



Your Guide to Workplace Equity

How to achieve your business outcomes and DE&I goals by analyzing equity

If DE&I is your destination, workplace equity is your compass

We would all love to snap our fingers and achieve the diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces of our dreams. But the truth is that most organizations have a lot of work to do to define what that means, and then progress will be incremental. Years — or even decades — of biased decisions, systemic inequities, and a lack of diverse representation in decision-making roles create inequitable policies and practices. And these, in turn, influence who gets hired, advanced, and retained, as well as how they are compensated.

All of this means that DE&I is a journey — and one with no single destination. Once you “achieve” diverse representation, equitable practices, and an inclusive culture, you have to sustain them. This is why **workplace equity** is so critical.

Workplace equity means unlocking opportunities for every employee by treating them equitably and without bias. This allows employees to achieve their highest potential within an organization, regardless of their gender, race, or other factors. It is the foundation for DE&I because without equitable treatment, people aren't hired, compensated, promoted, and retained at the same rates. This leads to a lack of diversity and, therefore, inclusion.

Workplace equity helps you meet the increasing demands for tangible progress and transparency by providing a framework and methodology for identifying potential issues and starting points, tracking progress over time, and maintaining gains with ongoing monitoring.

- By comprehensively measuring workplace equity, you can identify where you have gaps and problems — and prioritize them.
- By monitoring workplace equity, you can see if you're making progress and surface the actions needed to achieve your goals.
- By updating your processes to include actionable data and real-time feedback around decisions, you can prevent and escalate issues before they take root.

This guide offers strategies to help understand, measure, and improve all aspects of workplace equity. We detail a step-by-step approach you can use to:

- Define success using data and insights (rather than hopes or guesses)
- Prioritize your biggest areas of opportunity
- Make incremental improvements on realistic goals
- Measure and maintain progress through ongoing monitoring and shared accountability

Creating an equitable workplace is complex. We want to help you break it down so you can make tangible progress. Let's dive in.



Despite widespread investments in DEI&B initiatives, only **18% of employees** and **22% of HR leaders** think they have a **high fairness workplace**.¹

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“Equality is giving everyone a shoe.
Equity is giving everyone a pair of shoes that fits.”²

