



CIIS Employer HR Resources

Toolkit 5: Managing Diverse Teams & Performance

*A practical employer guide to inclusive leadership,
conflict resolution, fair performance management, and
long-term team growth*



Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit helps managers lead diverse teams with greater consistency, fairness, and confidence. It focuses on the day-to-day leadership practices that influence trust, accountability, communication, performance, conflict resolution, and long-term team growth.

How to use it

Each chapter can be read independently or used as part of manager training. Each chapter includes one consolidated downloadable tool that can be offered separately on the CIIS employer resources page.

Intended audience

Managers, supervisors, HR professionals, team leads, project leads, and organizational leaders responsible for managing diverse employees and teams.

Note on legal and HR content

This toolkit provides practical HR guidance and general legal awareness. Employers should seek legal or professional advice for specific employment, human rights, accommodation, or workplace conflict matters.

Table of Contents

01 Leading Diverse Teams Effectively

- [The Role of Inclusive Leadership](#)
- [Building Trust Within Teams](#)
- [Managing Different Working Styles](#)
- [Encouraging Collaboration](#)
- [Supporting Team Communication](#)

03 Performance Management Across Diverse Teams

- [Consistent Performance Expectations](#)
- [Reducing Bias in Evaluation](#)
- [Coaching and Development](#)
- [Supporting Employee Accountability](#)
- [Recognizing Different Strengths](#)

05 Long-Term Leadership & Workplace Growth

- [Sustaining Inclusive Leadership](#)
- [Succession Planning and Equity](#)
- [Developing Future Leaders](#)
- [Continuous Learning and Improvement](#)
- [Building Long-Term Organizational Capacity](#)

02 Conflict Resolution & Difficult Conversations

- [Understanding Workplace Conflict](#)
- [Cultural Factors in Conflict](#)
- [Conducting Respectful Conversations](#)
- [Addressing Misunderstandings Early](#)
- [Maintaining Team Relationships](#)

04 Building High-Performing Inclusive Teams

- [Characteristics of High-Performing Teams](#)
- [Inclusion and Team Performance](#)
- [Encouraging Diverse Perspectives](#)
- [Team Decision-Making Practices](#)
- [Continuous Team Development](#)

Using This Toolkit as a Manager

Managing diverse teams well requires more than good intentions. Managers need practical habits that make communication clearer, conflict easier to address, expectations more consistent, and performance conversations fairer. This toolkit is designed for managers who are responsible for turning workplace inclusion into everyday practice.

The earlier CIIS toolkits focused on hiring, onboarding, workplace integration, retention, and culture. This toolkit moves into the manager's role once employees are already on the team. It focuses on how leaders set standards, support accountability, handle disagreement, and develop people without allowing bias or inconsistency to shape outcomes.

CIIS Research Insight

CIIS 2024 research found that employer resources, mentorship, workplace culture guidance, and accountability are important gaps in supporting Black immigrant women in the workforce. This toolkit responds to those findings by focusing on manager behaviours and systems that improve day-to-day team experience and performance

Chapter purpose

This chapter helps managers understand their role in creating team environments where employees understand expectations, feel respected, and can contribute fully. It focuses on leadership behaviour, trust, working styles, collaboration, and communication.

Section 1: The Role of Inclusive Leadership

Purpose

Inclusive leadership is the manager's ability to create conditions where employees can contribute, develop, and be held accountable fairly. It is not a separate HR initiative. It is part of everyday management, especially in teams where employees bring different cultural backgrounds, communication styles, professional experiences, and expectations of leadership.

What inclusive leaders do

Inclusive leaders set clear expectations, invite participation, explain decisions, and address concerns early. They do not assume that silence means agreement or that confidence always equals competence. They pay attention to who speaks, who is heard, whose ideas are developed, and whose work is recognized.

This does not mean managers must avoid difficult decisions. Inclusive leadership includes giving feedback, addressing performance concerns, and making decisions that are fair and transparent. The difference is that employees understand the standard being applied and have a reasonable opportunity to meet it.

Employer Practice

Organizations can strengthen inclusive leadership by giving managers practical tools, not only broad values. Managers need guidance on communication, feedback, conflict, performance expectations, and accountability. This is especially important in small or growing organizations where leadership habits shape culture quickly.



Reflection Questions

Do managers understand how their behaviour shapes team inclusion?

Are expectations and decisions communicated clearly enough for all team members?

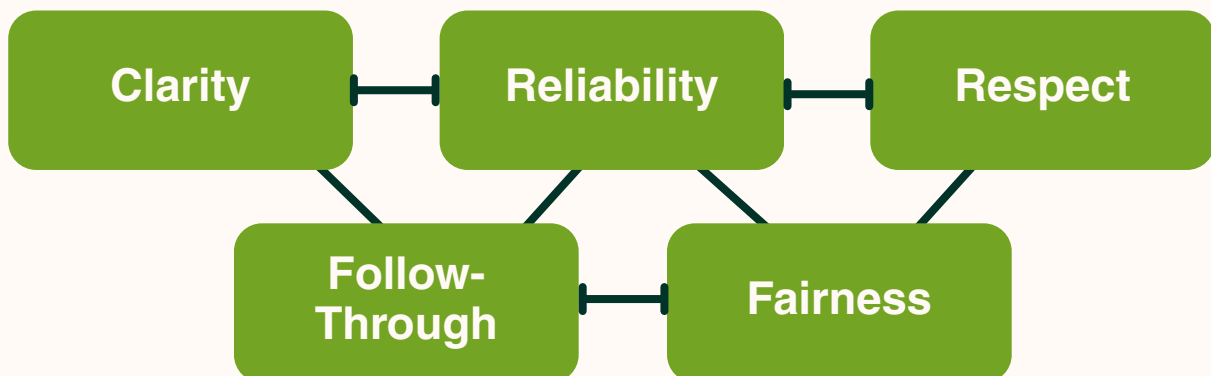
Section 2: Building Trust Within Teams

03

Purpose

Trust is built when employees experience consistency between what managers say and what managers do. In diverse teams, trust is especially important because employees may be navigating unfamiliar workplace norms, different communication styles, or previous experiences where speaking up carried risk.

Team Trust Building



How trust develops

Trust develops through reliable follow-through, clear communication, respectful feedback, and fair decision-making. Employees notice whether managers listen without dismissing concerns, whether commitments are honoured, and whether mistakes are handled as learning opportunities where appropriate.

Trust also depends on predictability. When standards shift without explanation or decisions appear personal, employees may become cautious. They may stop raising concerns or sharing ideas, which weakens team performance over time.

Employer practice

Managers can build trust through regular check-ins, transparent priorities, consistent standards, and acknowledgement of employee contributions. They should also explain the “why” behind decisions where possible. Clear reasoning reduces uncertainty and helps employees understand how decisions connect to work needs rather than personal preference.

Reflection Questions

Do team members trust that expectations are applied consistently?

Do managers follow through on commitments and communicate changes clearly?

Section 3: Managing Different Working Styles

05

Purpose

Diverse teams often include employees who approach planning, communication, decision-making, conflict, and initiative differently. These differences can strengthen the team when managers understand them and set clear expectations for how work should be completed.

