HWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY PARTICIPATION TOOLKIT

Why this consideration?

The Health + Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI) Employee Survey is an annual, repeated, cross-sectional survey aimed at documenting the preparedness of an organisation's employees to deliver LGBTQ+ inclusive services. The survey is collected by Pride in Health + Wellbeing, through an online questionnaire issued to employees via their employer organisations. It has been run since 2021, and participation has grown year on year, to over 1,000 responses from 34 different organisations.

The survey provides rich insights into diversity, inclusion, exclusion, and culture at your organisation. You will have access to data about employee's beliefs, opinions, and experiences in relation to service provision to people with a diverse sexuality, diverse gender, or a trans experience. The survey will also give your organisation specific insights from your LGBTQ+ employees.

You can use your data to compare yourself year-on-year, compare yourself with your sector, or compare yourself with all Australian participants.

Data-driven discussions within your organisation can support your LGBTQ+ inclusion team to develop your organisation's inclusion strategies for clients of diverse gender and sexuality. Your results from the 2024 HWEI Employee Survey, in combination with your 2024 HWEI Submission results, will highlight key focus areas of greatest benefit to your organisation and your clients. The data will also empower you to gain meaningful support from your Senior Leadership Team to drive your inclusion initiatives organisation-wide.

In addition, this data can be used within internal communications campaigns to raise awareness and visibility of the inclusion work that is being carried out within your organisation, and the impact it is having on your clients.

For the data to have this value, you need a meaningful number of responses from your employees. Just like any survey, the higher the rate of employee participation, the more beneficial it is for your organisational knowledge and future planning.

There are a number of areas that employer organisations can be working in to maximise their response rate and the value of their data.

The HWEI Employee Survey is one of three surveys operated by ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs. Hundreds of organisations Australia-wide participate in our surveys. Case studies from two of these organisations are included in this Toolkit.

CASE STUDY – HOW WE USED THE HWEI EMPLOYEE SURVEY IN LINE WITH OUR CONSUMER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Calvary Mater Newcastle provides a range of public health services to the Hunter, New England, and Mid North Coast regions of NSW. In 2024, Calvary Mater Newcastle participated in the HWEI Employee survey for the first time.

Calvary Mater Newcastle's second Consumer and Community Engagement Framework built upon work they had already undertaken to provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and CALD communities, by extending their commitment to other diverse communities including sexuality and gender diverse people - a group that staff and consumer feedback identified as an area of need. The Framework highlights health discrepancies experienced by LGBTQ+ people, and clearly identifies the workforce as being a key contributor to the patient experience.

The decision to participate in the HWEI Employee survey was made after discussion with the Hospital Management Committee and the Mater's peak consumer body, the Community Advisory Council. The intention was to seek a baseline measure of employees' views and knowledge about LGBTQ+ inclusive service delivery and their thoughts on how they are currently tracking in this area, as they start working towards the HWEI Foundation Submission.

Once the decision to participate had been made, extensive work was undertaken with their Public Affairs and Communication Manager prior to the survey going out to staff. A series of all-employee emails were sent out, explaining the purpose of the survey, and linking it back to the Consumer and Community Engagement Framework. Additionally, champions were identified to work within their own teams to try and increase participation.

Calvary Mater Newcastle achieved close to 15% of their workforce completing the survey, putting them in a great place to analyse their data, present it to the extended Hospital Management Committee, and design initiatives to work through the HWEI Submission criteria.

What to think about

In order to maximise your organisation's responses, a robust communications plan should be developed. Consider seeking assistance from your organisation's internal communications specialists.

What are some things to consider?

1. How long do you want to promote the survey internally? Slow and steady might work best for some organisations, while for others, a few weeks of dedicated focus could be the best approach.
2. Do you have other surveys running? Try not to have your timings overlap to reduce survey fatigue.
3. Are there any major events happening in your organisation that may impact people's ability to complete the survey, e.g., internal conferences, major product launches, public holidays and other 'shut-down' leave, etc.
4. What is your participation target? Perhaps for your other employee surveys you have a target for the % of your employees you want to engage; set a target for the HWEI or try and beat your participation rate from last year.

5. Who should promote the survey? More responses will be achieved if the survey is promoted by senior leaders plus an employee's direct manager.
6. How often should it be promoted? More success will be achieved if people are reminded to participate several times.
7. What communications platforms are available? What has the highest chance of being seen and having cut through. Do you need to use multiple platforms to reach different parts of the organisation? What informal channels can you use?
8. What is the messaging? What is most likely to make people want to participate? Do you need several different messages to motivate different people?

CASE STUDY: HOW WE GOT GREAT PARTICIPATION

ORGANON

Organon took part in the AWEI employee survey in 2023, and achieved a 100% participation rate! Here's how they did it.

