, supporting our vision for an organisation that looks both inwards and outwards in building an equitable and inclusive research ecosystem.

Achieving equality, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to the success of the organisation. People start from different places, so true inclusion and belonging require equitable actions, where equity means that everyone receives the supports they need to achieve their goals and ambitions.

We aspire to support those with the greatest potential to become part of delivering on the ambitions of SFI's organisational Strategy - building on the strengths in the diversity of their backgrounds, identities and social characteristics.

Achieving our EDI ambitions means challenging ourselves and taking action to become a more inclusive, equitable and accessible organisation. We believe that this approach will help embed EDI as part of a more inclusive and diverse workplace environment and culture where every individual feels safe, valued, recognised and is empowered to achieve their full potential.



**Prof Philip Nolan**  
*SFI Director General*



**Achieving equality,  
diversity and inclusion is  
fundamental to the success  
of the organisation.**



# Vision

**Our vision is for SFI to be a leader in promoting the principles of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in the workplace, ensuring that all staff can work, grow, and thrive in a fair environment defined by dignity and respect.**

Our EDI Vision is underpinned by our commitment to human rights and equitable inclusion. Driven by our public sector duty to prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for and treatment of staff, this Vision recognises and champions the evidence that diverse and inclusive organisations are higher performing and generate more impact.



# Mission

**To achieve this Vision, our mission sets out a number of key objectives:**

- To ensure equitable and fair recruitment and professional development policies for all staff, developing an inclusive and diverse workplace where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and feels valued by the organisation;
- To continually review progress against our EDI objectives, be innovative and transparent in our initiatives and learn from best-practice in understanding our EDI challenges;
- To reflect societal diversity in our workplace and be accountable for upholding shared community values.

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at Science Foundation Ireland

SFI's internal EDI Strategy establishes the EDI vision, mission, goals and objectives for the organisation.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are key enablers for SFI that will form the bedrock of the responsible implementation of the organisation's Strategy, Shaping our Future<sup>1</sup>, or successor. This EDI Strategy is also underpinned by the national research and innovation strategy, Impact 2030, in which EDI is a cross-cutting objective.<sup>2</sup>

**Equality** is about providing equitable opportunities to all, ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Equality of opportunity is a basic condition of our society and fundamental to SFI's values.

**Diversity** underpins creativity and growth by bringing together people of different backgrounds and experiences in addition to being open to leaning into those rich dimensions of diversity. It embodies differences, seen and unseen, as well as diversity of thought across SFI staff.

**Inclusion** represents a culture of belonging where every individual feels valued and supported. An inclusive environment at SFI will enable staff to achieve their full potential.

1 Shaping Our Future

2 Impact 2030

# Our Core EDI Values:

## Excellence:

We strive to create a diverse and inclusive work environment where all staff's efforts are recognised and valued.

## Passionate:

We are passionate about providing equity of opportunity to all individuals in the organisation. We commit to being transparent in our approach to EDI and sharing information on our EDI journey's successes and challenges.

## Progressive:

We will create and implement progressive EDI policies and initiatives to attract, recruit and retain diverse talent to support SFI being an innovative and dynamic organisation.

## Integrity:

We strive to do the right thing, ensuring all staff have equitable access to opportunities, resources and supports necessary to succeed.

## Collaborative:

We will endeavour to work with colleagues and external partners to promote best practice in EDI, contributing to the organisation's broader EDI policies and initiatives.

## Respect:

We commit to treating every individual with dignity and respect, regardless of their background, identity or social characteristics.

# Legislative Framework and Key Definitions

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014<sup>3</sup> imposes a statutory obligation on public bodies in performing their functions to be responsive to the need to *eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services and protect the human rights of staff and services users*.<sup>4</sup> This Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty places equality and human rights at the heart of how a public body fulfils its purpose and delivers on its strategic plan.

While Irish legislation sets minimum standards, an effective SFI EDI Strategy goes beyond legal compliance to create a diverse and inclusive workplace that inspires all employees to perform at their highest level. The Irish Government's *Maturity Model*<sup>5</sup> that aims to support public service organisations in progressing their EDI journey helps illustrate this.

## There are several key definitions that underpin SFI's internal EDI Strategy:

**Direct Discrimination** in the workplace occurs when someone is unfairly disadvantaged for reasons related to one of the nine specific grounds described in the Employment and Equality Acts (below).