— Dr. Naheed Dosani

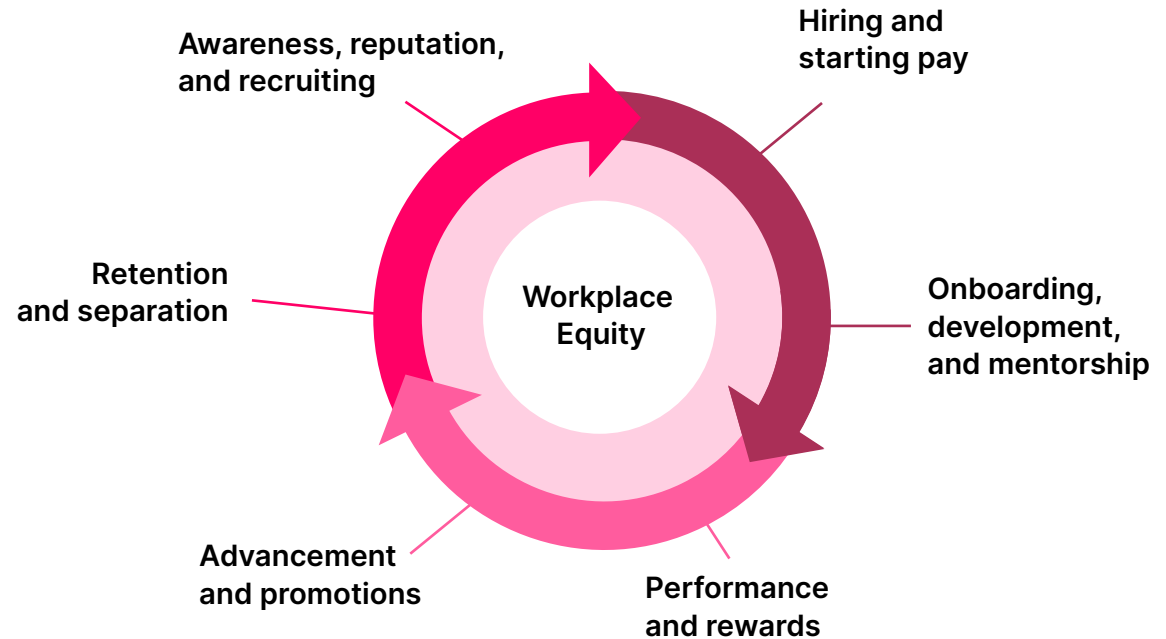


01 What is workplace equity?

Success in workplace equity is driven by two things: equal pay for equal work and equal access to opportunities. To get these right, companies must ensure they're hiring, compensating, supporting, and advancing employees based on what they have to offer — not their gender, race, or other factors. Equity is a measurement that can be applied to any and all stages of employment, compensation type, and access to opportunities.

Workplace equity creates a virtuous cycle. When you hire, compensate, and advance people in an equitable way, you establish your organization as a fair workplace, which creates positive brand awareness and fuels subsequent recruiting and hiring. ▶

Workplace equity = equitable pay and treatment at every stage of employment



Workplace equity is both the foundation of and roadmap to a data-driven DE&I program that works. If you're not building and enforcing equitable hiring practices, you won't be able to increase diversity in your workforce. And if you aren't promoting people equitably into higher paying roles, your pay gap will continue to widen. But once you turn your focus to equity and ensure your policies and practices are fair at every stage of the employee journey, that's when you'll start to gain traction — and create a diverse workforce where employees can feel valued and included.

Pressure is mounting to report on DE&I outcomes

Pressure's coming from all sides to disclose and report on pay gap and diversity metrics. Globally, legislation is increasing, with more requirements around both pay gap and pay equity disclosures. Investors, boards, and Wall Street are calling for more disclosures and transparency with ESG reporting and SEC human capital disclosures, and we're seeing a rise in voluntary disclosures. Your employees have the same high expectations: they're leaving organizations that don't share their values, and that don't back up promises with action.

You're now being asked to report on these outcomes by legislators, investors, consumers, and your employees.



Most companies have had a hard time making headway on these outcomes, because you can't improve what you can't measure. Many organizations focus on anecdotal and qualitative assessments — rather than data — and analysis is often siloed between teams. One part of the organization may be focused on analyzing promotions, another on analyzing pay equity, another on diversity in leadership. And if you're not approaching these outcomes from a holistic, data-driven perspective, progress will feel elusive.

...Closing median pay gaps requires a more holistic approach. It requires companies to evaluate their hiring, development, and promotion practices. Without full transparency and action taken to narrow these median pay gaps, progress is unlikely.”³

