Realising the promise of national equality policy

An evaluation of the processes of implementation of three national equality strategies

May 2023

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Disclaimer

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which takes no responsibility for any errors or omissions in, or for the accuracy of, the information contained in this report.

Acknowledgements

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CES	Centre for Effective Services
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAF	Dormant Accounts Fund
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
FRA	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
HSE	Health Services Executive
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
LGBTI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and more
MIS	Migrant Integration Strategy
MISMCC	Migrant Integration Strategy Monitoring and Coordination Committee
NDIS	National Disability Inclusion Strategy
NIRN	[United States] National Implementation Research Network
NLIS	National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy
NSWG	National Strategy for Women and Girls
NTRIS	National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
NWCI	National Women's Council of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPMI	Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration
QIF	Quality Implementation Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

In 2022, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) commissioned the Centre for Effective Services (CES) to conduct an independent evaluation of the processes used by government to implement three national equality strategies: the Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS), the National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG), and the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS).

The evaluation was guided by four overarching questions:

1. **Evaluation Question 1**: What represents best practice in implementing national equality or human rights strategies or policies?
2. **Evaluation Question 2**: What processes were used by government to implement the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS?
3. **Evaluation Question 3**: How effective were the processes used to implement the national equality strategies?
4. **Evaluation Question 4:** In what ways could the processes of implementation be improved in successor or other national equality or human rights strategies or policies?

An evaluation was designed to address each of the four evaluation questions, and which sought to assess the extent to which the processes used to implement the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS were effective. With a defined focus on evaluating *processes*, it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to establish whether, and to what extent, the equality objectives of the strategies were achieved. It was also beyond the remit of the evaluation to assess any potential impact the strategies had on the groups and communities that they were targeting. Instead, this study was focused on drawing out lessons that could be used to improve the implementation of future national equality strategies.

Background and Context

Promoting equality is a clearly stated priority of the Irish Government. Equality is described as "*a core guiding principle of our Republic*" in the 2020 Programme for Government, where commitments were set out to pursuing a more equal society for minoritised and marginalised groups. Ireland has also signed and ratified a series of international human rights agreements under which it has obligations to eliminate various forms of discrimination.
In recent years, the Irish government has developed a series of national strategies aimed at addressing inequalities in Ireland. These include the National Disability Inclusion Strategy

(NDIS) and the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities, the Migrant Integration Strategy (MIS), the National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG), the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS), and both the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy (NLIS) and the National LGBTI+ Youth Strategy.

Together, these strategies create a policy framework for pursuing equality in Ireland. They set out visions, missions and values relating to the creation of a safer, fairer, and more inclusive society. They also include action plans that enumerate the specific measures designed to realise these visions.

The present study evaluates the ways in which three of these strategies have been implemented:

- The Migrant Integration Strategy
- The National Strategy for Women and Girls
- The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.

Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020

Since 2017, the [Migrant Integration Strategy](#) (MIS) has aimed to promote the inclusion of migrants in Irish society, with 76 actions targeting social inclusion and improved access to public services for migrants. The Strategy also aims to tackle racism and xenophobia. The Migrant Integration Strategy Monitoring and Coordination Committee (MISMCC) was established to oversee strategy implementation and comprised representatives of government departments, local authorities, and key stakeholders. Due to COVID-19, the Strategy was extended to the end of 2021.

National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020

The [National Strategy for Women and Girls](#) 2017-2020 (NSWG) is a whole-of-government framework adopted in May 2017 to advance women's empowerment. It contains six high-level objectives to promote equality for women and girls, advanced through 139 actions relating to 85 intended outcomes. The NSWG Strategy Committee consisted of government department representatives, women's groups, civil society actors, trade unions, and business representatives. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the implementation of the Strategy was extended to the end of 2021.

National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021

The Government published the [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy](#) (NTRIS) in June 2017. The Strategy represents a whole-of-government approach to bringing about

meaningful change and progress for the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. The NTRIS contains 149 actions, grouped under ten themes, that aim to improve the lives of the Traveller and Roma Communities. A steering group was established to oversee implementation and progress monitoring, bringing together government departments, state agencies, and representatives of Traveller and Roma civil society groups.