**Indirect discrimination** in the workplace occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is applied to all staff or candidates, and:

- a group with a protected characteristic under the nine grounds of the Employment and Equality Acts is placed at a disadvantage compared with another group,
- an individual is put at a disadvantage,
- the employer cannot show it to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

**Indirect discrimination** is more subtle than direct discrimination and requires a nuanced approach to ensure that individuals and groups are not placed at a disadvantage by applying policies, procedures and practices to all staff equally without due regard for differences, both visible and invisible.

**Associative discrimination** means treating someone less favourably because they are connected to, or associated with, an individual covered by the nine grounds of the Employment & Equality Acts.

**Discrimination by imputation** occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because they are perceived to belong to one of the categories covered by the nine grounds, whether they do or not.

3 IHREC Act of 2014

4 IHREC Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

5 Vision Statement, Commitments, and Maturity Model for Public Service Organisations



**The Irish Employment and Equality Acts 1998-2015 bar discrimination in employment on nine specific grounds. They also prohibit sexual harassment and harassment based on any of the nine grounds.<sup>6</sup>**

### 1. Gender:

Less favourable treatment of an individual compared to another because one is a woman, or a man. Pregnant women and women on maternity leave are protected on this ground, as are transgender people who experience discrimination linked to gender reassignment or transition.

### 2. Civil Status:

Less favourable treatment of an individual person due to their different civil status, defined as being single, married, separated, or divorced, widowed or in a civil partnership or one that has ended for any reason.

### 3. Family Status:

Less favourable treatment of one person compared to another because one has a family status and the other does not. Family status is defined as responsibility as a parent or person in loco parentis under the age of 18, or as a resident primary carer for someone over 18 requiring care or support.

### 4. Sexual Orientation:

Less favourable treatment compared to another because a person is a different sexual orientation, defined as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual orientation.

### 5. Religion:

Less favourable treatment compared with another person because a person has a different religious belief, background, or outlook from the other.

### 6. Age:

Less favourable treatment compared with another person because they are different ages.

### 7. Disability:

Less favourable treatment compared to another person because one has a disability and the other has not, or the other has a different disability. The legal definition of 'disability' is broad in Ireland, and includes physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional and medical conditions.

### 8. Race:

Less favourable treatment because a person is of a different race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin.

### 9. Membership of the Traveller Community:

Less favourable treatment because a person is a member of the Traveller community, defined as a community of people often called Travellers, identified as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

**Going beyond the nine grounds of discrimination, SFI will work to ensure compliance across other identified grounds for potential discrimination, including:**

#### Cognitive diversity:

Encouraging and valuing the different ways that different personalities and thinking styles approach work. Businesses and teams comprised of more diverse personalities and cognitive styles produce better quality, more creative and innovative results than cognitively homogenous teams, if such diversity is well-managed.

#### Neurodiversity:

Creating a positive environment at work for those who have a pronounced difference between strengths and weaknesses due to a neurodevelopmental difference or to a mental health condition. Neuro diversity encourages an inclusive approach to reduce the stigma experienced and create an environment where challenges are reduced, and potential can be reached.

#### Social diversity:

Defines and encompasses the great variety of different and similar characteristics that are shared between all of us. Creating a socially diverse workforce is about removing barriers and developing social mobility.