Avoiding misinterpretation

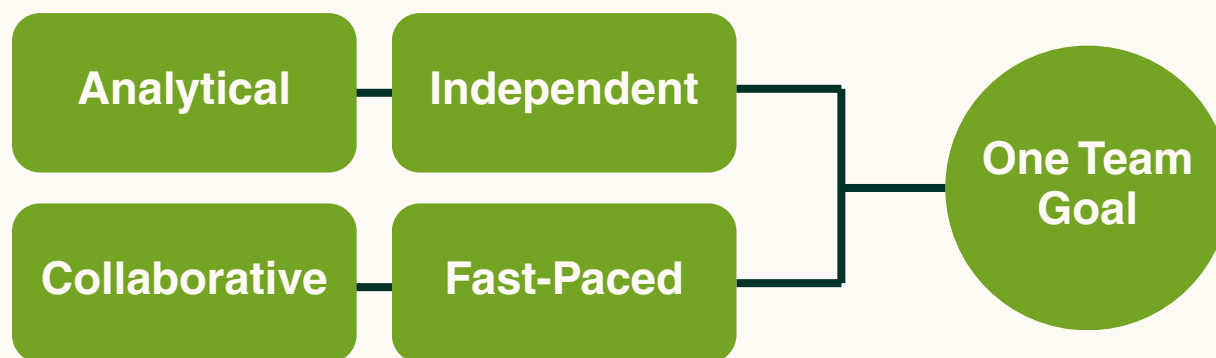
A reflective employee may need time to process before contributing. An employee who asks detailed questions may be seeking clarity, not resisting direction. A direct communicator may not intend disrespect, while a quieter employee may not lack ideas. Managers should avoid turning style differences into performance judgments unless there is a clear work impact.



Employer Practice

Managers should define outcomes, timelines, decision rights, communication channels, and quality expectations. When those are clear, employees have more room to use different approaches while still meeting the same standard. This supports both inclusion and accountability.

Work Styles



Reflection Questions

Are different working styles being managed fairly?

Are managers distinguishing between work preference and actual performance concern?

Section 4: Encouraging Collaboration

07

Purpose

Collaboration improves when employees know the shared goal, understand their role, and have a clear process for communicating progress or concerns. Without structure, collaboration can become uneven. Some employees may dominate, while others may become invisible.

Collaboration

**Shared
Goals**

**Defined
Roles**

**Communication
Routines**

**Joint
Accountability**

Making collaboration inclusive

Inclusive collaboration requires managers to design participation intentionally. This may include circulating agenda items before meetings, inviting input from quieter team members, clarifying decision-making authority, and ensuring follow-up actions are documented.

Collaboration also requires attention to power dynamics. New employees, racialized employees, internationally trained professionals, or employees in junior roles may hesitate to challenge ideas openly. Managers can reduce this barrier by normalizing respectful disagreement and asking for input in more than one format.

Employer practice

Team leaders should establish project norms, communication routines, and decision processes at the start of collaborative work. The goal is to create a team environment where contribution does not depend on who is most comfortable speaking first or loudest.

Reflection Questions

Are collaboration expectations clear across the team?

Do meetings and projects create space for different voices to contribute?

Section 5: Supporting Team Communication

09

Purpose

Diverse teams often include employees who approach planning, communication, decision-making, conflict, and initiative differently. These differences can strengthen the team when managers understand them and set clear expectations for how work should be completed.



Practical communication standards

Managers should clarify which channels are used for urgent matters, where decisions are documented, how feedback is provided, and when team members should escalate concerns. These expectations are especially important in hybrid or distributed teams where informal communication may not reach everyone.

Employer Practice

Good communication includes active listening, checking for understanding, and creating space for clarification. CCOHS guidance on active listening emphasizes listening without judgment, focusing attention on the speaker, and responding in ways that improve understanding. Managers can model this by asking clarifying questions before drawing conclusions.

Team Communication Framework

Purpose

Channel

Timing

Audience

Follow-Up

Reflection Questions

Are communication channels and expectations clear?

Are misunderstandings being addressed early and respectfully?

Chapter Takeaway



11

Inclusive leadership is practical management. It requires clear expectations, consistent behaviour, trust-building, and the ability to support different working styles without lowering standards or creating confusion.



Chapter purpose

This chapter gives managers a practical approach to workplace conflict and difficult conversations, with attention to cultural interpretation, early intervention, respectful communication, and relationship repair.

Section 1: Understanding Workplace Conflict

Purpose

Workplace conflict may arise from unclear expectations, workload pressure, communication differences, competing priorities, perceived unfairness, or unresolved interpersonal tension. Conflict is not always negative. When handled well, it can clarify expectations and improve how a team works.

What makes conflict harmful

Conflict becomes harmful when it is ignored, personalized, or allowed to escalate. Employees may withdraw, avoid collaboration, make assumptions, or become less willing to raise concerns. In diverse teams, unresolved conflict can also be misread through cultural stereotypes or assumptions about attitude, respect, or professionalism.

Employer Practice

Managers should intervene early when there is a clear work impact. The first step is to understand the issue, separate facts from interpretations, and identify what needs to change. CCOHS notes that conflict resolution works best when people are calm and focus on the issue rather than the people involved.

Conflict Escalation Ladder

Damaged Trust

Formal Complaint

Unresolved Issue

Misunderstanding

Early Tension

Reflection Questions

Are managers addressing conflict early enough?

Is conflict treated as a work issue that can be managed, rather than a personal failure?

Section 2: Cultural Factors in Conflict

14

Purpose

Culture can shape how employees interpret disagreement, authority, feedback, silence, eye contact, directness, and urgency. Managers do not need to become experts in every culture, but they do need to recognize that their own interpretation may not be the only reasonable one.



Common interpretation risks

A direct employee may be seen as confrontational. A less direct employee may be seen as evasive. An employee who avoids open disagreement may be trying to preserve respect, while another who challenges ideas openly may see that as healthy problem-solving. These differences can become conflict when teams do not clarify expectations.

Employer practice

Managers should focus on observable behaviour and work impact rather than assumed intent. A useful approach is to say what was observed, describe the effect on the work or team, and invite the employee's perspective. This creates room for clarification without avoiding accountability.

Reflection Questions

Could cultural assumptions be influencing how conflict is interpreted?

Are managers asking clarifying questions before concluding intent?

Section 3: Conducting Respectful Conversations

16

Purpose

Difficult conversations should be clear, respectful, and focused on the work. Avoiding them often makes issues harder to resolve. However, poorly handled conversations can damage trust, especially when employees feel judged, embarrassed, or misunderstood.

Conversation structure

A respectful conversation begins with preparation. Managers should identify the concern, gather relevant facts, choose a private setting, and consider what outcome is needed. During the conversation, they should explain the concern clearly, listen to the employee's perspective, discuss expectations, and agree on next steps.



Respect

Employer Practice

Managers should avoid labels such as “difficult,” “aggressive,” or “not a team player” unless they are tied to specific behaviour. Instead of saying “you are not collaborative,” a manager can say “in the last two project meetings, decisions were challenged after the meeting rather than during the discussion, which delayed the timeline.” This keeps the conversation specific and fair.



Reflection Questions

Are difficult conversations prepared and conducted respectfully?

Do managers focus on observable behaviour and impact?

