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SUMMARY

This document presents a practical toolbox for evaluating interventions that aim to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within organisations, with a specific focus on municipal settings. Developed within the framework of the European Union - funded DiGiN project, the toolbox is designed to support professionals in evaluating their DEI strategies and interventions. While its primary target group is municipal professionals, the toolbox is equally relevant for other organisations committed to institutional change.

The first chapter offers a practical guide for designing an evaluation plan as part of any DEI intervention. The plan consists of 3 key steps, each with its own sub-steps. The second chapter provides the theoretical foundation behind the toolbox. One can refer to these sections when in need of more explanation, guidance and substantiation of the steps. The section elaborates on key concepts such as the role and different types of evaluation and the Theory of Change.

As attachment the reader can find the following helping documents:

Annex 1: Evaluation Action Plan Template

Annex 2: Step-by-Step guide and Checklist

Our ambition is for this toolbox to serve as a valuable resource for all organisations striving to build more inclusive, equitable, and resilient structures, starting with reflection and ending with action.

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INTRODUCTION

This document presents a practical toolbox for evaluating interventions that aim to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within organisations, with a specific focus on municipal settings. Developed within the framework of the European Union - funded DiGiN project, the toolbox is designed to support professionals in evaluating their DEI strategies and interventions. While its primary target group is municipal professionals, the toolbox is equally relevant for other organisations committed to institutional change.

The evaluation toolbox forms the second deliverable (D6.2) of Leiden University of Applied Sciences (LUAS) to the DiGiN project and is largely based on the first deliverable (D6.1).

The toolbox can be used to make an evaluation plan in various situations. First, as is also recommended, is to make an evaluation plan at the outset of designing DEI interventions. This is because an evaluation plan is most successful if it is part of the initial design of an intervention, when the desired change is made clear and an agreement is made as to how to measure that change. This way the data for evaluation can be monitored and gathered throughout the implementation process. Nevertheless, the guiding steps can also be followed if your organisation has already selected an intervention, or has already started its implementation, without having made a clear evaluation plan beforehand.

Structure of this Toolbox

The first chapter offers a practical guide for designing an evaluation plan as part of any DEI intervention. The plan consists of 3 key steps, each with its own sub-steps.

The second chapter provides the theoretical foundation behind the toolbox. One can refer to these sections when in need of more explanation, guidance and substantiation of the steps. The section elaborates on key concepts such as the role and different types of evaluation and the Theory of Change.

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CHAPTER 1: FROM INTERVENTION TO EVALUATION ACTION PLAN

At the heart of any intervention lies the intention to create change: to address a specific need, achieve defined outcomes, and generate lasting impact. To check whether an intervention has led to specific changes or to the desired outcome, it must be evaluated. Evaluation is not an add-on at the end, but an essential part of the design process from the outset. This chapter provides a step-by-step guide on how to create an evaluation plan during the early stages of planning diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) interventions. Each step contains instructions that one can follow to implement this step.

Based on the 10 principles of success, the DiGiN project zoomed in on a selection of success criteria.[3] These are central steps for ensuring successful impact. These criteria are:

- A clear DEI vision as part of institutional policy.
- SMART-ly formulated interventions.
- Effective tools and instruments to implement the intervention in achieving the formulated results.
- Inclusive workplace environment (with special attention to creating or having a support base).
- Systematically monitoring throughout the project, evaluating the achieved results, and adjusting the intervention when necessary.

These elements are foundational for ensuring that DEI efforts are not only well-designed but also responsive, evidence-based, and impactful. The following sections will guide you through how to integrate them into a robust evaluation action plan.

[3] In this project we use the 10 principles of success that together provide the conditions needed for DEI policy to achieve positive impact. To read more about these conditions see deliverable 6.1: Zbeidy, D., & Çelik, S. (2025).

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Step 1: Alignment of DEI vision and intervention

1.a Clarify the DEI vision or rationale before the intervention

Before zooming in on a DEI intervention, it must be made clear what the organisation would like to achieve in its overall DEI mission, policies and objectives. Some organisations might have a clear DEI vision at the outset, while others are not there (yet). A clear, shared vision is the foundation of any effective DEI intervention. It anchors the organisation's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in a strategic direction and ensures that individual initiatives contribute to a broader goal.

The DEI vision may be embedded in the organisation's overarching mission and values, or it may be articulated in a dedicated DEI strategy. In either case, the vision should clearly explain why DEI matters to the organisation, what kind of culture or change it aspires to, and how it intends to get there. It should reflect the unique context of the organisation, its communities, and its internal dynamics.

Examples of DEI visions from the DiGiN partners	
Municipality of Genoa	"Removal of all obstacles, and principle of solidarity and equal opportunities" - removal of all obstacles for persons with a disability - inter-generational inclusion
Municipality of Ghent	"Being a reflection of diverse Ghent society" - representation of the diverse population - being an organization in which every employee can develop and flourish
Municipality of Rotterdam	"Rotterdam represents Rotterdam" - bringing in and keeping in different perspectives - an open and safe working culture in which everyone participates and feels seen

If your organisation does not have a DEI vision yet, or if the existing one is vague or outdated, this step must become a priority. Developing a vision is not a one-person. task; it should be a collaborative process that includes leadership, human resources, and a diverse group of staff members. This participatory approach ensures that the vision is not only aspirational but also grounded, inclusive, and sustainable.