Evaluation methodology

To evaluate the processes employed to implement the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS, a multi-stage, multi-stakeholder evaluation was designed. The evaluation consisted of four main phases:

1. A review of the relevant literature
2. A review of the existing written documentation relating to the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS
3. An expert consultation
4. Consultation with stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of each of the three strategies.

How each component of the evaluation maps onto the four main evaluation questions is shown in Table A.

Table A Mapping of evaluation phases onto evaluation questions

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Phase			
	Literature review	Document review	Expert consultation	Stakeholder consultation
Q1: What represents best practice?	●		●	
Q2: What processes were used?		●		●
Q3: How effective were the processes?	●	●	●	●
Q4: What could be improved?	●	●	●	●

Literature review

A review of the relevant policy and academic literatures was conducted in order to identify what represents good practice when implementing national equality or human rights strategies or policies. The reviewed literature emphasised the value of using an implementation framework when evaluating implementation efforts. Dozens of implementation frameworks exist, created for use in different contexts and varying in the extent to which they have been tested empirically. No single framework was identified that could be used straightforwardly in the context of the implementation of national equality strategies. Consequently, a bespoke framework was created for the purposes of the

evaluation, drawing on the most relevant elements of existing high-quality frameworks and toolkits. The draft framework compiled for the evaluation consisted of 12 high-level implementation approaches and a series of 42 associated activities that the literature suggests are important for implementing whole-of-government strategies in the area of human rights and policy.

Expert consultation

An external consultation process was designed to refine validate the framework created following the review of the literature. The aim was to seek expert consensus on the implementation approaches and activities that represent good practice when implementing government equality or human rights policy. A modified Delphi process was conducted, using two rounds of rating and review over a 12-week period. Twelve experts in implementation science, policy implementation, and/or human rights or equality policy participated in the process. Consensus was reached on the value of the framework consisting of implementation approaches and associated activities representing good practice when implementing national equality strategies. The finalised framework consists both of approaches and activities complied from the literature and additional activities suggested by experts to help focus the framework more specifically on the implementation of Irish government equality strategies.

Document review

To understand how the MIS, NSWG, and NTRIS were implemented, a review of all available documentation relating to each strategy was undertaken. For each strategy, the review process started with the strategy text itself and followed with a review of other relevant documents, including public consultation calls, progress reviews, annual reports and traffic light progress reports and committee meeting documentation. A timeline of actions/events was developed for the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS, which provided a summary of the implementation journey of each strategy. Where gaps existed in the information on implementation processes that could be inferred from the desk review of documentation, the evaluation team sought to fill these with data collected from interviews and surveys with stakeholders.

Stakeholder consultation

The stakeholder consultation had two goals: to deepen understanding of the implementation processes of MIS, NSWG, and NTRIS and to gather stakeholder opinions on the effectiveness of these processes, areas of good practice, and areas for potential improvement. The consultation involved three groups. Group 1 consisted of individuals in the DCEDIY or the (then) Department of Justice and Equality who were responsible for planning and coordinating the strategy; Group 2 comprised representatives of other government

departments and state agencies who were involved in the implementation and monitoring of strategy actions, while Group 3 comprised representatives of civil society organisations on the strategies' committees. To ensure efficiency, each group's consultation approach matched their level of engagement in the implementation process and consisted of either individual interviews or qualitative surveys.

Main findings

Once the document review and stakeholder consultation phases were complete, the processes of implementation of the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS were considered in light of the evidence-informed, expert-validated framework representing good practice in implementing national equality strategies. Key findings of the evaluation are summarised below.

Addressing intersectionality

- While not the primary focus of this study, experts and stakeholders provided their views on how intersectionality is or should be addressed in national equality strategies in Ireland, with mixed findings. Some argued for maintaining separate equality strategies for different target groups, while others suggested the possibility of developing one overarching equality strategy within which intersectionalities could be addressed.
- The MIS and NTRIS were criticised for not adequately addressing the diversity of experiences within the populations they targeted. It was perceived that migrants were seen as one homogeneous group in the MIS, while the differences between Traveller and Roma experiences were not fully addressed in the NTRIS.
- Challenges to addressing intersectionality in public policy in Ireland were discussed, including a lack of available data and awareness among decision-makers about its importance. The reviewed literature indicated that even policy makers who do recognise the importance of intersectionality have struggled with incorporating it effectively into the policy cycle due to a lack of established methodologies. While it was beyond the scope of the present study to find a solution to the complex issue of incorporating intersectionality into public policy, the findings indicate the need for further exploration in this area.

