1.
Title Card

2.
Coming up in this module on measuring impact, we'll be building on the work from the previous module on strategy. So if you haven't finished that yet, or need a quick review, now is the time. We'll be reminding ourselves of what's expected of you, the difference in measuring diversity and inclusion (and just a quick note that if you're not strictly a D&I network, many of the lessons here still apply to employee engagement and defining your purpose), we'll be extending that to the importance of measurements outside your organisation, and offering a few tools to help you think critically about your progress.

3.
Measuring impact is an extension of your strategy. It should tell you whether you're going in the right direction. As Lewis Carrol puts it in Alice in Wonderland:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'
'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where -' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

'- so long as I get SOMEWHERE,' Alice added as an explanation.

'Oh, you're sure to do that,' said the Cat, 'if you only walk long enough."

With any employee network strategy we're likely to get somewhere, but is it where we wanted to be? Being able to set and take measurements is how we can answer that.

Start by asking what were the expectations of our network, and did we fulfil them? You may have come short, met, or exceeded them. Any result is an opportunity to learn, then restrategise. That understanding is crucial in measuring impact. It's not a yes or no result. It's part of a cycle.

Look to your current strategy, what goals did you set yourself - are they still valid?

Do your measurements here include a mix of quantitative and qualitative information?

Are your measurements unique to your network, or can they be benchmarked with other internal networks, or across an industry, or region?

What methods of collection were you able to use? Surveys, focus groups, employee data, grievance reports?

You may not be able to answer all of these yet, but they're considerations as you grow the capability of your network measurements.

As employee networks, you will not be expected to solve the issue of monitoring diversity, inclusion, and engagement… I hope. But you will be expected, like any other work project or employee, to understand this issue broadly, and then specifically demonstrate the impact of your activities.

4.
A word on what's expected of you in this first area of understanding the broad context…

It's unlikely that HR or D&I would expect you to track diversity data. This is detailed, technical and carries certain data protection legalities with it. But it is useful to see the results of, as this can be key in helping you create a strategy which speaks to the particular challenges of your organisation. For example is there a particular career development point where the diversity metrics become… less diverse… that could be tackled with a specific aim to routing out the systems of bias through your networks observations. Inclusion data is much more difficult to monitor, because it's about feelings and behaviours that are not easily turned into numbers. But if you're only attempting to track diversity data, then you're only doing half the job of D&I. Typically efforts to measure inclusion will be in the form of employee surveys. Any data scientist will tell you these are fraught with bias because people might not feel trusting enough to fill them out, or it's affected by a person's mood that day, or the questions are ambiguous. Some organisations are now scouring work social feeds and collaboration tools for mention of inclusion issues. This is also very revealing, but the more in-depth sentiment tracking is, the more likely an employee is to feel "observed", so this should be used with caution, and only in environments where there is trust.

5.

As an expansion of their research on diversity, McKinsey have begun to track sentiment to inclusion by looking at employee reviews of their employers posted on online platforms. Putting our data scientist hats on, it's interesting that the information gathered is likely to be of a different quality to internal surveys, perhaps freer, but also perhaps more skewed negatively. The results I think are indicative, rather than conclusive, but does represent a trend to monitoring sentiment and inclusion.

It shows that while overall sentiment on diversity was 52 percent positive and 31 percent negative, sentiment on inclusion was markedly worse, at only 29 percent positive and 61 percent negative. This encapsulates the challenge that even the more diverse companies still face in tackling inclusion. Hiring diverse talent isn't enough—it's the workplace experience that shapes whether people remain and thrive.

Opinions about leadership and accountability accounted for the highest number of mentions and were strongly negative. On average, across industries, 51 percent of the total mentions related to leadership, and 56 percent of those were negative. This finding underscores the increasingly recognised need for companies to improve their D&I engagement with core-business managers.

For the three indicators of inclusion—equality, openness, and belonging—they found particularly high levels of negative sentiment about equality and fairness of opportunity. Negative sentiment about equality ranged from 63 to 80 percent across the industries analysed. The work environment's openness, which encompasses bias and discrimination, was also a significant concern—negative sentiment across industries ranged from 38 to 56 percent. Belonging elicited overall positive sentiment, but from a relatively small number of mentions.

If you want to see the full report from McKinsey latest study, the link is in your further reading.