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A strong DEI vision should:[4]

- Be aligned with the organisation's core mission and value;
- Be co-created with a diverse range of stakeholders;
- Reflect both the challenges and aspirations of the organization;
- Acknowledge systemic inequalities and commit to long-term change;

Follow these steps:

- Check whether your organisation currently has a DEI vision. Is it part of the main vision, or a separate statement?
- If the organisation has a clear DEI vision, and an intervention is already selected, formulate in a short paragraph how the intervention fits within that vision – what does it aim to change and why? Is the connection clear? If not, the evaluation process may be an opportunity to revisit or refine this alignment.
- If your organisation does not have a formal DEI vision, and an intervention is already selected, reflect on the following questions and write a short statement accordingly:
    - What prompted this intervention? (e.g. feedback, audit findings, leadership initiative)
    - What is the DEI problem or need it is trying to address?
    - Identify whether this aim aligns with any existing strategic documents or policies (e.g. HR strategy, equality plan).
    - *If nothing exists, this statement will serve as a temporary "working vision" for the purpose of evaluation.*

1.b Identify and select the DEI need

The next step is to identify the problem the intervention aims to address. You may already have this from earlier analysis (e.g. staff survey results, leadership priorities, observed inequalities, or previous project outcomes). If not, consider simple internal exercises: short team discussions, anonymous staff feedback, or a quick mapping of known gaps.

If you start this process before having identified the DEI need you want to address, ask yourself, and discuss with colleagues:

- What is the specific issue or inequality we want to address?
- Who is affected by it? Who benefits from the status quo?
- Is it a one-off issue or part of a broader pattern?

[4] See also the following DiGiN report (deliverable 5.2) for more on how to formulate a strong DEI vision: Municipality of Ghent (2026), Recommendations for implementation of a long-term DEI strategy in municipal organizations.

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Based on the need identified, choose an intervention that fits your organisational reality and has the potential to create change. This could be a training, a mentoring programme, a policy revision, or a structural change in decision-making.

One helpful tool in identifying both strengths and areas for improvement is the Assessment Tool for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Capacity in Municipalities: https://diginproject.eu/assessment-tool/, developed by Yellow Window. You can also consult the DiGiN page with inspiring practices: https://diginproject.eu/resources/#3

If the intervention is already selected in advance, it is important to check its validity:

- Check whether it still aligns with current needs and fits within the organisation's DEI vision.
- Check whether the goals of the intervention align with the DEI needs identified. Identify any gaps between them. Based on that decide whether you need to adapt or change the intervention.

1.c Key design considerations

Once the intervention is selected, reflect on these design aspects to ensure it is set up for success. The following guiding questions are to be answered for each selected intervention:

A) Alignment with the DEI vision

Discuss and decide to what extent it is clear how this intervention not only contributes to the desired change, but also to the wider vision of the organisation. If the connection between intervention and vision is not clear, does the intervention need to change? Or does the vision need to be adjusted?

- *How does the intervention contribute to the organisations' DEI vision?*
- *If there's no formal vision, does it respond to the working rationale identified in Step 1?*

B) Practical feasibility

Make a list of what is needed logistically to carry out the intervention. Think of budget, workforce, material, time. Is the intervention realistic? Can it be implemented with the available resources? If not, check whether you have access to more resources, in discussion with management or in cooperation with other partners, for example.

- *What resources are required (budget, time, skills)?*
- *Is the intervention realistic within the team's capacity?*

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- *Are there external allies (e.g. departments, partners) who can support?*

C) SMART formulation

The SMART method to formulate intervention goals is widely used in monitoring and evaluation processes, and in project management more widely.

Formulate your intervention in a way that it is: [5]

- Specific – What will be accomplished? What actions will you take?
- Measurable – How will you know it happened? What data will measure the goal? How much? How well?
- Achievable – Can you do it with what you have? Do you have the necessary skills and resources?
- Relevant – How does the goal align with broader goals? Does it matter for your DEI aims?
- Time-bound – What is the time frame for accomplishing the goal?

D) Inclusive workplace environment and support base

Experts agree that it is difficult to carry out DEI interventions when there is a lack of support from either the management or the wider organisation community.[6] Building an inclusive workplace environment can of course be an aim in and of itself and so can building a support base. DEI interventions need a supportive environment to succeed. At the same time DEI interventions can contribute to enhancing inclusivity and support. In any case, it is useful to make sure different groups and individuals are involved in the design and the implementation of the project and the evaluation. This increases legitimacy and decreases blind spots.

Lack of support at the organisation can lead to unintended consequences. Interventions can backfire or spillover.[7] A good place to start when identifying areas for DEI interventions is strengthening support for DEI within the organisation, on all levels of positions.

By formulating for yourself (within the team) to what extent you think there is support for the DEI intervention, you can already identify risk factors or plan what you can do during the project to ensure it will not backfire or contribute to negative effects and reactions. At the end of the project, you can also get back to this question and

[5] The following YouTube link provides a short guide on how to formulate SMART goals: Harry Hall, How to Write Smart Goals, 16 april 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_AzY7AP2Kg. You can also check out the following source: University of California (2016-2017). SMART Goals: A How to Guide. https://www.ucop.edu/local-human-resources/_files/performance-appraisal/How+to+write+SMART+Goals+v2.pdf

[6] Zbeidy, D., & Çelik, S. (2025).

[7] Ibid.

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evaluate whether the inclusive culture and support base were expanded and impacted positively.

- *To what extent is there an inclusive workplace environment and support base for such an intervention?*
- *Are those affected by the intervention involved in shaping it?*
- *Can you anticipate any resistance, and plan for it?*

Step 2: Map the theory of change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a simple way to describe how your intervention is expected to work. It helps you connect actions to outcomes, and ultimately to the DEI change you hope to see. [8] When one wants to achieve (societal) impact, we make assumptions based on previous research and experience of what can bring this change about.

How to formulate a ToC:

Part of this step is to formulate an answer to the following questions:

- What is the desired DEI impact you want to achieve with the intervention? (longer-term aim).
- What are the desired outcomes? (changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities of those involved).
- What are the expected outputs? (the tangible products as a result of the activities).
- What are the actual activities, as part of the intervention, that will be implemented?