Importance of Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

- According to the literature, experts, and governmental and civil society representatives consulted in the evaluation, stakeholder engagement is crucial when developing and delivering national equality strategies. The involvement of civil

society representatives in the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS was highly valued by governmental representatives coordinating the strategies.

- Members of communities targeted by equality strategies are the best experts on the lived realities of structural inequalities, and consultations with those communities in the development phases of the MIS, NSWG, and NTRIS were thorough, far-reaching, and generally well-regarded by stakeholders. There was, however, a perceived disconnect between the results of the consultations and the actions eventually included in the final strategy texts.

- There was consensus in the literature and among experts that stakeholder engagement should not end after initial consultations but should be maintained throughout the lifetime of the strategies. The primary way that stakeholder engagement was maintained for the MIS, NSWG, and NTRIS was through the strategy committees on which civil society groups were represented. The committees were viewed as valuable spaces for government departments and civil society organisations to come together to build relationships and share expertise, and these interactions were perceived to be one of the main successes of the strategies. However, the actual role of civil society representatives on the committees was variously reported as unclear, limited, and lacking in influence.

- Stakeholders generally agreed that the committees had good representation of diverse voices, which was seen as a significant success of the strategies. Initially, the NTRIS Steering Group lacked sufficient Roma community representation, but once raised by civil society, this was subsequently addressed. However, for the MIS, stakeholders suggested that more efforts could have been made to ensure that the heterogeneity of migrant experiences was reflected, both in initial consultations and overall.

- Each of the national strategies was perceived by stakeholders to be "owned by government", but the literature and experts agree that it is important to move beyond merely consulting and informing non-governmental stakeholders towards more collaborative arrangements and co-ownership of equality policy.

Role of Committees in Whole-of-Government Strategies

- The literature on implementing large-scale initiatives highlights the importance of structures such as decision-making or steering bodies, technical or advisory groups, and implementation teams. The MIS, NSWG and NTRIS strategies relied heavily on the steering/strategy committees to serve multiple purposes. These committees may not be well-suited for all functions, due to their large membership and quarterly meeting schedule.

- There is a strong consensus among experts and stakeholders that clear roles and responsibilities are essential for effective implementation of whole-of-government strategies. The evaluation revealed that this clarity was somewhat lacking in the implementation of the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS. Dedicated structures with explicitly-defined terms of reference may improve implementation processes for future whole-of-government strategies.

Challenges in Incorporating Emerging Issues and Maintaining Dynamism

- Civil society representatives on strategy committees were tasked with raising emerging issues or challenges for the communities they represent, so that these could be incorporated into the strategies. However, when such issues were raised, these were rarely acted upon.
- Each of the three strategies was intended to be dynamic and to incorporate new actions over time. In reality, the strategies were felt to be static and limited in their ability to respond to emerging issues.
- The large number of actions initially included in the strategies made it difficult to incorporate new issues over time, and the long lists of actions were described as "unwieldy" by some stakeholders.
- The reviewed literature suggests, and experts recommend, that government strategic plans should focus on a limited number of key priority objectives and associated actions to ensure a focused strategy that is feasible to implement. This was not found to be the case for the MIS, NSWG or NTRIS.

Challenges relating to capacity and commitment

- Ensuring commitment and buy-in from government departments and state agencies assigned responsibility for implementing MIS, NSWG and NTRIS actions has been a major challenge. "Strategy fatigue" was reported by representatives from departments and agencies who are committed to delivering multiple actions across multiple initiatives, including whole-of-government initiatives, which constrains their capacity to deliver.
- There may be underdeveloped understandings of equality and related concepts among some civil servants working in the area of equality. Developing staff expertise to work in the area of equality policy may be necessary.

Issues with Indicator Sets for Progress Assessment

- The identification, development, and use of indicators of progress for the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS was unsatisfactory, making it impossible to assess the extent to which the strategies were implemented as intended.