As a relatively young organisation (less than two years old at the time of the survey), Organon is very focused and committed on building their people first culture. They aim to visibly live and demonstrate their values - including 'We All Belong' - to employees and external stakeholders.

Their strategy was to give employees a 2-week window to complete the survey, to create a sense of urgency. The survey was launched at an all-organisation 'town hall' meeting by Kate Berriman, the LGBTQ+ ERG lead. Kate described the survey and what the organisation wanted to do with the data (plan their inclusion work based on the priorities identified by their employees) and asked everyone to participate. The link to the survey was distributed via an all-organisation email shortly afterwards. 30% of employees completed the survey at this point.

After 1 week, Kate sent a reminder email to all employees, and Managing Director, Nirelle Tolstoshev, responded to the email (reply all), stating that she had completed the survey, restating the importance of the survey data, and encouraging all other employees to complete it.

Every time a survey update was received from Pride Inclusion Programs, Kate forwarded this to all employees, reminding them that the feedback would be used to inform what inclusion initiatives the organisation should prioritise for the next year.

With 2 days to go, just over 70% of employees had completed the survey. At this point, all the Directors were asked to remind to their teams, and Kate and the other members of the LGBTQ+ inclusion committee continued to encourage participation from all their colleagues via informal channels.

At the end of the survey, Kate sent out a final all-organisation email to share the outstanding participation rate and say a massive "Thank you!" to all her colleagues.

How to use the data

Once you have your data, you can use it in a number of ways.

If Pride in Health + Wellbeing receives sufficient responses from your organisation's employees, you will be sent your data at summary as well as de-identified line-by-line data. You will also receive the summary data for all Australian respondents.

Firstly, you can compare your organisation's summary data to that of the total Australian data set, to see where you are better or worse, and identify any gaps to address within your LGBTQ+ inclusion strategy.

Secondly, if there are sufficient organisations participating in your sector and industry, you can request the summary data for these groups, and compare your organisations to others. Again, you can identify gaps to address within your LGBTQ+ inclusion strategy.

Thirdly, you can do a 'deep dive' into your line-by-line data, to see if there are any particular groups that have different experiences from the average. For example, you may have lower levels of LGBTQ+ support in a particular team, or your trans and gender diverse clients may face greater barriers to inclusive services. This analysis will allow you to design targeted initiatives. Consider seeking assistance from a data analyst within your organisation.

It should be noted that some respondent populations will be small when multiple filters are applied, e.g., location, age, gender, gender experience, etc. Therefore, it is recommended that organisations consider their data sharing protocols, to maximise anonymity of respondents. To this end, participating organisations will be asked to nominate a senior contact to receive the results, and the survey data will not be distributed to anyone else by Pride Inclusion Programs employees. The nominated senior contact person should develop a plan of how to treat the data, in a similar way as would be done for any internal survey data.

As well as using your data for inclusion planning, it can also be used to raise awareness about the experiences of your employees in providing services to LGBTQ+ clients. You can also share success stories where you can see a measurable positive impact on your clients. Consider seeking assistance from your organisation's internal communications specialists.

CASE STUDY – OUR PLAN TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT

In 2024, Southern NSW Local Health District participated in the HWEI Employee survey for the first time, achieving a 5% participation rate. Associate Director Organisational Development & Talent Acquisition, Benjamin Hodgson, says it was a last-minute decision to participate in 2024, but has already started planning for 2025, aiming to double the participation rate.

Southern NSW LHD employs 3500 people across 24 services at 16 locations; reaching all these employees and having them engage in any survey is a challenge. But Benjamin has a communications background and has mapped out a multi-prong approach that has proven successful with other surveys.

Firstly, formal all-staff communications (newsletter posts, email blasts, intranet news post) will be developed in collaboration with the comms team. These will be shared regularly for a 4-week window.

Secondly, memos to the executive team will be developed, providing them the information they need to actively support participation within their parts of the organisation, and pass this information down to their teams.

Thirdly, a 'pitch' for people managers containing key talking points will be created, so they can brief their teams in their team meetings or huddles. This will link to the purpose of the organisation, explain why their input is needed, and give them the correct language to use. They will be asked to include this information four weeks in a row.

In terms of engaging with these important stakeholders, Benjamin advises that while these teams will receive communications through the formal channels, it is highly effective to reinforce the message through personal relationships. The Executive Sponsor leads the engagement with the executive teams, whereas Benjamin and the other members of the Rainbow working group will lead engagement with the various people managers throughout the organisation, prioritising those units where there is already good engagement. Additionally, the working group will be tasked with engaging with their own networks, encouraging them to participate.

Despite the limited number of responses in 2024, Benjamin confirms that the data has already proven useful. Southern NSW LHD also participate in the HWEI Submission process, and the survey data has been helpful in reinforcing and measuring the impact of the work they have been doing towards those criteria. Also, surprisingly, reading some of the more negative write-in comments has been valuable.