There is no one order to answer these questions. You can start from the impact and work your way down, or work back up from the level of activities, and vice-versa afterwards to double check and complete the ToC. See Chapter 2 for more on Theory of Change and several examples for common DEI interventions.

Figure 1: Visualization of the Theory of Change (Napkin AI, 2025)

[8] Belcher et.al., (2020).

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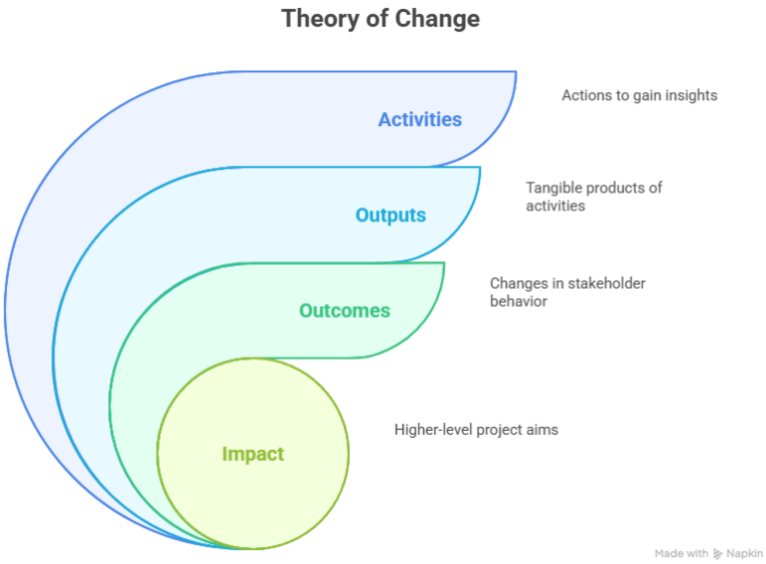

Step 3: Create an Evaluation Action Plan

Designing an evaluation action plan is an important step to take before starting the implementation of an intervention. Nevertheless, if your organisation has already started with the implementation, this can still be a very important exercise throughout the implementation stage or towards the end.

The following steps are part of designing an evaluation action plan:

3.a Define what you want to measure (indicators).

3.b Choose how to measure (methods and tools).

3.c Assign who will measure (responsibilities) including the timeframe.

A template is available as Annex 1 to support this process.

3.a Define what you want to measure (indicators):

"Indicators consist of information that signals change. An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to reflect the changes connected to an intervention. Indicators enable us to perceive differences, improvements or developments relating to a desired change (objective or result) in a particular context."[9]

[9] Church C. and Rogers M. M. (2006).

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As the quote above shows, indicators help us realise what differences, improvements or development an intervention has caused.

To get started, ask yourself two key questions:

- What do we want to know? (monitoring question)
- How will we know if we've achieved it? (indicator)

You should formulate indicators for:

- Outputs – the direct results of your activities (e.g. number of staff trained)
- Outcomes – changes in behaviours, attitudes, or systems (e.g. increased reporting of discrimination)

Good indicators are:

- Simple to understand;
- Clearly linked to your intervention's goals (see Step 2);
- Measurable with available resources;
- A combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators from diverse sources and inputs.

3.b Choose how to measure (methods and tools)

Part of the evaluation plan and template is where the data for the indicators will come from: the data source, or method for gathering the data. The method you choose depends mainly on the type of the formulated indicators.

Once you've defined your indicators, decide how you will collect the data. Your method should match the type of information you need. It should also take into account ethical considerations, such as how to ensure the privacy and anonymity of participants, and how to ensure informed consent when holding interviews, surveys or using HR data.

Here are examples of common data collection options[10]:

HR metrics: this is a much-used source in measuring the impact of DEI interventions that aim at diversifying the workforce. These metrics are quantitative data that the organisation registers (or can register) about its employees, such as the number of employees in different positions, the gender and age composition of employees, and the like.

Questionnaires: This is another measurement tool that is widely used. Some organisations use questionnaires recurrently – such as wellness, work satisfaction, or

[10] Based on Berg et. al. (2021).

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social safety experience questionnaires. The outcome of these questionnaires can be used as baseline (at the start of an intervention) and in a summative evaluation (at the end of the intervention). One can also design a questionnaire specifically to measure the impact of a new DEI intervention. The outcome is usually quantitative and provides an indication of how employees experienced a certain intervention or what their opinions and attitudes are regarding certain themes. It is important to decide in advance how many responses you need in order to have valid and representative results.

Interviews: Interviews provide quantitative and in-depth data. While it takes more time than a questionnaire, and you might reach less people, you will also learn more about the underlying thoughts, motivations and attitudes of your respondents. Think in advance who you want to interview (make sure you reach out to a diversity of respondents), when you will conduct the interview, and what questions you will ask in order to gather reliable and valid data.

Focus group discussions: This is a useful tool if you would like to get more in-depth quantitative data but do not have much time to conduct lengthy interviews. You can gather a diverse group of stakeholders together and ask questions. An added data dimension is observing how individuals in the group responds to each other. Group dynamics and interaction may however also impact the collected data, as people might refrain from voicing unpopular opinions.

Observations: If your indicators can be answered by observing behaviour, this is a suitable method to choose. Though you might not be able to determine directionality (cause and effect), observations can provide valuable data. For example, if your intervention aims at empowering women in teams, you can observe the number of times women speak during weekly meetings. Do you see an increase over time during an intervention? Here it is also essential to formulate clearly what you will observe, for how long, and how might your presence in the setting impact the behaviour of others.