- Indicator sets were not identified or developed before strategies were launched, and it was difficult to identify appropriate indicators retrospectively. Strategy actions should be clear, specific, and measurable in order to support the identification of appropriate indicators. However, many actions in the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS were vaguely worded, making it difficult to understand what tasks or activities were necessary to achieve them. Further, the very large numbers of objectives and actions in the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS meant retrospective development of indicators was demanding and time-consuming and, ultimately, unsuccessful.

Importance of planning for implementation

- The literature and consulted experts emphasised the importance of implementation plans for the effective implementation of large-scale cross-government initiatives like national equality strategies. There was also consensus that implementation planning should be done *early* in the strategy development process. An implementation plan for NTRIS was initiated and created by civil society groups later in the lifetime of that strategy, though it is unclear to what degree this was, or could be, effectively operationalised by the strategy steering group. No implementation plans were produced during the development of the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS.

Need to maintain a focus on implementation

- Stakeholders praised the commitment, knowledge, and leadership of the teams coordinating the strategies in the DCEDIY. However, there was potential for a stronger role for these teams in terms of ensuring effective implementation of strategy actions, even allowing for the fact that most actions came under the operational responsibility of other departments and agencies. Committee members questioned whether any follow-up action was taken by the DCEDIY coordination teams when strategy actions were reported as experiencing problems or delays in monitoring reviews.

Impact of disruptions on strategy implementation

- The restructuring of government departments in 2020 caused considerable disruption to the implementation of strategies, leading to a perceived depletion in the resources available for strategy implementation. Associated staff changes resulted in the loss of institutional memory and of rich insights into and knowledge of the strategies.
- After government department restructuring, turnover on the strategy committees has remained high, particularly among government department and state agency representatives. Government representatives who had become involved in strategy coordination or implementation at a later stage described difficulties in "getting up to

speed" on the strategies, as it was not possible to piece together the trajectories of the strategies from existing strategy documentation such as meeting minutes or traffic light monitoring documents.

- While mentioned less frequently by stakeholders, some evaluation participants discussed the disruptive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the strategies.

Appropriateness of the monitoring system

- The traffic light monitoring system used by all three strategy committees was perceived by stakeholders as superficial, and there were mixed views on its effectiveness. The user-friendliness of the system was also questioned by may.

Recommendations

This evaluation has produced a set of recommendations that are likely to improve the implementation of future national equality strategies. These recommendations reflect key messages on best practice from the literature and the views of experts, as well as the views of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the MIS, NSWG and NTRIS.

	Address intersectionality
1	Further research should be carried out to explore how an intersectional approach can be effectively incorporated into various phases of the policy cycle.
	Collaborate with stakeholders
2	Stakeholder consultations for future national equality strategies should seek to build on the successes of the consultations for the NTRIS, MIS and NSWG, which were felt to be thorough and to capture a broad cross-section of views.
3	Efforts should be made to ensure that key learnings emerging from stakeholder consultations are accurately reflected in national equality strategy texts or, when they are not, there should be transparent communication with stakeholders regarding how and why such decisions were made.
4	Resources should be allocated to support the capacity of seldom heard and marginalised groups to participate fully in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national equality strategies.
5	Civil society representatives should have a more formal and influential role in strategy implementation and monitoring, moving towards more collaborative arrangements or co-ownership of strategies.
	Adopt appropriate structures
6	It may be helpful to reconsider the reliance on steering/strategy committees to serve multiple purposes, as they may not be well-suited to fulfilling all necessary functions. Consideration should be given to the creation of dedicated structures with explicitly-defined terms of reference, such as decision-making or steering bodies, technical or advisory groups, and implementation teams.
	Strive for focused and dynamic strategies
7	Action should be taken to ensure that each equality strategy is actually dynamic, i.e., that there are clear mechanisms through which emerging issues or challenges can be responded to throughout the strategy cycle.
8	Large, unfocused strategies are difficult to implement. Future strategic plans should