"It's a really good opportunity for us to see the how much opposition to expect, and what they're saying. It has enabled us to think about what our response would be to any negative comments, and to identify where we might focus our education to address any commonly held misconceptions about LGBTQ+ people and our inclusion work".

What are the next steps?

The HWEI Survey is open every year from mid-October to mid-February.

There are four steps to participate:

1. Complete the Expression Of Interest form.
2. Get approval from your organisation to participate in the survey.
3. Develop your internal communications plan.
4. Send out your unique link to your employees.

When you complete the EOI form to request your survey link, the Pride Inclusion Programs team will send you some preparatory documents for your organisation's review, including:

1. A PDF of the HWEI survey questions.
2. A summary of the survey questions and the areas covered.
3. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs Research Data Security policy.
4. ACON's Privacy Policy.
5. ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs Data Cleansing Protocol.
6. HWEI Survey Participation Toolkit.

This will give you the information you need to develop a business case in order to get approval to participate, and liaise with your senior leadership team, internal communications team, and other key stakeholders, to develop your communications plan.

The unique URL for your organisation's employees to participate will be sent for distribution to your employees one week before the survey goes live!

During the live period you will be provided with updates on your participation rates; this will help you to decide how to further support your employees to participate. Throughout November and December these updates will be monthly, but from mid-January until the survey closes you will receive weekly updates. However, you can request an update at any time from your relationship manager, or if you are not a member of Pride in Health + Wellbeing just email hwei@acon.org.au

Should you have any questions, please speak to your Relationship Manager or contact hwei@acon.org.au

CASE STUDY – WHY WE USE THIS DATA TO INFORM OUR STRATEGY

As a consumer intelligence company, providing measurement and data analytics for other organisations, NielsenIQ understands the importance of data-led business planning.

NIQ created and launched their PRIDE pillar at the beginning of 2023, and took the decision to participate in the AWEI employee survey straight away. They acknowledged that it was very unlikely that they would ever include such a range of questions focusing specifically on LGBTQ+ inclusion within their internal surveys, and that the use of the AWEI survey was the best way to gain the data they needed.

At the PRIDE launch, co-leads Ben Heyhorn and Jose Rodriguez spoke about why the organisation was introducing a focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion, citing statistics from the 2022 AWEI data to illustrate some of the experiences of employees in workplaces across Australia. Managing Director and Executive Sponsor, Megan Treston, then spoke about NielsenIQ's participation in the 2023 survey as a way to find a baseline; understanding where their organisation was currently at in order to be able to track their culture from the beginning. Megan described the survey as "a tool to make everyone's experience at work better".

The Pride group has representation from every level of the organisation from MD down, as well as HR and internal communications teams. All these people were involved in communicating the survey, both through formal channels, and also through their team meetings, etc. The messaging was clear; the organisation wanted to understand how ALL people feel about LGBTQ+ inclusion. This was for everyone to complete, not just LGBTQ+ employees, aligning with the advice that NielsenIQ gives to clients – "analytics that don't belong to everyone serve no one".

Appendices

1. Example business case for participation

PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH + WELLBEING EQUALITY INDEX (HWEI) EMPLOYEE SURVEY			
Project Sponsor		Project Manager	
Contribution to organisation	The Human Rights Commission estimates that approximately 11% of the Australian population identify as LGBTQ+, with more than a third of those hiding their LGBTQ+ identity when accessing services. The current data on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ communities has significant gaps which is due to a lack of LGBTQ+ indicators in a range of health and wellbeing sector data sets, for example, the national census, minimum data sets and suicide death data records. Sexuality and gender identity are not routinely collected, or if it is it's often not conducted in a culturally safe or appropriate way. It may also be skipped by staff who have not been trained on how and why the collection of sexuality and gender identity data is crucial to achieving equitable health care outcomes for LGBTQ+ communities. Additionally, LGBTIQ+ people experience significant health disparities compared to the general population. These poorer health outcomes can be attributed to the chronic stressors that LGBTIQ+ people are uniquely exposed to as a result of their sexuality and gender diversity being socially stigmatised, plus avoidance of accessing services due to previous poor experiences. Front-line employees and those who design services play an instrumental role in the inclusivity of the experience of LGBTQ+ clients, however we have very little visibility of the level of knowledge, beliefs, opinions, and experiences in relation to service provision to people with a diverse sexuality, diverse gender, or a trans experience. It is recommended that we participate in the HWEI Employee Survey in order to be able to measure this, so we can design the most effective initiatives to ensure the appropriate levels of capability across our workforce.		
Options considered	We could put our own staff survey together, to understand their levels of understanding around LGBTQ+ inclusion, and run it ourselves. Feedback has been received from the HR team that this would be problematic since we don't currently have the expertise to understand what to ask, or the correct terminology to use, so we would need to use an external source to support this. It was also advised that running our own survey on one very specific area of inclusion could be viewed negatively, would be out of line with our broader strategy, whereas using a survey from a provider who is an expert would attract less negative attention.		
Benefits	• The HWEI survey is run by an external organisation, and therefore has an extra level of anonymity attached. • Pride in Health + Wellbeing is the National subject matter expert in inclusive service delivery, and understand what themes are important. • Participation in the national survey would allow us to benchmark our organisation against other organisations nationally and within our industry.		
Timescale	• The PIHW survey period is from beginning of October – beginning of January. • It is proposed we use a 4 week window from mid-October to mid-November, prior to National conference and the busy Christmas period. • The survey will be launched and promoted in an intense campaign during this 4-week window. • Results will be received and analysed in March, and reported to the leadership team in April meeting		
Costs	Participation in the survey is free for Pride in Health + Wellbeing members		

