



Equality & Diversity in Local Councils

Diversity Ambassador Network – Terms of Reference

Context

Local Government has an important role in promoting equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion. The regional Equality and Diversity Group has responsibility for the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government. A key feature of the work of the Equality and Diversity Group is the establishment of the Diversity Ambassadors' Network.

Vision for Local Government

Our vision is to create a fully inclusive and diverse local government sector—one in which the workforce reflects the communities it serves, and where diversity and inclusion are actively recognised, supported, and celebrated. We are committed to fostering a culture where staff feel valued and are comfortable being their authentic selves in the workplace.

This commitment extends beyond our internal workforce to the people and communities we serve. We aim to deliver services that are equitable, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all residents and service users, recognising and respecting the full range of identities, backgrounds, and experiences across society.

As Councils carry out their wide range of services and work with other public bodies, we will make sure inclusion is built in – from planning and policymaking to how services are delivered on the ground. This will help build trust, lead to better outcomes, and support fairer, more inclusive public services for everyone.

Objectives and Delivery

The objective of the Network will be to support Elected Member and Officer Diversity Ambassadors. Diversity Ambassadors will be supported to champion diversity and inclusion in their Councils to help staff and functions to create positive impacts on this agenda in services and local communities, specifically to:

- Continue to build capacity for Diversity Ambassadors.
- Promote and encourage Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agendas in individual Councils including at Elected Member level, linking to the EDI Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2027.

- To assist Councils to improve cross departmental working within Councils, (particularly across Good Relations, Human Resources and Equality and relevant front-line functions or service delivery functions).
- To assist collaborative working across all 11 Councils.

The delivery of these objectives will be done by creating a forum for Diversity Ambassadors to gather and share best practice, engage with the work of others on this agenda, develop skills to support and influence innovative practices, and embrace the opportunity to work in collaboration with existing and new partners in the delivery of this programme of work.

Operational Arrangements

The Network will meet at least three times a year and will work in the following ways:

- Members of the Network are encouraged to suggest items for the agenda and to suggest expert speakers and key stakeholders to contribute to the Network.
- Non-members may be invited to join the Network, permanently or temporarily, to aid discussions on topics.
- Decisions will be made by consensus, but if that is not possible the Co-Chairs will make the final decision.
- Diversity Ambassadors are expected to attend, and apologies should be given in advance, where possible.
- Hybrid Meetings will be offered with at least 1 meeting per year, in person only.

Membership –

The Network will comprise the nominated Council representatives, including both Elected Members and Officers, as well as NILGA Elected Members. Membership will be reflective of wider society and inclusive of diverse perspectives. In line with our commitment to equality and representation, we actively welcome participation from individuals across the Section 75 categories, ensuring the Network benefits from a broad range of experiences, backgrounds, and insights.

Chairing of the Network Meetings

The Network will be Co-Chaired by an Elected Member and Officer Diversity Ambassador. The Co-Chairs will ensure the proper running of meetings in a timely, fair transparent and inclusive manner and will have the final say on the finalisation of minutes. Items on the agenda should be alternated between the Co-Chairs.

Meetings will alternate locations to cover each Council area in turn.

Accountability

The Co-Chairs will be expected to provide regular updates to the regional Equality and Diversity Group on the Network's activities, either verbally or in written reports.

Secretariat

The Local Government Staff Commission will serve as the secretariat for the Network until 31 March 2026. From that point onward, the hosting Council of each meeting will assume the secretariat role for the respective meeting.

Network Values

Members of the Network will:

- Treat all other Members with respect.
- Act in a courteous and ethical manner at all times.
- Improve communication on and within Network.
- Not disclose any matter that the Network is satisfied should remain confidential.

Review

The Network will review the relevance and value of the terms of reference and its work on a regular basis.

Co-Chair Role

- Both should be treated as equal in the role, Officer and Elected Member
- Co-Chairs should remain in place for at least 1 year
- Schedule of meetings to be approved at least 1 year in advance
- Meetings which are being held every 4 months should be hosted by a different Council. Practical issues for the host Council include ensuring ICT and accessibility are appropriate and hospitality is agreed with Co-Chair
- Pre-meetings should take place 2 weeks in advance of the meeting to agree the agenda items and liaise with secretariat
- The Co-Chair should make space for diverse viewpoints to be heard and support challenging discussions
- The Co-Chair should agree and track actions, communicating outcomes either prior to or the following meeting dependant on their urgency
- The Elected Member Co-Chair is encouraged to contact other Elected Member to encourage participation.