Experiment: With an experiment you compare the behaviour / attitude / opinions / output of the group that was the target of an intervention (experiment group), with a similar group that was not part of the intervention (the control group). While an experiment will not be a suitable method for many DEI interventions, with an experiment you can better determine the relation between cause and effect.

Keep it simple: Choose 1–2 methods you can realistically carry out and focus on getting meaningful data over perfect data.

3.c Assign who will measure (responsibilities) including the timeframe

It is not only important to decide in advance which indicators you will measure, but also to assign responsibility for who will track progress, gather the data and systematically register them. It should be agreed upon when the data needs to be collected (time frame) and where it will be registered by this person/group. Define:

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- Who will collect and analyse each type of data?
- When the data will be collected (start, during, end of intervention)?
- Where the results will be stored and reported?

Remember! Adjust along the way. An evaluation plan is a living document. If the intervention evolves or unexpected challenges arise, you can adjust your indicators or methods.

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Example: Leadership Training for DEI

The intervention

The leadership training program is designed to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the municipality by equipping current and emerging leaders with inclusive leadership competencies. Through a series of workshops, coaching sessions, and policy reviews, participants will develop skills to recognize and mitigate unconscious bias, foster inclusive team environments, and implement equitable decision-making practices.

Alignment with organisation vision

Part of our vision is that all employees feel included and an integral part of the organisation. The intervention aims to create a sustainable shift in leadership culture and make sure unconscious bias in decision making is tackled. This will increase employee satisfaction and feelings of belonging and inclusion.

Theory of Change

Activities

- Conduct 3 inclusive leadership workshops that include 1) unconscious bias training 2) peer learning and coaching session 3) analysing and revising existing policies and practices.

Outputs

- Number of leaders trained
- Revised leadership policies and practices

Outcomes

Leaders demonstrate inclusive behaviors in decision-making (conceptual)

Clear inclusive decision-making mechanisms (instrumental

Improved team climate and employee engagement (conceptual and knowledge culture)

Impact

- A more diverse, equitable, and inclusive municipal organization
- Institutional culture shift toward equity and belonging

SMART goal

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Specific: Train municipal leaders in inclusive leadership practices through a structured workshop series.
Measurable: At least 80% of participants will show improvement in inclusive leadership competencies based on pre- and post-training assessments.
Achievable: The training will be delivered over three months, with expert facilitators and practical tools.
Relevant: This goal aligns with the municipality's commitment to equity and inclusive governance.
Time-bound: The training and evaluation will be completed by x.

Evaluation action plan

Indicator	**Tool/Method**	**Responsible Role and timeframe**
Number of leaders trained (at least one manager from every department)	Attendance record	Workshop trainer - after each workshop session
Number of policies analysed together and if necessary revised (at least 2: HR and procurement policies)	Feedback gathered from participants and relevant departments	Diversity & Equity Officer in collaboration with HR – within 1 month after the end of the training
Change in inclusive leadership behavior	Pre- and post-training surveys for participants	Diversity & Equity Officer in collaboration with HR
Quality of team climate and inclusion	Focus groups and anonymous employee feedback forms	External evaluator – 3 months after the end of the training.

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The outcome: An evaluation action plan!

If you have followed these steps, you have a good basis for an evaluation plan that you can use throughout the implementation of the intervention, and that you can get back to at the end of the intervention to measure effect.

Your evaluation action plan will include the following sections:

- A clearly formulated DEI vision of the organisation, or DEI priorities and overall objectives.
- A well-designed intervention that:
  - Is built on a clear Theory of Change, showing how change is expected to happen;
  - Aligns with the organisation's DEI vision and priorities;
  - Includes defined steps, tools and resources needed for implementation;
  - Has SMART goals;
  - Has sufficient internal support from leadership, teams, and/or other key stakeholders.
- A completed evaluation action plan template that outlines:
  - The key indicators you will use to track outputs and outcomes;
  - The methods you will use to measure each indicator;
  - Who is responsible for collecting the data, and when.

Use the template in Annex 1 to organise this information clearly.

I now have an evaluation plan, what's next? Tips and advice

Evaluation is not only about accountability, but also about organisational learning. Ensure that insights are shared across departments and feed back into policymaking, HR practices, and new interventions.

Use the evaluation action plan as a monitoring document to fill in, reflect on and adjust throughout the implementation of the intervention. Make sure you have collected most data for the indicators by the end of the intervention.

When it ends:

1. Write an evaluation summary or report.
2. Convene a short reflection meeting with key stakeholders.
3. Reflect and ask:
   - What worked?
   - What didn't? Why?
   - What did we learn?
   - What evidence do we have of impact?
   - What should we do differently next time?

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- How did this intervention contribute to cultural change?
- How can we share our findings with(in) the organisation?

Based on these insights, decide whether to:

- Continue the intervention as is.
- Modify it for better results.
- Scale it up, to reach more stakeholders or include more activities.
- Design a new intervention building on its outcomes.
- Decide how to involve the various stakeholders in sharing the outcomes and in future DEI steps and projects.

You now have a solid evaluation action plan that will accompany the implementation of your DEI intervention(s). This will lead to a strong DEI policy that is sustainable, adapts to changes and context, and is inclusive and broadly supported.

Good luck in making your organisations an inclusive, equitable and diverse workplace!

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CHAPTER 2: UNDERLYING THEORY

This section is for readers who want to learn more about the theories that lie behind the toolbox, or who want to know more about the themes discussed in the toolbox. The first section zooms in on evaluation: what evaluation entails and why it is important. The second section discusses the theory of change further. it touches on the importance of considering unintended consequences of interventions, the specific organisational context, and intersectionality, and ends with examples of DEI interventions and their ToCs. For more in-depth research on DEI interventions and the 10 principles of success, we recommend reading the research report of deliverable 6.1.[11]

What is evaluation and why is it important?