Risks	• There is a risk that participation may attract negative feedback from some employees. The comms campaign will align it with our organisation values and be supported from the senior leadership team. • There is a risk of having confidential employee data be surveyed by a 3rd party. Pride in Health + Wellbeing Research Data Security Policy and Privacy Policy have been provided. • There is a risk of the data being visible internally. The results data will be supplied to the Head of HR only. An internal data security plan has been developed to ensure non-identifiability is maintained when analysis is conducted, and reporting occurs.

2. Example communications plan

Date	Type	Audience	Purpose	Sender	Notes	Status
4-Oct	Teams Call	Directors	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum FEEDBACK REQUESTED: Lorem ipsum	Executive sponsor	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst.	Completed
15-Oct	Townhall briefing	Directors, People Leaders, All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Network Lead	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.	Approved
16-Oct	Email #1	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum FEEDBACK REQUESTED: Lorem ipsum	MD	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst.	Approved
16-Oct	Yammer Post #1	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Executive sponsor	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio.	Approved
16-Oct	Teams Post #1	Pride ERG	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Network Lead	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.	Approved
23-Oct	Email #2	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Network Lead	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio.	Drafted

23-Oct	Email #2 response	All Employees	ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	MD	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lore	Drafted
23-Oct	Yammer Post #2	All Employees	ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Executive sponsor	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lore	Drafted
23-Oct	Yammer Post #2 Response	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum	Pride ERG		
30-Oct	Email #3	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Network Lead	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst.	Drafted
30-Oct	Email #3 response	Directors	ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Individual teams	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lore	Drafted
30-Oct	Yammer Post #3	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Executive sponsor	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.	Drafted
30-Oct	Yammer Post #3 Response	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum	Pride ERG		
6-Nov	Email #4	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Network Lead	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lorem, porttitor id dolor eget, rutrum pretium odio. In hac habitasse platea dictumst.	Drafted
6-Nov	Yammer Post #3	All Employees	INFORM: Lorem ipsum ACTION REQUIRED: Lorem ipsum	Executive sponsor	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.	Drafted
6-Nov	Email #5	All Employees	INFORM: Responses and thanks	MD	Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Vestibulum augue lore	Drafted

3. Example email communication – you can edit and use within your organisation

INVITATION TO HAVE YOUR SAY IN REGARD TO OUR LGBTQ+ INCLUSION WORK

Dear **<name>**,

This year we are participating in the Health + Wellbeing Equality Index (HWEI) Employee Survey. This is a national survey run by Pride in Health + Wellbeing, and covers a number of areas related to diversity, inclusion, exclusion, and culture, with a particular focus on inclusion of LGBTQ+ clients. This is only one area of our diversity & inclusion work, and while the survey focuses specifically on LGBTQ+ inclusion, it does not by any means lessen our focus in other areas of diversity practice.

The HWEI survey data enables our organisation to gain insights into the knowledge levels and experiences of all our employees. It will also provide us with essential information about many areas specific to LGBTQ+ inclusive service provision, allowing us to develop inclusion plans and initiatives which prioritise the needs of our LGBTQ+ clients and their allies.

It provides a means by which you can have your say!

Regardless of how you personally identify, or your role within the organisation, we encourage all our employees to participate in this survey.
While the survey data will identify the name of our organisation, please note that individual employees cannot be identified by either Pride in Health + Wellbeing or by ourselves (i.e., participation is completely anonymous).

Your feedback will enable us to, not only gauge the visibility and impact of our LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives, but it will also enable us to understand the views of those who do not identity as LGBTQ+ as well as the experiences of those who are of diverse sexuality and/or gender.

Should you have any questions, please contact: **[insert contact name here]**

The survey will close **[insert date here]** (CHANGE IF YOU WANT TO CREATE A SPECIFIC WINDOW FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES)

To participate in the survey, please click here: [insert URL here]