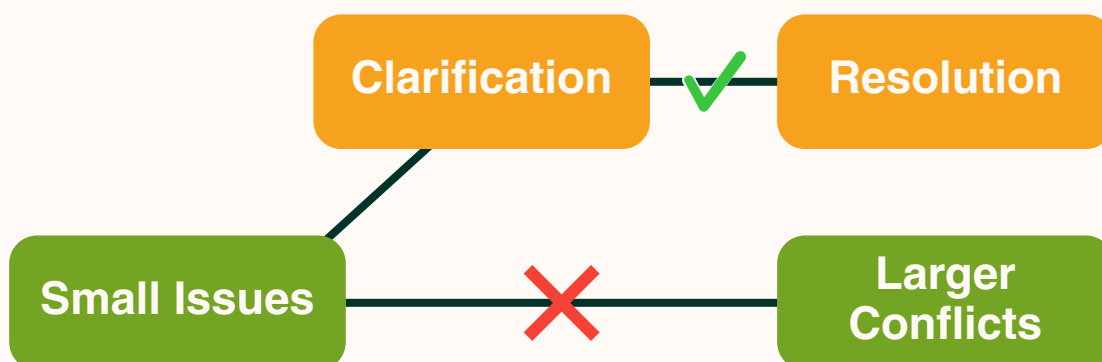
Section 4: Addressing Misunderstandings Early

18

Purpose

Many workplace conflicts begin as small misunderstandings that are not addressed. A missed update, an unclear tone in an email, a meeting comment, or a disagreement about priorities can grow if people fill the silence with assumptions.

Early Intervention



Early intervention

Managers should create team norms that make clarification normal. This can include encouraging employees to ask “Can you clarify what you meant?” or “How should we handle this next time?” Managers can also model this by checking assumptions out loud rather than making private judgments.

Employer practice

Early intervention should be proportionate. Not every misunderstanding requires a formal meeting. Sometimes a quick clarification is enough. The manager’s role is to decide when an issue needs coaching, mediation, documentation, or escalation through HR or formal workplace processes.

Reflection Questions

Are small misunderstandings being clarified before they become patterns?

Do employees know how to raise concerns respectfully?

Section 5: Maintaining Team Relationships

20

Purpose

Resolving the issue is only part of conflict management. Teams also need to restore working relationships, especially when conflict has affected trust, communication, or collaboration.

Repairing working relationships

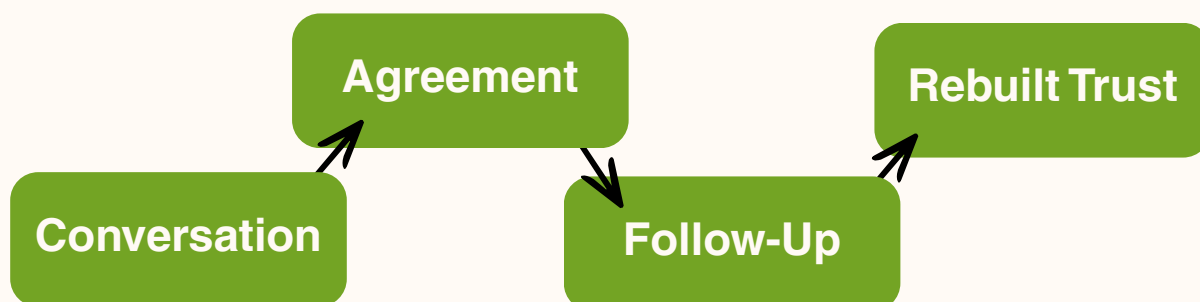
Relationship repair does not require forced closeness. It requires professional respect, clear expectations, and follow-through. Managers should clarify what will change, how people will communicate going forward, and when follow-up will occur.



Employer Practice

Where conflict has affected the wider team, managers may need to restate shared norms without exposing confidential details. They can reinforce expectations for respectful communication, collaboration, and escalation. In more serious cases, HR involvement, mediation, or formal processes may be required.

Team Repair Process

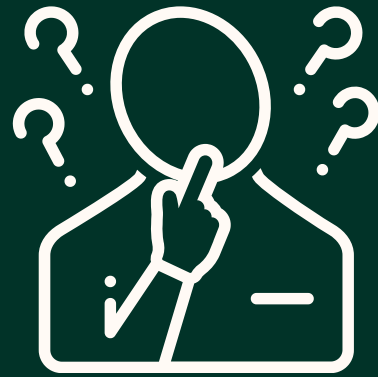


Reflection Questions

After conflict, are working relationships intentionally repaired?

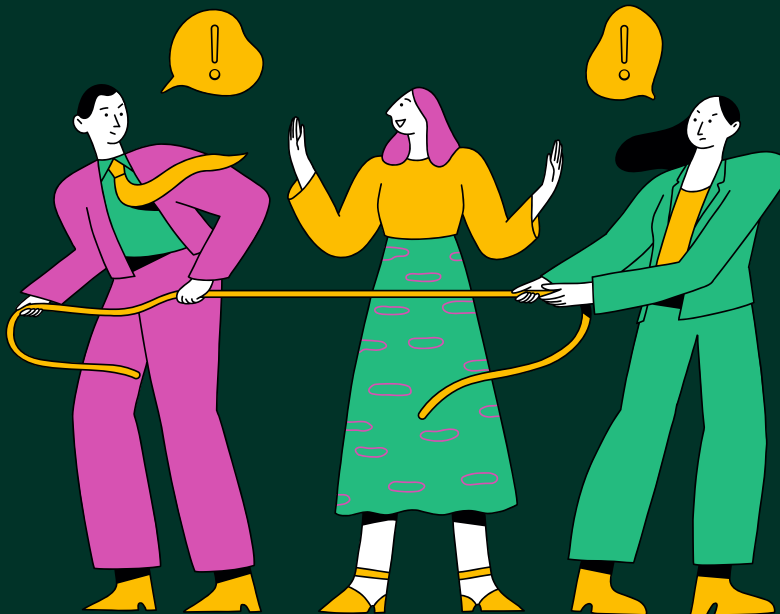
Are managers following up on agreements and team norms?

Chapter Takeaway



22

Conflict resolution is a management skill. Managers do not need to avoid difficult conversations, but they should prepare well, focus on behaviour and impact, listen carefully, and document next steps when needed.



Chapter purpose

This chapter supports managers in setting clear standards, giving fair feedback, coaching employees, addressing performance issues, and evaluating strengths consistently across diverse teams

Section 1: Consistent Performance Expectations**Purpose**

Employees perform better when they understand what success looks like. In diverse teams, clear expectations are especially important because employees may have different prior workplace norms about initiative, reporting, communication, escalation, and feedback.

Making expectations concrete

Managers should explain expected outcomes, quality standards, deadlines, communication routines, and decision authority. They should also clarify what must be done independently and what requires consultation. Clear expectations reduce the risk that employees are judged against unwritten standards they did not know existed.

Employer Practice

Performance expectations should be documented in plain language and revisited regularly. OHRC guidance recognizes that employers may manage performance and use progressive performance approaches, but best practice includes consistency, documentation, and attention to accommodation needs where relevant.

Performance Expectations Framework

Role Goals

Behavioural
Expectations

Timelines

Support

Review Points

Reflection Questions

Are performance expectations specific and understood?

Are all employees being held to the same role-related standard?

Section 2: Reducing Bias in Evaluation

25

Purpose

Performance evaluation can be influenced by recency, personality, communication style, assumptions about leadership, or comfort with a particular employee. Bias-aware evaluation helps managers distinguish work evidence from personal interpretation.