Evaluation is a structured process of assessing the success of a project in meeting its goals and to reflect on the lessons learned"[12]

Evaluation is an assessment of a planned, on-going, or completed intervention (or activity, policy, programme or plan) that needs to take place as systematic and objective as possible. It is meant to determine the significance and effect of an intervention. It also takes into consideration its design, implementation and its results.[13] It therefore can be developed during any phase of the intervention or larger policy cycle, rather than only during the final stages of an intervention.[14]

Why evaluate: Importance of Evaluating DEI Interventions[15]

Evaluation is a necessary step in the implementation of any intervention, including DEI interventions. The importance can be summarized in the following points:

- Measure Effectiveness: Evaluations help determine whether DEI interventions are achieving their intended goals, and what the key results are.
- Identify Areas for Improvement: An evaluation can help understand why a project might not have achieved its intended purpose, and thus highlight aspects of the interventions that need adjustments or enhancements to be more effective, improving practice in the future.
- Ensure Accountability: Evaluations hold organisations and leaders accountable for their DEI commitments and progress, and it ensures transparency.

[11] Zbeidy, D., & Çelik, S. (2025).
[12] National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) and Swinburne University (2011), p. 1.
[13] Espinosa et. all (2016), p. 5.
[14] Espinosa et. all (2016), p. 5, National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) and Swinburne University (2011), p. 1.
[15] This section is written based on the following sources: National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) and Swinburne University (2011), Espinosa et. al (2016), Zheng (2023), Jourdan (2023), Hogg (2025).

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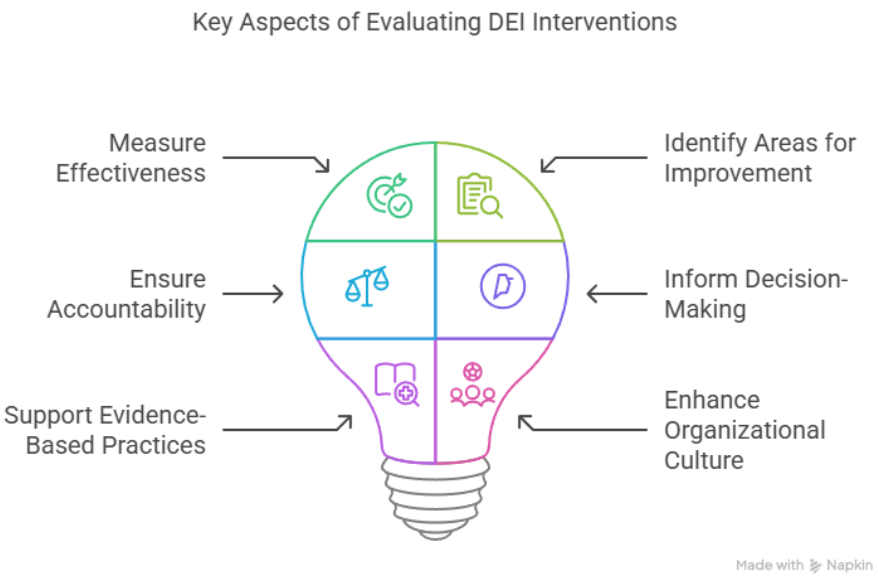
- Inform Decision-Making: Evaluations provide data-driven insights to guide future DEI strategies and resource allocation.
- They inform decision makers about how to build on or improve a project.
- Support Evidence-Based Practices: Evaluations contribute to the body of knowledge on what works in DEI, helping to develop best practices.
- Enhance Organisational Culture: Evaluations promote collective learning. They can foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace by continuously improving DEI practices.

Figure 2: Key aspects of evaluating DEI interventions (Napkin AI, 2025)



Types of Evaluation

Process versus Effect Evaluation

Process evaluation focuses on the implementation of a program or intervention. It examines how the program is delivered, the activities involved, and whether it is being implemented as intended. Process evaluation helps identify areas for improvement in the delivery and execution of the program. It provides insights into the operational aspects and can highlight any deviations from the planned implementation.[16]

Effect evaluation, also known as impact evaluation, assesses the outcomes and impacts of a program. It aims to determine whether the program has achieved its intended goals and what changes have occurred as a result of the intervention. It

[16] Williams (2023), Rogers and Woolcock (2023).

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provides evidence of the program's impact and helps in understanding the overall success of the intervention.[17]

The DiGiN project focuses on evaluating the effect of an intervention. Nevertheless, it is recommended also considering evaluation questions and indicators to evaluate the process, specifically to evaluate whether the intervention was implemented as designed, and whether it reached the intended people and beneficiaries. If not, reflect on why deviations took place and whether they had a negative or positive impact on the overall intervention.

Participatory Evaluation

Participatory evaluation means having various stakeholders, and especially the target group, involved in a project evaluation. The level of participation can vary, from getting the target group to set objectives, targets, and data sources themselves, to getting participants to gather data, tell their story, and interpret results.[18]

Participatory evaluation considers and values the knowledge and information of insiders. It recognises that evaluation should not rely solely on objective and external indicators for measuring impact.[19]

It is recommended using participatory evaluation for evaluating DEI interventions, especially in having participants involved in formulating the evaluation questions and indicators, and where possible to get them involved in the collection and interpretation of results. This will result in a shared responsibility and commitment from the stakeholder and improve the collective learning process and shared understanding of the intervention. All aspects that are especially important in DEI interventions.

Theory of Change

One way to design, implement, and especially evaluate an intervention is by formulating and working with a Theory of Change (ToC). The aim of a ToC is to describe "how and why a desired change is expected to occur [or occurred] in a specific problem context."[20] When one wants to achieve (societal) impact, we make assumptions based on previous research and experience on what can bring this change and realizing the desired impact.