— Arjuna Capital

Roadmap: Equity drives measurable outcomes

Workplace equity is the path to tangible progress

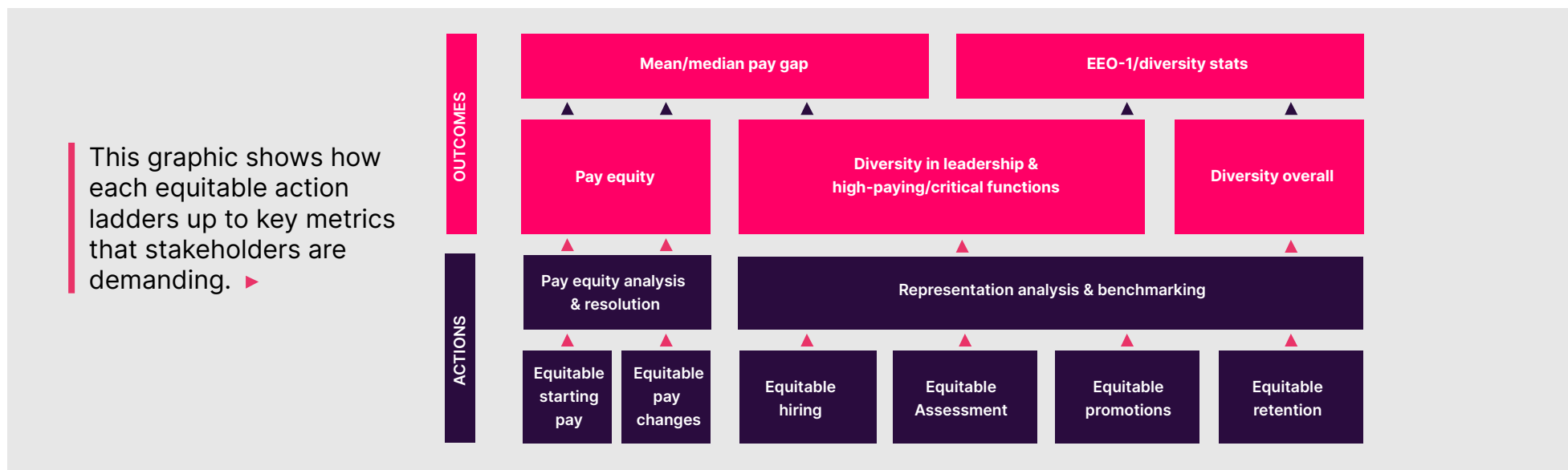
A workplace equity strategy helps you make progress you can measure and maintain. When you have a holistic view of every interconnected variable that impacts equity in your organization, you can start to see where you need to focus your attention and how that will lead to tangible results.

If you try to address pay equity in a vacuum, for instance, you might patch a problem without addressing the underlying issue, which means you'll keep recreating pay equity issues year in and year out. Only by digging into specific actions — such as whether you are offering equitable starting compensation and equitable pay increases during promotions — can you establish and sustain pay equity over time.

The same goes for diversity. You could spend a lot of money and effort recruiting a more diverse workforce, but you won't remain diverse — or leverage the power of that diversity for better business outcomes — if your hiring, performance reviews, and promotion policies are inequitable.

A workplace equity strategy helps you understand how multiple, interrelated actions impact each outcome so you can make tangible, measurable improvements.

By conducting a step-by-step equity analysis and digging into levels, departments, roles, and locations, you can pinpoint your unique set of problems and devise a clear and customized action plan.



Roadmap: Equity drives measurable outcomes

🔍 Example

Opportunity inequity for women of color in leadership roles

Let's look at a scenario for how this might play out for a company. Consider a national retail chain that wants to achieve a specific outcome: diversity in leadership and high-paying/critical functions. This gap in representation is also contributing to their median pay gap. The brand wants more diverse representation at the leadership level, yet they aren't sure what's causing the opportunity gap.

Using a workplace equity strategy, they investigate whether their policies and practices are equitable, and find that representation is on track at headquarters. But when they zoom in and analyze representation at their retail stores, they find that employees aren't advancing equitably: in many locations, women of color aren't moving from assistant manager to manager. Why?

By analyzing the data and interviewing employees, the company can isolate the root cause of the problem: women of color have been more adversely impacted by the pandemic than other groups of employees. And due to their caregiving responsibilities at home, the hours and flexibility required for the manager job aren't feasible. This company's experience reflects broader labor market trends after the COVID-19 pandemic, when Black and Latina women left the labor force at higher rates than any other group.⁴

By isolating the inequity by group, job, and location, the retailer can put a plan in place — including restructuring job requirements to ensure there was more opportunity for women of color to advance — to move the needle on their diverse leadership and pay gap goals



Challenge

Lack of diversity in leadership



Root cause

Women of color not advancing equitably to manager level



Actions needed

Address inequitable opportunities at store locations with updated job requirements



Results

Increase diversity in leadership to close the pay gap

Roadmap: Equity drives measurable outcomes

Action-oriented DE&I starts with analyzing equity

Analyzing equity in a holistic, data-driven way helps you pinpoint your biggest problem areas, figure out how to solve them, and determine if you're making progress, and by how much.



01 MEASURE

Measure equity to find and prioritize problem areas

Pinpoint inequities by analyzing internal data (including gender, race, LGBTQ, and more — as well as intersectionality) and external benchmarking data across multiple cuts: level, department, role, and location.