**Evidence-
Based Criteria**



**Subjective
Impressions**

Common bias risks

A confident employee may be perceived as more capable even when results are similar. A quieter employee may be overlooked for leadership potential. An employee with a different communication style may be rated lower on collaboration without clear evidence. Managers should watch for these patterns and review whether ratings are supported by examples.

Employer practice

Use defined criteria, multiple sources of evidence where appropriate, factual notes, and calibration discussions. If concerns exist, they should be communicated before the formal review whenever possible so employees have a fair chance to improve.

Reflection Questions

Are ratings supported by evidence?

Could communication style, cultural familiarity, or similarity influence evaluation?

Section 3: Coaching and Development

27

Purpose

Coaching helps employees improve before problems become entrenched. It is one of the most practical ways managers can support performance, confidence, and career growth.

What effective coaching includes

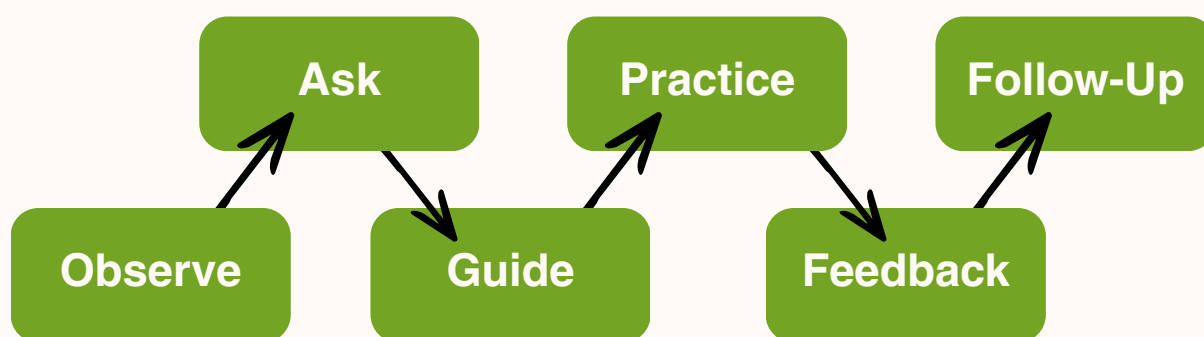
Good coaching is specific, timely, and connected to work outcomes. It asks questions, provides examples, identifies next steps, and follows up. It should not be limited to employees who are struggling. High-performing employees also need coaching to grow into new responsibilities.



Employer Practice

Managers should use coaching conversations to clarify expectations, identify barriers, discuss support needs, and agree on actions. When coaching relates to a performance concern, documentation should be factual and role-related.

Coaching Pathway



Reflection Questions

Are managers coaching before issues become formal performance concerns?

Do employees receive guidance that helps them improve?

Section 4: Supporting Employee Accountability

29

Purpose

Inclusive management does not mean avoiding accountability. Employees need to understand standards, consequences, and support options. Accountability becomes fairer when managers are clear, timely, and consistent.

Accountability Model

Expectations

Support

Feedback

Correction

Follow-Up

Balancing support and standards

Managers should ask whether expectations were clear, whether the employee had the tools and information needed, and whether any accommodation or support issue may be relevant. This does not remove accountability. It ensures the response is accurate and appropriate.

Employer practice

Address performance concerns early and privately. Focus on the specific work issue, required change, support available, timeline, and follow-up. Where concerns persist, HR should be involved and organizational procedures should be followed.

Reflection Questions

Are accountability conversations fair and timely?

Are support needs considered before escalation?

Section 5: Recognizing Different Strengths

31

Purpose

Employees contribute in different ways. Some build relationships, some solve technical problems, some stabilize processes, some mentor others, and some challenge thinking. Inclusive managers recognize these different strengths and connect them to team performance.

Avoiding narrow definitions of value

Teams can overvalue visible or vocal contributions while undervaluing quiet consistency, emotional labour, cross-cultural navigation, mentoring, or process improvement. This can affect recognition, development, and promotion opportunities.



Employer Practice

Managers should regularly identify what each employee contributes, how those strengths support team goals, and how they can be developed. Recognition should be specific and tied to actual work impact.

Different Contributions

Analysis

Relationship
Building

Execution

Innovation

Mentoring

Reflection Questions

Are different types of contribution recognized?

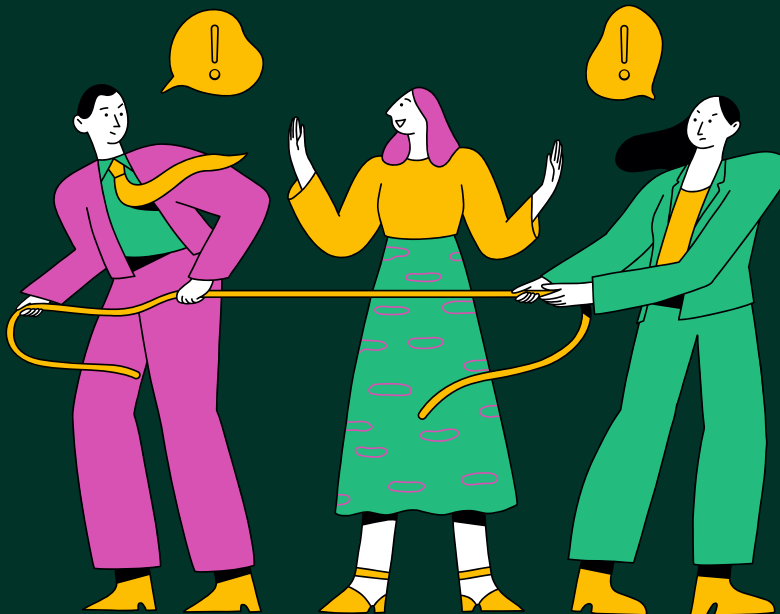
*Do recognition and advancement decisions reflect only
one model of leadership?*

Chapter Takeaway



33

Fair performance management requires clarity before evaluation, useful feedback during the work, and evidence-based decisions at review time. Managers should address concerns early while also recognizing varied strengths and growth potential.



Chapter purpose

This chapter helps managers connect inclusion with team effectiveness. It focuses on performance conditions, participation, decision-making, meeting practices, and continuous development

Section 1: Characteristics of High-Performing Teams**Purpose**

High-performing teams have more than talented individuals. They have shared goals, clear roles, reliable communication, accountability, and the ability to learn from mistakes. Inclusion strengthens these conditions when employees feel safe enough to contribute and clear enough about what is expected.

What performance requires

Teams need clarity about priorities, decision rights, timelines, quality expectations, and interdependencies. Without these basics, diversity of thought may not translate into better results because people do not have a shared operating system.

Employer Practice

Managers should periodically review team operating norms. This includes how meetings are run, how decisions are made, how work is handed off, and how issues are escalated.

Team Performance Model

Shared Goals

Trust

Clear Roles

Communication

Accountability

Learning

Reflection Questions

Does the team have shared goals and clear roles?