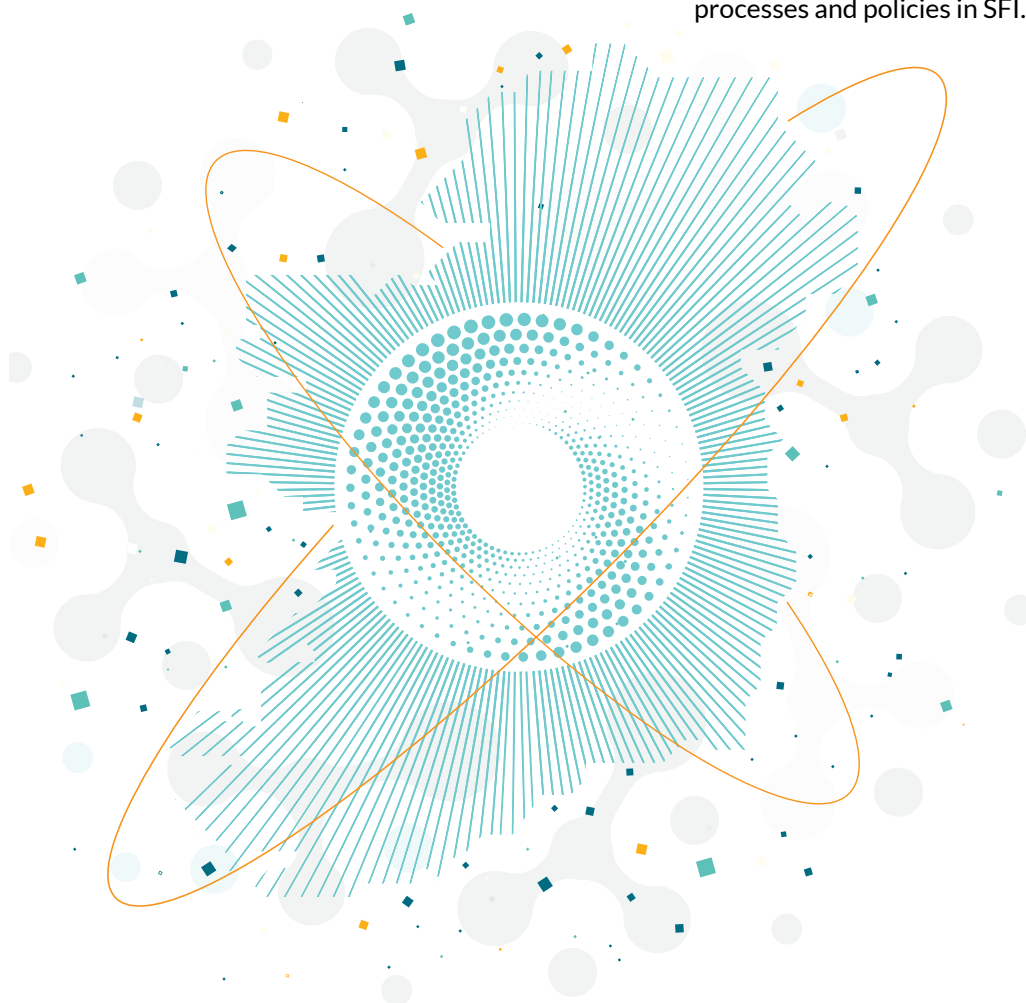
# SFI's Internal EDI Journey

## **SFI commissioned an independent staff consultation on Equality, Diversity and inclusion in the workplace in Q1 2023.**

This involved engaging the services of the Irish Centre for Diversity (ICFD)<sup>7</sup> in two distinct activities. The first activity centred on assessing the organisation's EDI maturity by evaluating the appropriateness of the existing EDI policies, the effectiveness of communication plans, and relevant EDI training for all leaders. The second activity was a survey of staff members to gather information on their lived experiences of SFI with the aim of informing the goals and objectives in this EDI Strategy.

Following the conclusion of these two activities, a high-level Action Plan was developed. A staff consultation was undertaken internally to solicit feedback on the proposed Action Plan. Responses from this consultation were then aligned with the six EDI Goals in the Action Plan, providing additional suggestions and observations that will be incorporated into the detailed implementation plan associated with this Strategy.

As part of our commitment to our EDI journey, staff consultations will be iterative and continuous to ensure all staff have ample opportunities to meaningfully contribute to EDI processes and policies in SFI.



# SFI's EDI Goals

Building on assessments of our existing EDI-related Policies and Procedures and the results of our organisational EDI survey, we have developed a set of Goals and Strategic Objectives to deliver on our mission:

# 1

## Goal 1 Inclusive Culture



SFI's workplace culture actively promotes inclusivity, ensuring every individual feels valued and included.

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# 2

## Goal 2 EDI Skills & Training



Increase knowledge, skills and awareness of EDI issues and initiatives across all staff in the organisation.

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# 3

## Goal 3 Diverse Talent



Attract and recruit diverse talent which reflects the communities we serve, at all levels of SFI.

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# 4

## Goal 4 Responsible Data Collection



Responsibly capture robust and reliable data to inform our EDI Strategy, policies and initiatives with the aim of reducing barriers to inclusion across the organisation.

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# 5

## Goal 5 Professional Development & Leadership Opportunities



Ensure fair and equitable access to development, advancement and leadership opportunities for all staff.

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# 6

## Goal 6 Collaboration for Best Practice



Endeavour to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to promote EDI best practices within SFI and beyond, contributing to the organisation's broader diversity and inclusion initiatives.