It is advised organisations to formulate the ToC at the start of the design process of the intervention.

[17] Williams (2023).
[18] National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) and Swinburne University (2011), 6-7
[19] Ibid.
[20] Belcher et.al., (2020).

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The first step is to clearly identify the problem or issue you want to contribute to, and from there work backwards to establish preconditions for reaching that goal.

Erasmus University formulated key elements necessary for developing a ToC:[21]

1. Mission or bigger goal your work is contributing to (description of context, current state and other actors able to influence change)
2. Main actors either involved in the process or who have a stake in the work (long-term outcomes that you seek to support and for whose ultimate benefit)
3. Main activities, their resulting outputs, and outcomes (broad sequence of events anticipated (or required) to lead to the desired long-term outcome)

The third key element – namely the activities, outputs and outcomes – are used in this toolbox as a basis to design an evaluation plan and to formulate evaluation indicators. Based on Belcher et.al. (2020), Erasmus University describe these concepts through three different spheres. The below explanation can help you concretely make an evaluation plan:

- Sphere of control – direct influence: What the project does
    - Activities: the insights that are needed to bring about the desired outcomes and how these insights will be gained
    - Outputs: the tangible products as a result of the activities. Usually expressed as nouns, tangible and can be counted (15 trainings, 5 market entry activities, 20 technical assistance missions).
- Sphere of influence – indirect influence: Who the project works with and through
    - Outcomes: relate to changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities of stakeholders resulting from exchange of knowledge and the uptake of research outputs. Identify who has to do what differently to achieve the desired impact. Changes can be:
        - *Instrumental*: plans, decisions, behaviour, practices, actions, policies
        - *Conceptual*: changes to knowledge, awareness, attitudes, emotions that contribute to the understanding of issues and reframing debates
        - *Capacity building*: technical and personal skills and expertise
        - *Network*: number and quality of relationships and trust
        - *Knowledge culture:* attitudes towards knowledge exchange and impact itself

[21] Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

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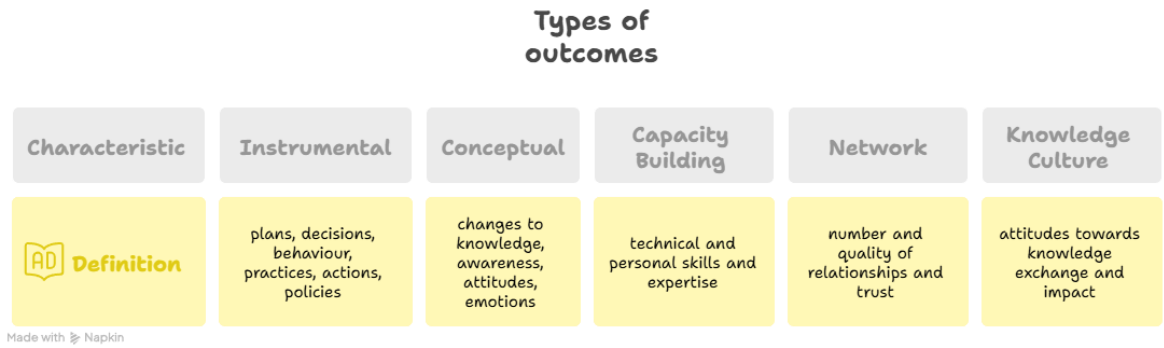
- Sphere of interest – higher level project aims, outside of project influence: Improved conditions that the project hopes to see
    - Impact: A deliberate chain of activities and conditions by which the potential impact that the project is aiming for could be realized

Figure 3: Types of outcomes (Napkin AI, 2025)



To formulate strong outcomes, outputs and activities that can bring about the desired impact, the ToC must be "robust", meaning that the assumptions made are well articulated, sound, logical and plausible.[22] One should expect that if the intervention is carried out as planned it will contribute to the intended results.

For evaluation purposes, it is important that the ToC has the following criteria:[23]

Well-defined	Is the assumption clear?
Logical coherence	Is the assumption a precondition or event for the effect sought?
Justified	What is the justification for the assumption as being necessary or likely necessary?
Realized	Is it plausible that the assumption will be realized? Are there at-risk assumptions that should be addressed?
Sustainable	Is the assumption sustainable?
Measurable	Is there a need to measure the assumption? How can the assumption be measured? What is the likely strength or status of evidence for the assumption being realized?

[22] Mayne, J. (2017), p. 158
[23] Ibid, p. 162

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Unintended consequences

Interventions can have positive and negative unintended consequences.[24] DEI initiatives can backfire, for example when they induce stigma and stereotyping, or have a negative spillover when they have other outcomes in addition to the desirable one. They can also have positive spillover, such as increased engagement or more ethical behaviour by nontargeted employees.

It is therefore imperative to monitor the implementation of an intervention, come back to the ToC, and adjust activities and outputs if and when necessary. Decide in advance what information and data participants and implementers will track throughout the intervention, and how often they will be monitored and checked for unintended consequences.

Organisational Context

Each organisation has its own context. Culture, policy, DEI experience, history, power relations and hierarchy – all differ from one organisation to another. The same ToC might therefore result in different interventions depending on the organisation. Similar interventions might also require a different ToC. There is no one ToC that works across all organisations, and no one intervention that always leads to the same results across organisations.

When formulating the impact one wants to achieve with an intervention, take the specificities of the organisation into account. What is feasible logistically? To what extent do you have supportive staff or leadership? What is the available budget and working hours?