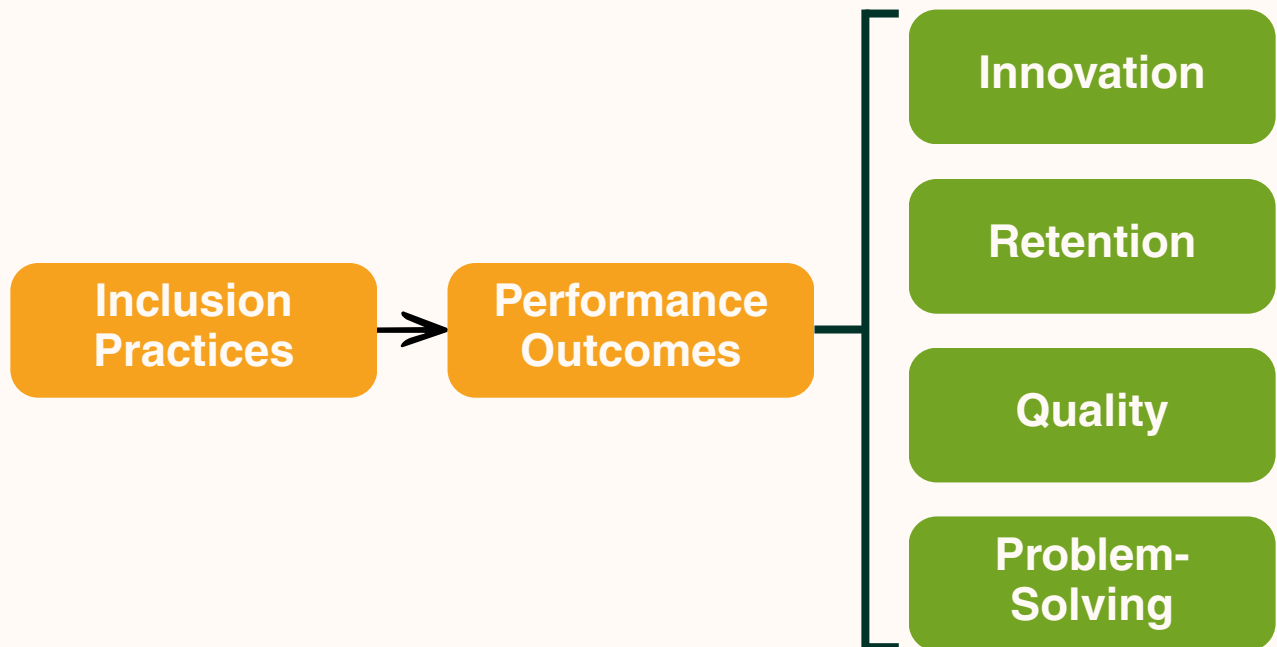
Are team members able to raise issues that affect performance?

Section 2: Inclusion and Team Performance

36

Purpose

Inclusion improves performance when it changes how teams work. It is not enough to have diverse people present. Teams need practices that allow different perspectives to shape decisions, solve problems, and improve outcomes.



Where inclusion affects performance

Inclusion affects whether employees share concerns early, identify risks, challenge assumptions, and offer ideas. It also affects whether people stay engaged when they experience disagreement or pressure.

Employer practice

Managers should invite input before decisions are finalized, make room for dissent, and recognize contributions that improve team learning. Employment and Social Development Canada guidance on workplace equity emphasizes practical, evidence-based actions that help employers improve equity rather than relying only on intent.

Reflection Questions

Is inclusion connected to how the team performs?

Are different perspectives actively used in problem-solving?

Section 3: Encouraging Diverse Perspectives

38

Purpose

Diverse perspectives can improve decisions when managers create structured opportunities for those perspectives to surface. Without structure, teams may default to the views of the most senior, most confident, or most familiar voices.

Practical methods

Managers can circulate questions in advance, use round-robin input for key decisions, invite written input after meetings, and explicitly ask what risks or perspectives may be missing. These methods are simple but can significantly widen participation.



Employer Practice

Encouraging diverse perspectives requires follow-through. If employees offer ideas but never see them considered, they may stop contributing. Managers should explain what input was used, what was not used, and why.



Reflection Questions

Do meetings invite different perspectives before decisions are made?

Are dissenting views treated as useful information?

Section 4: Team Decision-Making Practices

40

Purpose

Decision-making can create confusion and conflict when employees do not know who is deciding, who is being consulted, and how input will be used. Clear decision practices reduce frustration and improve accountability.

Decision-Making Framework

Decide

Implement

Consult

Communicate

Review

Making decisions transparent

Not every decision can be democratic. Inclusive decision-making means the process is clear and respectful. Employees should understand when they are being asked for input, when a decision has already been made, and what constraints shape the outcome.

Employer practice

Managers should clarify decision rights at the start of major work. For important decisions, they should document the decision, rationale, owner, timeline, and follow-up steps.

Reflection Questions

Are decision-making roles clear?

Do employees understand how input is used?

Section 5: Continuous Team Development

42

Purpose

Teams need ongoing development, not occasional training alone. Work changes, people change, and team habits need review. Continuous development helps teams adapt while maintaining trust and performance.

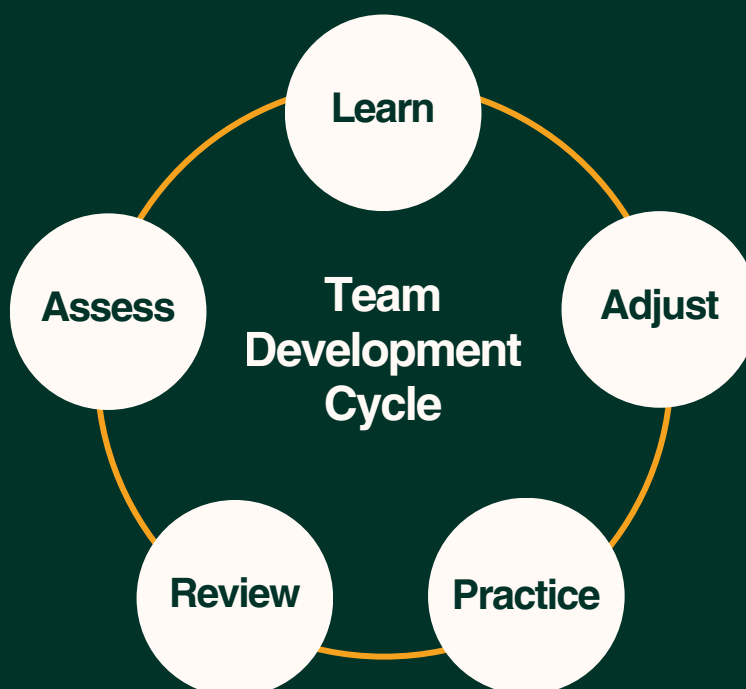
How teams improve

Teams improve when they reflect on what is working, what is causing friction, and what needs to change. This can happen through short retrospectives, project debriefs, team surveys, or manager-led conversations.



Employer Practice

Managers should build reflection into existing work rhythms. A 20-minute project debrief can identify communication gaps, unclear roles, or decision delays before they become recurring problems.



Reflection Questions

Does the team review how it works together?