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# Strategic Objectives

## Goal 1

# Inclusive Culture



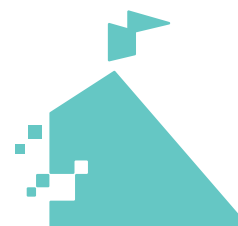
SFI's workplace culture actively promotes inclusivity, ensuring every individual feels valued and included.

### Objectives

<b>Objective 1.1</b>	Create and socialise a broad suite of SFI EDI-related policies, ensuring all staff understand how their employment may be supported and impacted by them.
<b>Objective 1.2</b>	Solicit feedback from all staff on the results from EDI surveys (including the Investors in Diversity Silver survey and all future surveys) to support HR and the internal EDI Committee assess how EDI can be improved at SFI.
<b>Objective 1.3</b>	Regularise communications from senior leadership highlighting SFI EDI successes and areas for future planned initiatives, reinforcing the positive impacts of inclusivity on the organisation's culture and work.
<b>Objective 1.4</b>	Develop a Change Management Plan that aims to embed EDI polices and initiatives across the organisation, including socialising it through an appropriate Communication Plan.
<b>Objective 1.5</b>	Continuously review relevant EDI-related policies including Bullying and Harassment, Whistleblower, and Discrimination policies to ensure they are fit for purpose and well signposted to all staff.
<b>Objective 1.6</b>	Monitor and regularly update staff on progress made against the EDI Strategy and action plan. Proactively engage with staff in the refinement and implementation of the EDI action plan.

## Goal 2

# EDI Skills & Training



Increase knowledge, skills and awareness of EDI issues and initiatives across all staff in the organisation..

### Objectives

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| Objective 2.1 | Create a learning and development strategy which incorporates mandatory training for SFI staff, at all levels throughout the organisation, on the multiple dimensions of equality, diversity and inclusion. |
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| Objective 2.2 | Transition the internal EDI Working Group into the internal EDI Committee to enable and support EDI Champions at all levels of the organisation. Appoint a dedicated EDI Point of Contact from within HR. |
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| Objective 2.3 | Develop EDI training programmes for all SFI staff throughout the organisation to increase awareness of EDI dimensions, including unconscious bias, microaggressions and inclusive language. |
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| Objective 2.4 | Support the establishment of employee resources groups (ERGs) to provide a platform for staff to connect, share experiences, and contribute to EDI initiatives and policies at SFI (e.g., carers, LGBTQ+, neurodiversity, etc). |
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## Goal 3

# Diverse Talent



Attract and recruit diverse talent which reflects the communities we serve, at all levels of SFI.

### Objectives

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| Objective 3.1 | Collaborate with recruitment agencies, educational institutions and professional networks to attract diverse talent. |
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| Objective 3.2 | Targeted training and workshops for senior management and interviewers to reflect on unconscious biases when selecting and interviewing candidates. |
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| Objective 3.3 | Review language and requirements in job specifications to ensure that the most diverse and inclusive talent is attracted to work at SFI. |
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| Objective 3.4 | Implement positive action through keeping up with best practice within our hiring processes. Undertake audits of SFI recruitment processes to confirm EDI policies are consistently followed. |
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## Goal 4

# Responsible Data Collection



Responsibly capture robust and reliable data to inform our EDI Strategy, policies and initiatives with the aim to reduce barriers to inclusion across the organisation.

### Objectives

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- Objective 4.1** Develop and communicate a robust approach to data collection with a view to increasing opportunities for staff development and promotion.
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- Objective 4.2** Prepare a transparent methodology in relation to recording and monitoring EDI related data including easily accessible information about what data will be gathered, how it will be stored and how it will be used.
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- Objective 4.3** Gather data for applicants, successful candidates and existing staff against the nine protected grounds to aid in identifying gaps in representation across SFI roles.
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- Objective 4.4** Ensure that the EDI Communications plan supports communication and socialisation of EDI policies and initiatives across the organisation.
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## Goal 5

# Professional Development & Leadership Opportunities



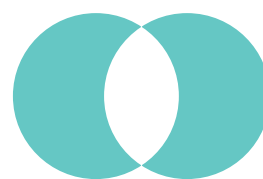
Ensure fair and equitable access to development, advancement and leadership opportunities for all staff

### Objectives

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- Objective 5.1** Implement a leadership development programme that nurtures diverse talent through a variety of internal supports.
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- Objective 5.2** Introduce mentorship programmes to support career progression and create a pipeline of diverse leaders.
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- Objective 5.3** Create and implement a strategy to increase the diversity of senior management.
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## Goal 6


# Collaboration for Best Practice



Endeavour to collaborate with external stakeholders to promote EDI best practices within SFI and beyond, contributing to the organisation's broader diversity and inclusion initiatives.