6.
In the previous module, we saw an example of linked strategies from a law firm. Well here is how each network chose to report evidence of their impact in-line with those strategies. They include examples like how many people were hired through a particular D&I initiative, updated employee demographic data at all levels including partners, external awarding bodies, signed pledges, events attendance, and published guides and frameworks.

Let's briefly think through some pros and cons of these examples:

Showing that networks can help advise on initiatives which lead to a more diverse intake is definitely a pro, but you don't necessarily want to set the expectation that networks are just for monitoring and fixing diversity, as we've just seen in the previous data. HR and the executive team are ultimately responsible for unbiased hiring, and there's a world of inclusion and employee engagement, even away from things like protected characteristics that can be part of your strategy.

Getting recognised by external awarding bodies is probably a sign that you're doing something right, and can be great for morale and overall buy-in. But be cautious about letting award-seeking be a goal in itself. They can be time-consuming in filling out forms and sending evidence, as well as prove expensive if it requires membership. We have seen networks chase particular awards and that become their sole focus for a year. I would suggest that this doesn't reflect a network which is intent on reacting to the needs of its members and an ever evolving strategy.

Signed pledges are great for expectations of behaviour across the organisation, but this needs to be equally met with holding people accountable for not meeting those pledges. And so this should be published as part of that effort.

Events are a big drain on resources (both time and budget) so I want to give extra weight to this note. Event attendance is only a good measure if the attendees are encouraged into action. So when you're measuring this, be sure to tie it as far as you can to outcomes following the event, rather than the perceived success of the event in isolation. Do this and you'll face less resistance from your senior stakeholders in future.

And published guides and frameworks can be really useful in helping people make best use of networks, or instigating more inclusive working practises. But do be aware that it can be a con if they never get used, as it eventually gets seen as a waste of time and undermines your purpose. Think carefully about whether your guides are suggestions for people seeking advice, or more explicit instructions that need the support of a senior stakeholder.

7.
Whether you're an established leader of a newer network, or a new leader of an established network, it can be useful to measure how you perceive your maturity. This is especially useful when combined with benchmarking across the other networks in your organisation, or even externally, if you choose to use the same system. The most valuable part of this is not to give yourself a badge of honour or award for completing these suggested goals, but to provide a basis of conversation about where you should focus you ongoing improvement efforts and to find examples of how other networks are finding success.

In our example, we've divided maturity into four spheres: membership motivation, key stakeholders, organisational model, and operation or practice. For each we've given a suggestion of where networks might be when they're starting out, developing, and mature. Let's go through each example:

As a new network it's likely that you came together because you had a shared passion for change, with common interests or characteristics. As you develop you'll want to expand your membership and seek engagement beyond the core team. This will often involve a drive for allies (people who don't necessarily identify with your network) in name only, but then result in greater collaboration across boundaries, releasing opportunities of intersectionality.

Setting out, your key stakeholders may only be your group members who are doing everything themselves. But as you progress you'll need to extend your reach with sponsor engagement and senior support, before reaching out even further by looking at external opportunities with customers, suppliers or industry groups.

Initially your group will probably be self-managed and ad-hoc, but as more members join your core team you'll need to formalise roles to set expectations and define process. One day, you'll be handing over leadership and a sign of a mature network is that they have solid succession plans and strong governance to oversee a sustainable future.

And in terms of your operations, most networks will begin with one-off events to test the waters of interest and announce their launch, but as you mature you'll want to prove you can solve problems and are listening to your members' feedback. Eventually you will become a key strategic partner for HR in delivering organisation-wide initiatives.

This model is in your worksheets for you to plot where you think your network is now, and help you think about areas you need to focus on to reach maturity. You may also want to tweek this model in collaboration with other networks or your D&I team - and we'd be interested to hear how you get on with this.

8.
Following the strategy module, you should have brainstormed a bunch of good ideas that can move you towards your goals. But which one should you spend your time on? The team may feel passionately that one option is best because it is the most exciting, but if you want a different perspective that tries to rationalise your decision, you might try a decision matrix

analysis.

First, you list all the options in rows on the table. In this example my overall goal is to promote the network to increase membership. My options are: an email campaign, a poster in a communal area, and a launch event. Next I'll want to decide on some factors which would affect effort and success. So here I've chosen: resources, exposure, and stakeholder buy-in. You can of course add as many options and factors as you want.