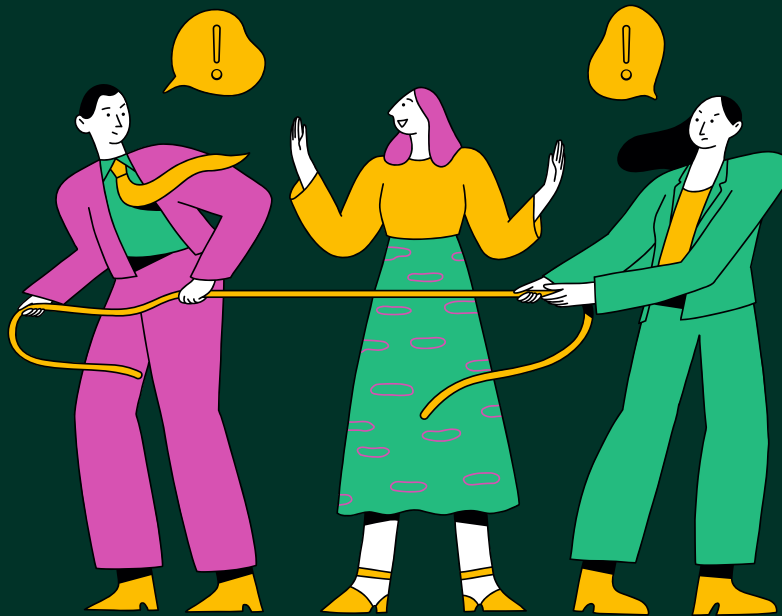
Are improvements translated into actual team habits?

Chapter Takeaway



44

High-performing inclusive teams combine clarity and openness. They invite different views, manage decisions well, and continuously improve how they work together.



Chapter purpose

This chapter helps employers move from individual manager effort to organizational capacity. It covers sustained leadership, equitable succession planning, future leader development, continuous learning, and long-term growth.

Section 1: Sustaining Inclusive Leadership**Purpose**

Inclusive leadership must be sustained through habits, systems, and accountability. If it depends only on one committed manager, progress can disappear when roles change or pressure increases.

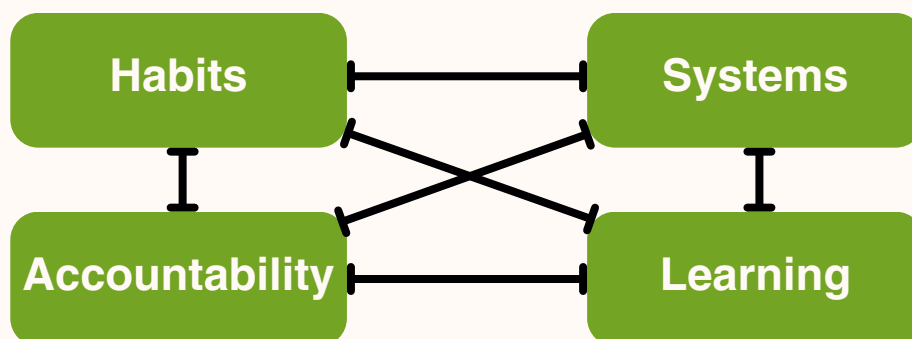
What sustainability requires

Organizations should define inclusive leadership expectations, include them in manager development, and review them in leadership conversations. Managers need practical tools, but they also need reinforcement from senior leaders and HR systems.

Employer Practice

Sustained leadership requires regular reflection on team experience, performance outcomes, and manager behaviour. Organizations should ask not only whether work is getting done, but whether teams are becoming stronger, more capable, and more trusted over time.

Leadership Sustainability



Reflection Questions

Are inclusive leadership practices built into manager expectations?

Do systems support the behaviours the organization wants from managers?

Section 2: Succession Planning and Equity

47

Purpose

Succession planning determines who is seen as future leadership. Without structure, it can reproduce familiar patterns and overlook employees who have potential but are less visible or less connected to informal networks.

Succession Planning Map

**Transparent
Criteria**

**Talent
Review**

**Development
Actions**

**Readiness
Timelines**

Equity risks in succession

Potential is often judged informally. Employees who communicate confidently, resemble existing leaders, or have sponsors may be identified earlier. Others may be left out despite strong capability. This can affect racialized employees, immigrants, and employees who are still learning informal organizational norms.

Employer practice

Succession planning should use clear criteria, documented readiness discussions, development plans, and periodic review. The goal is not to guarantee advancement, but to ensure that opportunity and visibility are not limited by informal networks or narrow assumptions about leadership.

Reflection Questions

Are succession decisions based on transparent criteria?

Are diverse employees visible in future talent discussions?

Section 3: Developing Future Leaders

49

Purpose

Future leaders are developed through exposure, coaching, feedback, and meaningful opportunities. Diverse employees may need clearer access to these pathways, especially when they are less connected to informal sponsorship networks.

What development looks like

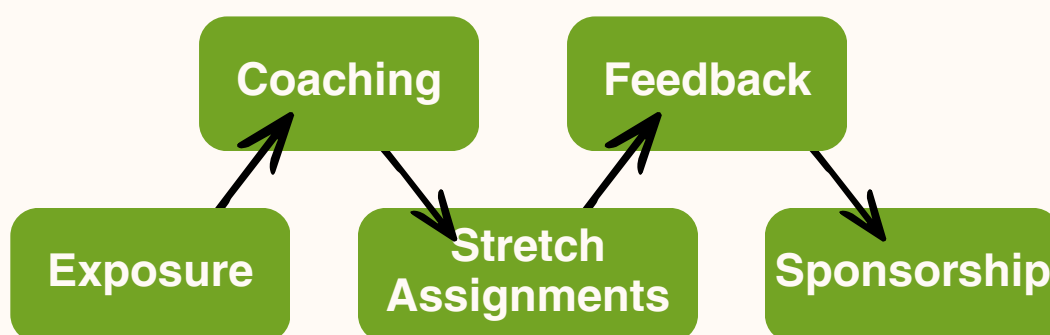
Development may include project leadership, mentoring others, acting assignments, presentation opportunities, cross-functional work, and coaching on organizational influence. These opportunities should be connected to clear leadership competencies.



Employer Practice

Managers should discuss leadership interest and readiness with employees, not only assume who is interested or capable. Development opportunities should be tracked so organizations can see whether access is balanced across teams.