### Objectives

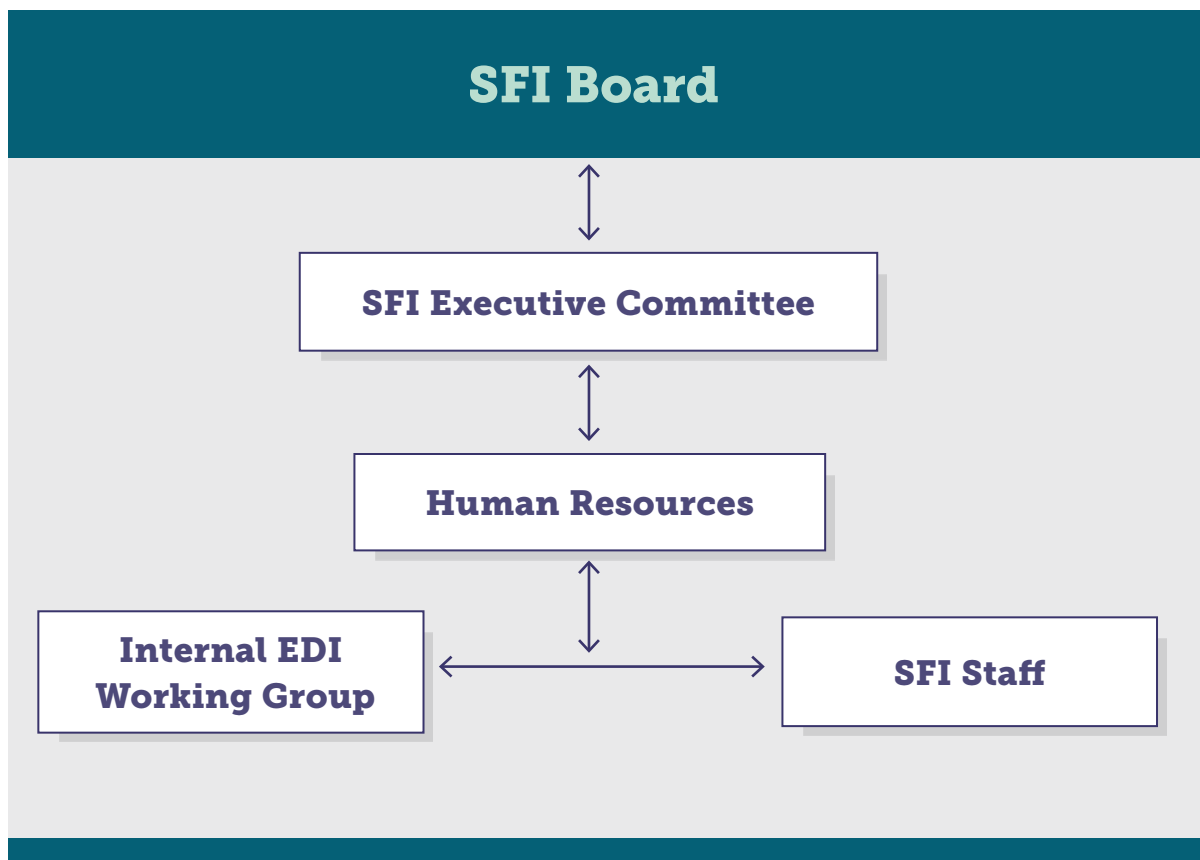
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- Objective 6.1** Strive to collaborate and partner with organisations and external stakeholders that promote EDI best practices, and respect SFI's EDI values.
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- Objective 6.2** Seek external, independent review of SFI's EDI Strategy throughout its lifetime to ensure that adequate progress is being made and identify any emerging gaps in the organisation's operations or EDI initiatives.
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- Objective 6.3** Pro-actively engage with relevant external organisations and other government agencies to encourage the sharing of EDI best practice.
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We strive to create a diverse and inclusive work environment where all staff's efforts are recognised and valued.

# Governance

Oversight of the EDI governance structure sits within the office of the Director General, with day-to-day responsibility delegated to the department of HR and Organisational Development. Successful strategy implementation will require active support across the organisation from the internal EDI Committee and broader SFI staff.



*Graphical representation of the EDI governance structure*





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