Next, work your way through grid assigning values to each crossover of option and factor. You can ignore Weight for now, and please also try to ignore the numbers in brackets. Use a 0-5 scale where 0 is poor and 5 is excellent. You don't need to have different values for each grid, just put whatever you want. In this example I've decided that it would be very easy to find resources to make and print a few posters so awarded it 5, but that it would take a lot of time and possibly budget to hold a live event, so gave it a 1. The potential exposure of an email campaign to the whole organisation only comes short of 5 because there's no guarantee that people would read it, and would probably need stakeholder buy-in from internal comms which may be met with enthusiasm, or a "we're too busy right now' response, so comes in a middling 3. Hopefully you get a sense of the thought process into how each mark is awarded.

Now it's time to consider the weighting of these factors - how important is each in your final decision? Again, award between 0-5 for not at all important, to crucial, and it's OK to repeat values. In this instance, because it's a new network and doesn't have much in the way of resources, or stakeholder buy-in yet as we're an unproven entity, I've decided to mark them higher than potential exposure.

Finally, it's time for some maths. Multiply your initial marks, by the weight you've just created. For example, the values for exposure now stand at 12, 9, and 6 - which you can see in brackets. When you've done that, total up the complete values for each option. I'm left with the results that emails are worth 36, posters are 45, and an event is just 18. Which means that my first activity for membership strategy should be a poster campaign in communal areas.

I hope that what you got from this tool demonstration is not to go away and immediately draw a poster, but that we can try different methods to tease out strategic options using different perspectives and anticipating impact. Even the conversations you'll have when trying to fill this in will be useful in uncovering challenges and assumptions.

9.

Surveys will probably be your main tool in gathering data as a network. You might already be doing these as part of big annual employee engagement surveys to gather some sense of inclusion in your organisation. But think about how you can use them specifically within your membership for a more focussed approach. Members may be more likely to open up about experiences to their network, than they would for something that is perceived as going straight to HR. Of course with that comes a responsibility of trust, so look carefully at how you can safely gather, store and potentially anonymise data. I've found networks use surveys particularly well when they're attached to other activities, like a blog article, post-event feedback, or a snapshot of sentiment following an organisational announcement.

As this is such a heavily used tool, I wanted to offer some tips on creating surveys:

Reduce, reuse, recycle
Avoid spending precious network time on reinventing the wheel. If you can adopt questions and methods that have already been used, either in surveys from HR, or other networks, then use this as your starting point. You could also use your external networks or research to find what's worked well outside of your organisation.

Think about method
Get creative about how you're delivering your method, and compare results. Do you get better engagement if it's dropped in a work-social feed rather than email. Are the quality of answers different if it's online compared to face-to-face interviews?

Keep it short
As I suggested, networks have had great success by asking a single question frequently, rather than 50 questions once a year. You saw an example from a BAME network in the previous module that used this in a blog, and I've added a link in your further research to Nasa's D&I survey which is… comprehensive, for your comparison.

Think about order
How people answer questions is informed by the order in which they arrive. It's best to ease people in with factual or easier questions before you get to something more personal, difficult and based on feelings or negative experiences.

Keep it relevant
If you are reusing questions across networks, and I do suggest that, make sure to adapt it where necessary so that everything will be relevant. If that means creating a filter in a digital experience then consider that worthwhile work. It can alter the engagement of your research if an individual believes the survey was never meant for them.

Mind your language
Writing is hard. Get a copywriter involved either as a member, or ally if you can. Questions can be vague, or leading, or full of jargon, or complex, and so you should be spending most of your time creating a survey working on the precise language needed to communicate what you really want to know.

Open or closed?
While open ended questions can provide you with valuable qualitative data, they are hard to analyse, so use them sparingly. It may be worth your time seeing whether you can craft a single-response closed question and achieve similar results to make data handling easier. And participants are also more likely to skip an open ended question, so this should increase your answer rate too.

Rating scales
This is where ambiguity and bias is most likely to come into play, so try to be very clear as to what the scale options mean. You'll get better results if you provide a definition for the middle option, and use a scale of between 5-7. When participants are selecting options from a survey they read, they will most often go for the first choice. When they select from questions they hear, they will most often go for the last choice. So randomising choices or alternating positive/negative scales can be a way to reduce the effects of that bias.