Future Leader Development Pathway



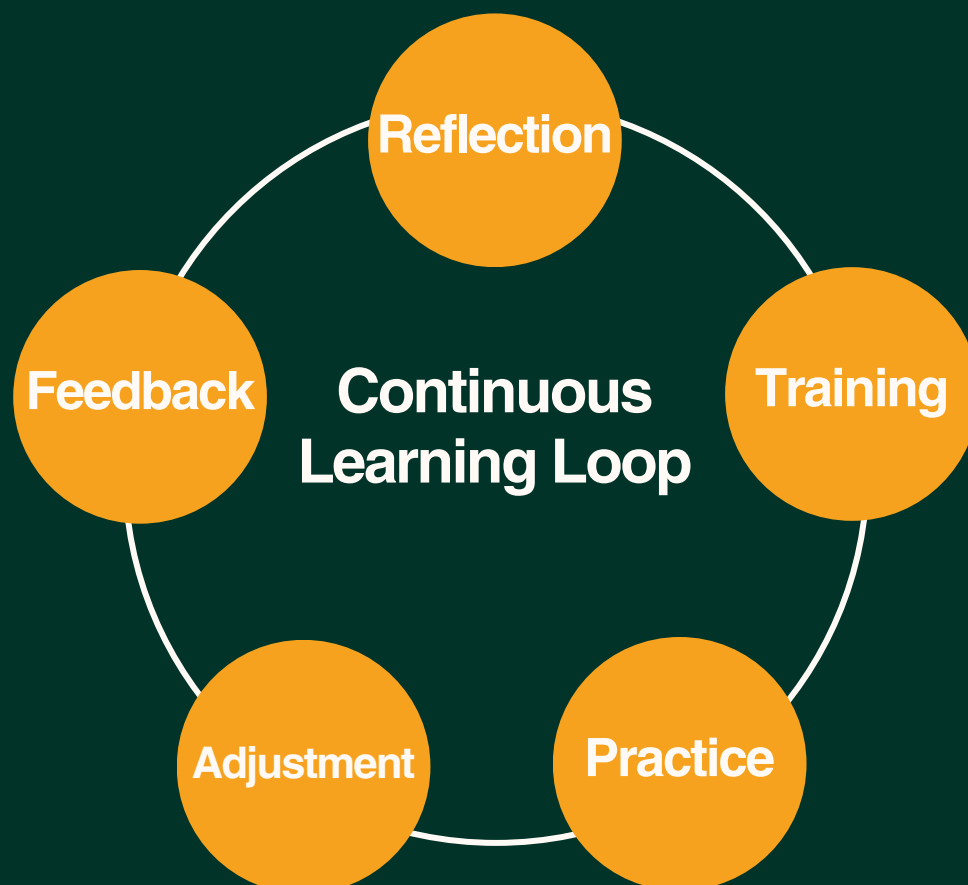
Reflection Questions

Are future leadership opportunities distributed fairly?

Do employees understand what leadership readiness requires?

Purpose

Inclusive management is a skill set that develops over time. Managers need opportunities to learn, practice, receive feedback, and adjust. One-time training is rarely enough to change leadership behaviour.



Learning that changes practice

Effective learning is connected to real management situations: difficult conversations, performance feedback, conflict, team decision-making, and employee development. Managers should leave learning activities with tools they can use immediately.

Employer practice

Organizations should combine training with manager circles, coaching, peer learning, and practical reflection. The Government of Canada's psychological health and safety guidance emphasizes that workplace improvement requires action at multiple levels of the organization, including leadership practices and organizational systems.

Reflection Questions

Do managers have opportunities to improve their leadership practice?

Is learning translated into changes in team behaviour?

Section 5: Building Long-Term Organizational Capacity

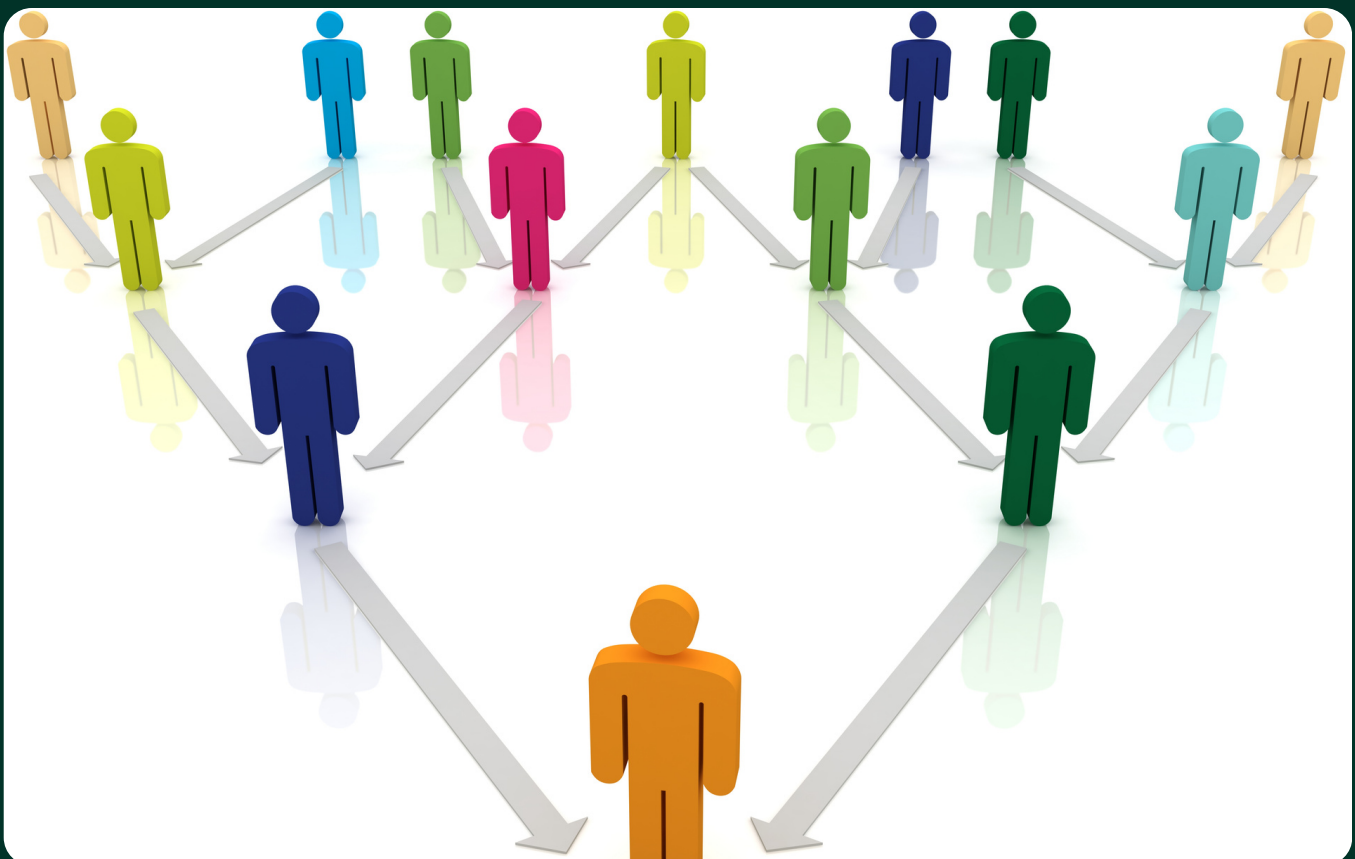
53

Purpose

Long-term capacity means the organization can keep improving even as people, teams, and priorities change. This requires repeatable tools, manager capability, leadership accountability, and data that helps the organization learn.

From effort to system

Many organizations rely on committed individuals to carry inclusion work. That can create progress, but it is fragile. Sustainable capacity requires documented processes, shared tools, clear ownership, and regular review of outcomes.



Employer Practice

Employers should integrate inclusive management into performance expectations for managers, leadership development, succession planning, team reviews, and workplace culture measures. This turns inclusion from a special project into part of how the organization manages people well.

Organizational Capacity Model

People

Systems

Tools

Leadership

Data

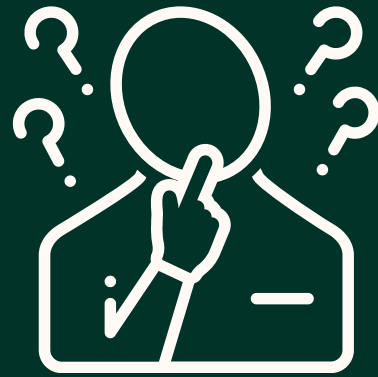
Continuous
Improvement

Reflection Questions

Are inclusive management practices documented and repeatable?