Intersectionality

It is important to adopt an intersectional approach throughout the design and implementation of DEI interventions. Hereby we mean understanding how various aspects of individual identity—including race, gender, social class, and sexuality—interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression.[25]

Make sure to include a variety of people and voices in the design of the project. Include input from a diverse range of people when making the evaluation plan and formulating the ToC and the indicators. Having a diverse team with a variety of backgrounds and experiences can enrich the design and implementation of the intervention.

It is also important to recognise that those implementing an intervention, those participating in an intervention (the target group) and those monitoring and evaluating the intervention, all have various layers of intersecting and interacting identities. For some this mean that they are impacted by the cumulative effects of multiple forms of discrimination. Ignoring this can result in unintended

[24] Zbeidy, D., & Çelik, S. (2025), p. 10-11. More information on the unintended consequences can be found there.
[25] Zbeidy, D., & Çelik, S. (2025), p. 8-9.

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consequences such as marginalizing some groups or individuals, strengthen competition between identity-based groups or inducing inequality.

Examples of ToCs for a selection of DEI interventions

Example 1: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

ToC: Forming ERGs in the organisation will increase employee engagement, retention and a sense of belonging among employee groups.

Impact: Improved employee engagement, retention, and sense of belonging among marginalised groups.

Outcome: ERGs influence organisational policies and provide support networks for members.

Outputs: Established x number of ERGs with regular programming (x meetings a year with x members) and leadership support (financial and time allotment).

Activities:

- Hold x sessions with employees for ERGs to formulate clear charters and goals.
- Organise advocacy initiatives.

Risks: balance between single-identity based groups and intersectional work as to limit competition and marginalisation.

Example 2: Pay Equity Audits and Adjustments

By conducting pay equity audits, the organisation becomes aware of disparities and inequalities in its pay system and can adjust the system to make it more equitable.

Impact: Equitable compensation across all demographic groups, contributing to fairness and trust in the organisation.

Outcome: Reduction in pay disparities across gender, race, and other groups.

Output:
Completed pay equity audit and implemented salary adjustments.

Activities:

- Collect and analyse compensation data disaggregated by demographic variables.
- Identify and address unjustified pay gaps.
- Communicate findings and actions transparently.

Risks: Not all data on employees' backgrounds are registered. Gender might be the easiest, but other identity groups are not as easy.

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Example 3: Inclusivity Panel

See also some examples in Annex 1 for the inclusivity panel.

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APPENDICES

Annex 1: Evaluation Action Plan Template

Annex 2: Ste by Step Guide and Checklist

Annex 3: Recommendation for a digital toolbox

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report was written by researchers affiliated with LUAS. The DiGiN partners provided feedback and reviewed the toolbox at various stages, and for this the authors of the toolbox are very grateful. Any mistakes or inaccuracies are nevertheless completely our own.

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ANNEX I: Template evaluation action plan

Annex I consists of an excel sheet that includes step-by-step instructions on

how to make an evaluation plan for DEI interventions. This document is to be structured before implementing the intervention during the design phase and filled in during and at the end of the intervention project. The evaluation can be used to reflect on as part of a summative evaluation at the end, to inspire changes, adaptations, or a continuation of the intervention.

See separate Excel document for the Annex I.

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ANNEX II: Step by step guide and checklist

Step 1: Alignment of DEI vision and intervention

1.a Clarify the DEI vision or rationale before the intervention

Before zooming in on a DEI intervention, it must be made clear what the organisation would like to achieve in its overall DEI mission, policies and objectives.

- Check whether your organisation currently has a DEI vision. Is it part of the main vision, or a separate statement?

- If the organisation has a clear DEI vision, and an intervention is already selected, formulate in a short paragraph how the intervention fits within that vision – what does it aim to change and why? Is the connection clear? If not, the evaluation process may be an opportunity to revisit or refine this alignment.

- If your organisation does not have a formal DEI vision, and an intervention is already selected, reflect on the following questions and write a short statement accordingly:
    - What prompted this intervention? (e.g. feedback, audit findings, leadership initiative)
    - What is the DEI problem or need it is trying to address?
    - Identify whether this aim aligns with any existing strategic documents or policies (e.g. HR strategy, equality plan).
    - *If nothing exists, this statement will serve as a temporary "working vision" for the purpose of evaluation.*

1.b Identify and select the DEI need

If you start this process before having identified the DEI need you want to address, ask yourself, and discuss with colleagues:

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- What is the specific issue or inequality we want to address?
- Who is affected by it? Who benefits from the status quo?
- Is it a one-off issue or part of a broader pattern?

For help, you can use the Assessment Tool for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Capacity in Municipalities https://diginproject.eu/assessment-tool/

If the intervention is already selected in advance, it is important to check its validity:

- Check whether it still aligns with current needs and fits within the organisation's DEI vision.
- Check whether the goals of the intervention align with the DEI needs identified. Identify any gaps between them. Based on that decide whether you need to adapt or change the intervention.

1.c Key design considerations

Once the intervention is selected, reflect on these design aspects to ensure it is set up for success. The following guiding questions are to be answered for each selected intervention:

Alignment with the DEI vision

- How does the intervention contribute to the organisations' DEI vision?
- If there's no formal vision, does it respond to the working rationale identified in Step 1a?

Practical feasibility

- What resources are required (budget, time, skills)?
- Is the intervention realistic within the team's capacity?
- Are there external allies (e.g. departments, partners) who can support?

SMART formulation

The SMART method to formulate intervention goals is widely used in monitoring and evaluation processes, and in project management more widely.

Formulate your intervention in a way that it is:

- Specific – What will be accomplished? What actions will you take?

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- Measurable – How will you know it happened? What data will measure the goal? How much? How well?
- Achievable – Can you do it with what you have? Do you have the necessary skills and resources?
- Relevant – How does the goal align with broader goals? Does it matter for your DEI aims?
- Time-bound – What is the time frame for accomplishing the goal?