02 MONITOR

Monitor improvements in equity to track progress

Use the employee lifecycle to track all aspects of the employee experience, and set specific KPIs that map to DE&I goals (e.g. equal promotion rates for men and women; target percentage of new positions in a job group filled by hiring or promoting Black employees).



03 MAINTAIN

Use equity as a target to maintain equity over time

Using both quantitative and qualitative data to integrate workplace equity into every employment decision. This can include providing scorecards to leadership teams to give meaningful, timely feedback on how equitable their promotion rates are; proactively analyzing performance scores to identify hot spots in your org and take action before unequal performance ratings turn into promotion or retention issues; and providing data and clear guidelines on how relevant, job-related factors should impact starting salaries.

3 How to measure and improve workplace equity

Achieving workplace equity can often feel like an overwhelming effort. But when you break it down into specific, tangible metrics, you'll find a clear path to where you can make incremental — and measurable — progress. Below we detail some common equity metrics and what they reveal about the root causes of challenges at each stage of the employee lifecycle.

While we outline a very comprehensive list of metrics for each stage of the employee journey, it does not mean that you should measure everything all at once. Rather, based on your goals and/or your known problem areas, pick one area for improvement or one metric to start with. Every small action you take and every incremental goal you achieve set you on the right path toward a more equitable workplace.

Before an employee joins your organization

IMPROVEMENT AREA	METRIC	ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO FIND THE ROOT CAUSE ISSUE
Awareness and employer reputation	Applicant demographics comparable to available talent in those markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you building awareness equitably for certain groups and markets? Are you posting jobs where a diverse set of candidates can find them? Are you investing in employer branding campaigns designed to reach a diverse candidate audience? Is your employer reputation preventing some groups from applying? Are your job descriptions designed to appeal to and ensure confidence in all types of candidates?
Recruiting	Equitable candidate pipeline based on available talent in those markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are your recruiters trained in unbiased recruiting practices? Are certain candidates failing to make it past resume screens? Are hiring managers advancing candidates at equitable rates?
Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equitable offer rates for all groups Equitable acceptance rates for all groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is bias preventing some groups from receiving offers? Is your employer reputation preventing some groups from accepting your offers?

3 How to measure and improve workplace equity

Once you hire an employee

IMPROVEMENT AREA	METRIC	ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO FIND THE ROOT CAUSE ISSUE
Onboarding	Equitable participation in or accessing of information, training, and support	<p>Have you purposefully made all groups of employees aware of onboarding resources?</p> <p>Do you have training that establishes and communicates your company's DE&I values and standards?</p>
Engagement	Similar response rates and employee satisfaction scores on engagement surveys	<p>Is your organization speaking to each community in a way that resonates?</p> <p>Have you built trust that the organization will listen to and respond to survey responses?</p>
Development	Equitable participation in employee development programs	<p>Is there equitable distribution of budget / training resources?</p> <p>Do managers have clear guidance on how to make sure they're distributing resources equitably?</p> <p>Are your development programs structured in a way that meets all community needs?</p> <p>Have you purposefully made all groups of employees aware of development resources?</p> <p>Are leaders differentiating strategic work and initiatives that better position their employees to be recognized and promoted (also known as "promotable work"), and ensuring that diverse groups are being assigned that work at equitable rates?</p>
Performance Assessments	Equitable rates of all performance scores	<p>Are there explicit, consistent standards for performance ratings and clear guidance on what criteria to use for ratings?</p> <p>Is there a clear definition of how performance assessments translate to pay changes?</p>

Continued on the next page

03 How to measure and improve workplace equity

Once you hire an employee (Continued)

IMPROVEMENT AREA	METRIC	ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO FIND THE ROOT CAUSE ISSUE
Advancement and promotions	Equitable promotion rates at every level Equitable representation in succession plans	Are you looking at both internally and externally available talent? Are all of your job postings readily available to internal employees? Is there clear guidance to managers about how to make equitable decisions and promotions? Are leaders creating specific succession plans? Are leaders differentiating strategic work and initiatives that better position their employees to be recognized and promoted (also known as “promotable work”), and ensuring that diverse groups are being assigned that work at equitable rates?
Retention	Staying at the same rates	When you perform exit interviews, are the findings different based on who’s giving you feedback? Are there themes of certain communities separating due to a lack of support, mentorship, pay, or advancement opportunities?