What systems would make this work sustainable beyond individual champions?

Chapter Takeaway



55

Long-term workplace growth depends on managers who can develop people, share opportunity fairly, and build systems that outlast individual effort. Inclusion becomes sustainable when it is embedded in leadership expectations and organizational planning.



1. Leading Diverse Teams Effectively

Lead with clarity, fairness, trust, and consistent communication.

2. Conflict Resolution & Difficult Conversations

Address conflict early, respectfully, and with a focus on the work issue rather than personal assumptions.

3. Performance Management Across Diverse Teams

Manage performance with clear expectations, evidence, coaching, and consistent documentation.

4. Building High-Performing Inclusive Teams

Build team systems that convert different strengths and perspectives into better outcomes.

5. Long-Term Leadership & Workplace Growth

Sustain inclusive management through systems, leadership development, succession planning, and continuous learning.

Downloadable Tools Guide

57

Each chapter includes one consolidated downloadable tool. The tools combine the most useful checklists, planning prompts, and reflection activities from that chapter into a single employer resource.

1. Inclusive Leadership and Team Communication Guide

*Use this tool with **Chapter 1: Leading Diverse Teams Effectively***

This guide helps managers reflect on inclusive leadership habits, clarify team communication expectations, and strengthen trust, collaboration, and working style management.

2. Conflict Resolution and Difficult Conversation Guide

*Use this tool with **Chapter 2: Conflict Resolution & Difficult Conversations***

This guide supports managers in preparing for respectful conversations, identifying conflict drivers, addressing misunderstandings early, and documenting agreed next steps.

3. Fair Performance and Coaching Guide

*Use this tool with **Chapter 3: Performance Management Across Diverse Teams***

This guide helps managers set expectations, reduce bias in evaluation, hold coaching conversations, support accountability, and recognize different employee strengths.

4. High-Performing Inclusive Team Assessment

58

*Use this tool with **Chapter 4: Building High-Performing Inclusive Teams***

This assessment helps managers review team goals, roles, participation, decision-making, meeting practices, and continuous improvement habits.

5. Leadership Growth and Succession Planner

*Use this tool with **Chapter 5: Long-Term Leadership & Workplace Growth***

This planner helps organizations sustain inclusive leadership, develop future leaders, review succession practices, and build long-term organizational capacity.

Source and Practice Notes

This toolkit was informed by CIIS 2024 research on Black immigrant employment barriers in Canada and by established public guidance on workplace equity, human rights, psychological health and safety, conflict resolution, workplace respect, and performance management. Key sources consulted include Employment and Social Development Canada guidance on improving workplace equity, the Ontario Human Rights Commission guidance on human rights at work and performance management, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety resources on workplace conflict and active listening, the Government of Canada psychological health in the workplace guideline, and the Mental Health Commission of Canada workplace standard and 13 psychosocial factors.

The toolkit is intended as practical employer guidance, not legal advice. Employers should adapt the tools to their own workplace context and seek appropriate advice where specific legal, accommodation, unionized workplace, or disciplinary matters arise.

Manager Implementation Roadmap

59

Week 1: Establish the Management Baseline

Managers should begin by reviewing how expectations, communication routines, and decision-making practices currently operate within their teams. The goal is to understand the present state before trying to change behaviour. A simple baseline review can reveal whether employees understand priorities, know how to raise concerns, and receive feedback consistently.

This first step should not be treated as a formal audit. It is a practical review of how the team currently works. Managers can use the Inclusive Leadership and Team Communication Guide to identify one or two immediate areas to strengthen, such as meeting participation, follow-up discipline, or clarity of responsibilities.

Week 2: Strengthen Communication and Trust

The next priority is improving the communication conditions that support trust. Managers should clarify how decisions are communicated, where work information is stored, which channels should be used for urgent matters, and how employees can ask questions or raise concerns.

Teams do not need complex communication systems to improve. They need predictable routines. A weekly priorities message, clearer meeting notes, documented decisions, and consistent follow-up can reduce confusion and prevent avoidable conflict.

Week 3: Review Performance and Coaching Practices

60

Managers should review whether employees are receiving clear expectations and timely feedback. Performance concerns should not appear for the first time during a formal review. Employees should have opportunities to understand expectations, ask clarifying questions, receive coaching, and improve.

This step is particularly important in diverse teams because employees may not always recognize unwritten expectations. Managers should make the implicit explicit by describing what good performance looks like, how work should be escalated, and what standards apply across the team.

Week 4: Improve Conflict and Decision Practices

Conflict and decision-making are often connected. When employees do not understand who decides, how input is used, or why a decision was made, frustration can grow. Managers should review recent team tensions and identify whether clearer process could have prevented them.

This is also the right time to normalize respectful disagreement. Teams perform better when employees can raise risks, challenge assumptions, and discuss concerns without being labelled as negative or difficult.

Ongoing: Build Leadership Capacity

The final step is to turn good intentions into repeatable leadership habits. Managers should schedule periodic reflection on team communication, performance fairness, conflict patterns, and development opportunities. HR can support this by providing tools, coaching, and consistent expectations for people management.

Long-term capacity is built when inclusive management is part of regular leadership practice, not a special project. The tools in this toolkit can be used during manager check-ins, team reviews, performance cycles, and leadership development planning.

Manager Conversation Starters

61

Managers often know that a conversation is needed but struggle to find the right opening. The prompts below are designed to help managers begin conversations clearly, respectfully, and without overcomplicating the issue.

Clarifying expectations

“I want to make sure we are aligned on what success looks like for this work. Let’s review the outcome, timeline, and how we will communicate progress.”

Addressing a misunderstanding

“I think there may be a misunderstanding here, and I would like us to clarify it before it grows into something bigger.”

Inviting a quieter employee into discussion

“I want to make sure we are hearing from everyone. Is there anything you would add or any risk you think we should consider?”

Giving corrective feedback

“I want to discuss a work issue I have noticed, explain the impact, and agree on what needs to change going forward.”

Checking for support needs

“Before we decide next steps, I want to understand whether there are barriers, unclear expectations, or support needs affecting the work.”

Rebuilding after conflict

“We have addressed the issue. Now I want us to be clear about how we will work together professionally moving forward.”

When Managers Should Involve HR

63

Managers should not be expected to handle every people issue alone. HR involvement is especially important when a matter involves repeated performance concerns, potential discrimination or harassment, accommodation needs, health-related information, workplace violence or safety concerns, formal complaints, discipline, termination risk, or significant conflict affecting more than one employee.

Early HR involvement can help managers choose the right process, protect confidentiality, document appropriately, and avoid making decisions based on incomplete information. It also helps ensure that employees are treated consistently across the organization.

Involving HR should not be seen as escalation in every case. Sometimes it is simply good practice. A manager may consult HR to prepare for a difficult conversation, review performance documentation, understand accommodation obligations, or decide whether a conflict requires a more formal process.

Practical HR Consultation Checklist

- What is the workplace issue or concern?
- What facts are known, and what remains unclear?
- Has the employee been informed of the concern?
- Are there accommodation, human rights, health, or safety considerations?
 - What documentation exists?
 - What outcome is being considered?
 - What process or policy should apply?