Test it out
And finally, test your survey out on a sample audience. Observe assumptions, biases, confusion, skipped answers, and quality of feedback. There will most likely be something you can improve. Then when you're happy - launch it and wait for the sweet data to roll in.

10.
As I said earlier, measuring impact is not an end point, but part of a cycle. Hopefully you will get an influx of data, whether that's qualitative or quantitative. But now comes the challenge of interpreting the data so you can form new actions. We are hardwired to seek results which confirm our previous ideas - it's called confirmation bias. So I'd recommend as always that you try to gather a team of diverse thinkers around you to challenge the narrative of results. it's important to have a process which reduces the risk that we will jump to conclusions based on that data. One way you could try this is with a ladder of inference.

The ladder describes a thinking process we usually go through without realising it, to make a connection between reality and our actions, via a filter of beliefs, culture and assumptions. We can try to interrupt that process by stopping our activity and asking ourselves where on the ladder we are right now, then working back down the ladder from that point until we return to what we know and observed. You can then reformulate your plans by going back up the ladder. This is a great system to help you not only reach better conclusions, but communicate your thinking to stakeholders who may not share your beliefs, and helping to avoid conflict.

Let's briefly examine each rung on the ladder:
At the bottom of the ladder there is a pool of observable data which we can observe. From that we select certain parts of that data - for you as an employee network it will probably be whatever relates most closely to your activities, characteristics or organisation. From the selected data we add meaning - we can't help it, we're human, not computers, and the data needs to form some kind of narrative. From our meanings, we're inclined to make assumptions. Again, part of our instinct in forming a narrative is to join dots together that may technically be independent, biologically even, we are always filling in blanks, particularly visually, to save time in processing information. From these assumptions we draw conclusions: this is when the whole story is written (partly by ourselves) and we have some sort of beginning, middle and end. We are likely to have some sort of belief in this story - we remember experiencing it, and feel it to be true, without having to reprocess the facts. And finally, we put these beliefs into action - which we would think of as enacting our strategy. You can see what big leaps we subconsciously make from the initial forming of a strategy to putting it into action.

Think about an action that you or your network is about to undertake, and use the ladder of inference in your worksheet to investigate how you got here. Then think about whether that exercise has thrown any new light on how you should approach this action, or communicate it to stakeholders.

If you want to know more about action science like this, check out the work of Chris Argyris.

11.

In many ways, employee networks are born out of the culture in which the organisation operates, and their motivation is to encourage that organisation to represent and serve that diverse culture without bias. So when considering what's important for you to measure, remember to look outside your organisation into the social and political sphere.

As an example, in 2015 the G20 drafted the Ankara agreement which was signed by many countries and included guidance that a country's employment success should not only be measured by economic output and employment rates, but by the quality of jobs, so that people's experience, safety and happiness are not secondary to money. And if you're going to commit to such a pledge, there has to be monitoring. In the UK that was informed by a cross-section of experts who produced the RSA's Taylor report. They identified that the best way to gather this new information was to make adjustments to an existing survey and has resulted in changes to the Labour Force Survey, managed by the office of National Statistics. This will help the government benchmark organisations on what quality of work they are offering. Among these measurements are things like "how included do you feel" and "do you have a voice in your organisation". This is a great opportunity for networks to become strategically aligned not only with internal aims, but future international policy.

In recent years I have found it useful to reflect on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to inform the kind of work I want to be doing on a personal level, but also with the organisations I work with. As an example, Goal 8 is about decent work and economic growth, so you can see how the Labour Force Survey and Ankara agreement fit into that. Wellbeing, reduced inequalities, and gender equality are obviously a driving force for what we're trying to achieve as employee networks too, but I'd suggest that if you spend some time, you can also find opportunities for your strategy across all the goals.

Find out more about this in your further reading and consider what external guidance and measurements you'd like to reference in the narrative of how your network is making an impact within the organisation, and beyond.

12.

As you progress through this course we'll be introducing more case studies and interviews into your Bonus Content section. Here you can see how other networks have decided to communicate the impact they've had, and it may give you a few ideas.

Demonstrating data and stories for what your network actually does is fundamental in how it will be perceived by others. We’ll explore this in the next module: Brand and Identity.