Only 18% of qualified employees are considered for the next opportunity when it emerges at their organization.⁵

How to measure and improve workplace equity

How you compensate an employee at every stage

IMPROVEMENT AREA	METRIC	ASK THESE QUESTIONS TO FIND THE ROOT CAUSE ISSUE
Starting salary, including equity/stock, as well as sign-on bonuses	Equitable starting pay	<p>Do you have pay ranges for each position?</p> <p>Do recruiters and hiring managers know what puts a candidate at what subset of the range based on neutral, job-related criteria?</p> <p>What role does candidate negotiation play in the hiring process?</p>
Bonuses	Equitable bonuses	<p>Are target bonuses discretionary?</p> <p>If so, how are they set and what governance exists around them?</p> <p>Are managers coached on valid justifications for discretionary individual bonus modifiers, and asked to provide rationale?</p>
Merit increases and promotions	Equitable compensation when someone is promoted or there are merit increases	<p>Do managers have clear guidance on making equitable decisions?</p> <p>Are there policies in place that may suppress pay for certain groups? (e.g. caps on increases, placing people low in the range based on current salary, etc.)</p>
Compensation during business changes like reorgs, mergers, acquisitions, etc.	Equitable pay at key business moments	<p>Does the company that you're merging with or acquiring have a different pay philosophy and/or existing inequities that are impacting pay equity status?</p> <p>Is there a clear understanding of job comparability across the two legacy organizations?</p> <p>Is there a plan for aligning pay, roles and performance expectations to inform equitable pay decisions?</p> <p>Are you basing the pay off of the employee's salary history or the true value of the role?</p>

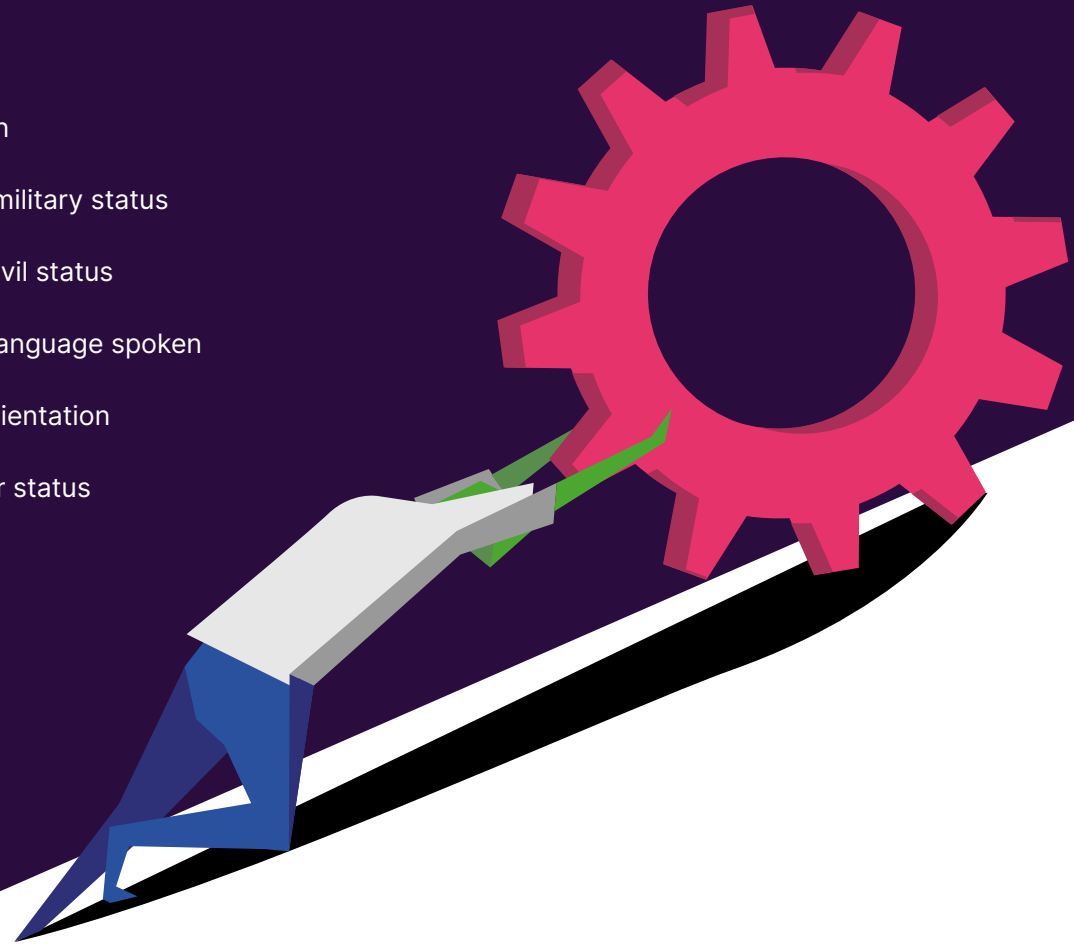
The war for talent is over and the talent has won. If your company doesn't address [pay equity], they simply won't come to work for you."⁶