Inclusive workplace environment and support base

- To what extent is there an inclusive workplace environment and support base for such an intervention?
- Are those affected by the intervention involved in shaping it?
- Can you anticipate any resistance, and plan for it?

Step 2: Map the theory of change

How to formulate a Theory of Change

Formulate the theory of change that forms the basis of the intervention, by answering the following questions:

- What is the desired DEI impact you want to achieve with the intervention? (longer-term aim).
- What are the desired outcomes? (changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities of those involved).
- What are the expected outputs? (the tangible products as a result of the activities).
- What are the actual activities, as part of the intervention, that will be implemented?

Step 3: Create an Evaluation Action Plan

3.a Define what you want to measure (indicators)

To get started, ask yourself two key questions:

- What do we want to know? (monitoring question)
- How will we know if we've achieved it? (indicator)

You should formulate indicators for:

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- Outputs – the direct results of your activities (e.g. number of staff trained)
- Outcomes – changes in behaviours, attitudes, or systems (e.g. increased reporting of discrimination)

3.b Choose how to measure (methods and tools)

Once you've defined your indicators, decide how you will collect the data. Your method should match the type of information you need.

Consider ethical considerations, such as how to ensure the privacy and anonymity of participants, and how to ensure informed consent when holding interviews, surveys or using HR data.

Here are examples of common data collection options:

- HR metrics – Use existing HR data (e.g. diversity in leadership, retention rates)
- Surveys – Use pre/post or pulse surveys to track attitudes and experiences
- Interviews – Ideal for deeper insights into how people experience the intervention
- Focus groups – Great for collective reflection and surfacing group dynamics
- Observations – Useful when behaviours can be tracked in real-time (e.g. speaking time in meetings)
- Experiments – Compare groups who received the intervention with those who didn't (useful but often resource-heavy)

Choose 1–2 methods you can realistically carry out and focus on getting meaningful data over perfect data.

3.c Assign who will measure (responsibilities) including the timeframe

- Who will collect and analyse each type of data?
- When the data will be collected (start, during, end of intervention)?
- Where the results will be stored and reported?

Tip: Use Annex 1 Evaluation Action Plan Template to complete step 3 **Remember!** Adjust along the way. An evaluation plan is a living document. If the intervention evolves or unexpected challenges arise, you can adjust your indicators or methods.

What's next? Tips and advice

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Use the evaluation action plan as a monitoring document to fill in, reflect on and adjust throughout the implementation of the intervention. Make sure you have collected most data for the indicators by the end of the intervention.

When it ends:

4. Write an evaluation summary or report.
5. Convene a short reflection meeting with key stakeholders.
6. Reflect and ask:
    - What worked?
    - What didn't? Why?
    - What did we learn?
    - What evidence do we have of impact?
    - What should we do differently next time?
    - How did this intervention contribute to cultural change?
    - How can we share our findings with(in) the organisation?

Based on these insights, decide whether to:

- Continue the intervention as is.
- Modify it for better results.
- Scale it up, to reach more stakeholders or include more activities.
- Design a new intervention building on its outcomes.
- Decide how to involve the various stakeholders in sharing the outcomes and in future DEI steps and projects.

Good luck in making your organisations an inclusive, equitable and diverse workplace!

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ANNEX III: Recommendations for a digital toolbox

The evaluation toolbox forms the second deliverable (D6.2) of Leiden University of Applied Sciences (LUAS) to the DiGiN project and is largely based on the first deliverable (D6.1). Part of the deliverable is to give recommendations on how to turn the toolbox into a digital form.

In addition to this annex, the toolbox consists of three documents:

1- Evaluation toolbox document: this pdf document consists of two chapters. The first chapter offers a practical guide for designing an evaluation plan as part of any DEI intervention. The plan consists of 3 key steps, each with its own sub-steps. The second chapter provides the theoretical foundation behind the toolbox.
2- Annex 1 Evaluation Action Plan Template: an excel document that contains the main components in the evaluation toolbox, namely the three steps and what to fil in. This excel document will form the basis of the evaluation plan of any DEI intervention.
3- Annex 2 Guide and Checklist: this pdf document is a summary of the first more detailed evaluation toolbox documents. This guide is a checklist for each step that can accompany the excel sheet template.

Recommendations

The following recommendations outline how the current evaluation toolbox can be transformed into a user-friendly digital tool for DEI practitioners.

Develop a Web-Based Interactive Platform

Transform the toolbox into a responsive web application that guides users through the evaluation process in a structured and intuitive manner.

Key Features:

- Step-by-step navigation through the three main evaluation steps.
- Embedded guidance and checklist items from Annex 2.
- Auto-save functionality and export options (PDF, Excel).
- Include multilingual interface options to ensure accessibility and multilingual support.

Examples of web-based platforms that can be used for this purpose are Brilliant Assessment or PointerPro.

Digitise the Excel Template into a Dynamic Online Form

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Convert Annex 1 into an interactive form that allows users to input data directly into a digital interface.

Key Features:

- Expandable sections for each step and sub-step.
- Tooltips and embedded examples from the guide.
- Exportable output in Excel or PDF format.

Include a Resource Library

Host the theoretical foundation and supporting materials in a searchable, accessible format.

Key Features:

- Glossary of terms.
- Case studies and examples.
- FAQs and best practices.

Optional AI Assistant or Chatbot Integration

Provide contextual help and support through an AI-powered assistant.

Key Features:

- Real-time answers to user questions.
- Suggestions for improving evaluation plans (help formulate indicators or suggest data gathering methods).
- Assistance with interpreting results and next steps.

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