—Frank Møllerop, CEO, Tivian

What data are you collecting and analyzing?

In order to effectively analyze and measure all of the workplace equity metrics above, you need to have the right data. While most companies are already looking at gender, race, and ethnicity, forward-thinking organizations are starting to collect and analyze employee data based on all of these protected categories.

- Age
- Sex (binary)
- Gender identity (nonbinary)
- Race/ethnicity
- Disability status (including neurodiversity)
- Education
- Veteran/military status
- Marital/civil status
- Primary language spoken
- Sexual orientation
- Caregiver status



04 Benefits of workplace equity

Organizations that use data to demonstrate they pay and treat all employees equitably reduce legal risk, improve ESG reporting, and build trust. This makes it easier to attract and retain talent and build resilience at a time when tangible results are table stakes.

Build an employer reputation that attracts, engages, and retains top talent

Prove and communicate your commitment to equity with data-backed achievements and goals, building trust, engagement, and confidence with employees.

58% of employees would consider switching jobs for more transparency. For Gen Z employees, that number jumps to 70%.⁷

Improve performance and retention

When your employees understand your policies and practices and know that they're being paid and treated fairly, it increases their sense of engagement — which leads to higher productivity.

Employees who work in a high fairness environment have 26% higher performance, 27% lower chance of quitting.⁸

Improve perception with investors and the public

Improve ESG metrics and your brand reputation by proving your company is a leader in fair pay, diversity, and opportunity equity.

85% of investment professionals take ESG factors into consideration in their investing, up from 73% in 2017.⁹

Easily adhere to global regulations and disclosures

Simplify compliance with international anti-discrimination legislation and pay equity laws, and adhere to SEC human capital and DE&I disclosures.

Between September 2020 and September 2021, the share of companies disclosing an EEO-1 Report or Intersectional Data, the standard for demographic data reporting, has more than doubled, from 4% to 11%.¹⁰

Mitigate legal risk

Settlements around discrimination in pay and opportunity regularly cost companies tens of millions of dollars — not to mention the damage to their brand and reputation.

\$64 billion: The estimated annual cost of losing and replacing more than two million American workers who leave their places of employment due to unfairness, discrimination, or harassment.¹¹

Syndio's Workplace Equity Platform

Syndio's Workplace Equity Platform gives you everything you need to measure, improve, and report on all facets of workplace equity — from bringing in talent fairly to paying, evaluating, promoting, and retaining them equitably. By automating analyses that are often done manually and in silos, our platform provides a holistic view of where you stand on fair pay, equal access to opportunities, and representation. It helps you focus your efforts to accelerate progress and maintain gains over time.

[SEE THE PLATFORM](#)



Secure integrations

for comp and HR data keep sensitive information safe



Statistical analyses

pinpoint inequities and identify actionable opportunities for improvement



Benchmark

against available talent to ensure that you set realistic, data-driven diversity goals



Real-time insights and dashboards

help you embed equity into decision and prevent problems



Custom and 1-click reports

make DE&I, pay gap, and ESG disclosures easy



Syndio's Workplace Equity Platform has been a critical tool for us to focus our strategies and efforts in DE&I. I love being able to see how we measure up against qualified applicant pools for our jobs and narrow data for senior leaders to specific and actionable areas of improvement."

Molly Gellerman

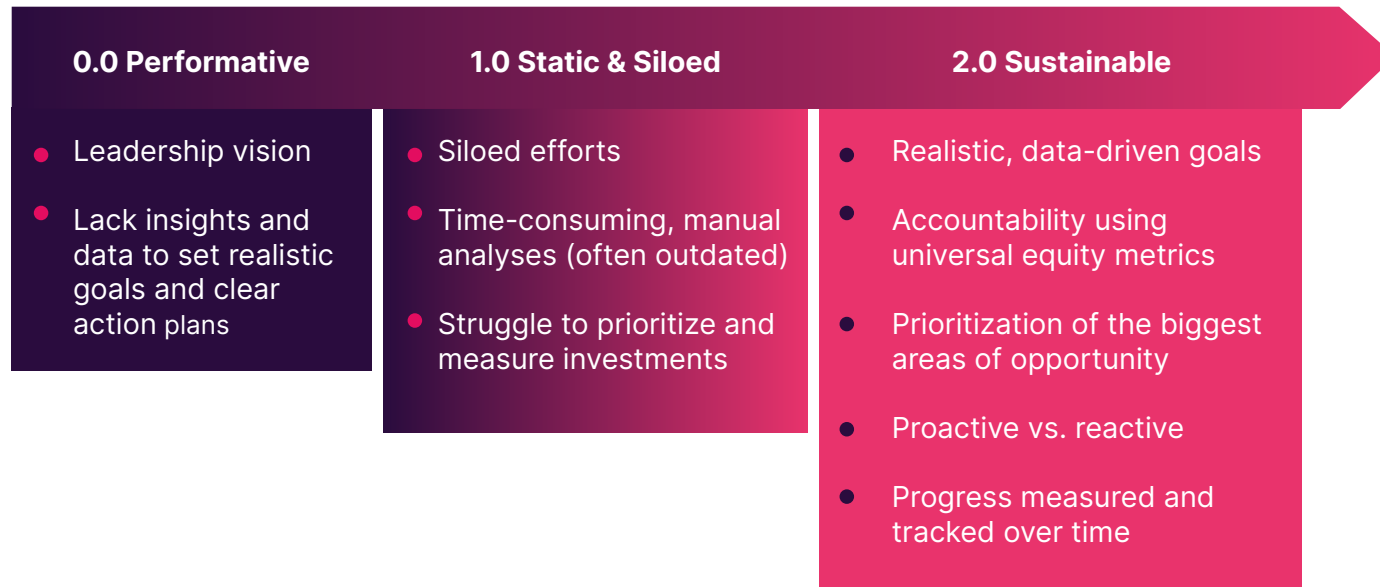
Vice President

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Transformation & HR Operations



Take the next step towards workplace equity

Workplace equity is an ongoing journey — one you can start no matter where your organization stands today. With this guide as a roadmap, you can take steps towards a data-driven, action-oriented workplace equity strategy that's programmatic, measurable, and sustainable.



Where are you on your workplace equity journey?

Want to know how equitable your workplace is? Take our quiz to find out how equitable your workplace is today — and what may be next on your journey.

[COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT](#)

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SYNDIO

Unlock Opportunity

Syndio provides technology and expert guidance that helps companies measure, achieve, and sustain all facets of workplace equity. Over 200 companies, including 10% of the Fortune 200, rely on Syndio's platform to close pay and opportunity gaps, mitigate legal risk, and turn DE&I goals into tangible results. Together, we are showing the world how to build resilient, open workplaces by ensuring every employee is valued for who they are and what they contribute to their company's success.

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