	include a limited number of key priority objectives and associated actions.
Address capacity issues	
9	Strategy fatigue' should be combatted by reducing the number of actions that any individual department or agency is responsible for implementing. This is likely to help with commitment and buy-in and ensuring focus and accountability in implementation.
10	Concerted efforts should be made to ensure the availability of adequate financial resources and staff time to properly develop, coordinate, and implement national equality strategies.
11	Diversity among the teams responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing equality strategies should be aimed for, and an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) lens should be applied to leadership practices.
Develop suitable indicators of progress	
12	Indicators sets should be identified or developed before equality strategies are launched, rather than retrospectively.
13	For every objective included in a national equality strategy, 3-5 outcome or impact indicators should be selected; for every action, one output indicator should be identified. If no indicator of progress (with a baseline and target value) can be identified for an action, and if it is not possible to develop one, then that action should not be included in the strategy text.
Plan for implementation	
14	An implementation plan should be created in parallel with any future equality strategy development. This plan should be based on input from all departments and agencies tasked with implementing strategy actions and feedback on these implementation plans should be sought from civil society representatives.
Pay ongoing attention to implementation	
15	Greater administrative support should be provided to teams coordinating the strategies in the DCEDIY to allow for greater focus and attention on issues related to actual implementation of strategy actions.
16	Outside of the committee meeting structure, the strategy coordination teams should engage in bilateral communication and troubleshooting with departments and agencies in cases where implementation of actions have stalled. An update should then be given to the wider committee membership.
Minimise the potential impact of disruptions on strategy implementation	
17	A comprehensive repository of knowledge on the various stages of strategy development and implementation should be created, including decisions taken and reflections on what went well, what challenges were experienced, and how these were handled. In the context of high turnover of equality strategy committee members, this repository could minimise the disruption of losing institutional memory.
Promote the effective collection and use of monitoring information	
18	Consideration should be given to moving beyond the monitoring "snapshot" offered by the traffic light system towards fuller narrative accounts of progress that allow for strategic input and troubleshooting by stakeholders.
19	There should be greater use of monitoring information to inform adaptive decision making throughout the lifetimes of the strategies.
Act to implement learnings from evaluation activities	
20	Action should be taken to operationalise the evidence-informed and expert-validated framework of implementation approaches and activities developed as part of this evaluation. Doing so should improve the implementation of future national equality strategies, helping to realise the promise of equality policy.

Table 5 Implementation framework for national equality strategies

Implementation approaches and associated activities	Policy Development		Policy Implementation	
	Exploring & preparing	Planning & resourcing	Operationalising & Implementing	Full implementation
Taking a whole-of-government approach	●	●	●	●
Create a clear medium- to long-term vision for equality that is anchored in key government documents.				
Ensure the strategy is a clear priority of government, with high status.				
Align national equality strategies with core obligations to the European Union, Council of Europe and the United Nations for implementation of law, policy, reporting of data and monitoring				
Define clear roles and responsibilities across the government for implementing, monitoring and overseeing the equality objectives.				
Locate leadership of equality strategies in a central government department with political authority.				
Align strategies to core priority deliverables for each department and agency so that delivery of the equality strategy is delivery of core business.				
Identify legislation that might be levered or proposed to underpin progress.				
Identify the whole-of-government structures that fit with the strategy.				
Engaging stakeholders	●	●	●	●
Identify all the stakeholders on whose work, involvement, or cooperation the success of implementation depends and all those most likely to be impacted by the strategy.				
Take proactive steps to involve all relevant stakeholders, identifying and acting to overcome barriers to participation for minority, marginalised or seldom-included groups.				
Clarify with stakeholders the definition of stakeholder engagement, so as to establish a common language and expectations.				
Strive to move beyond consultation towards collaboration with critical stakeholders.				
Set up a communications plan to ensure that all stakeholders involved in or affected by the strategy are kept informed about progress.				
Ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the views of others and of what might be competing or conflicting viewpoints or priorities				
Communicate about the work routinely with stakeholders to secure ongoing buy-in				
Engage in information sharing on best practice in stakeholder engagement with other EU countries				
Secure buy-in from the general public				
Ensure ongoing media engagement throughout the lifetime of the strategy				
Situation analysis, scoping and prioritisation	●	●	●	

Conduct a problem/situation/needs analysis in a collaborative effort between government and non-government stakeholders.

Identify the available evidence and any evidence gaps that may need to be filled, drawing on international, national, and local experience.

Review international, regional, and national standards to identify the changes that equality policy is required/intended to achieve.

Ensure that the strategy is dynamic and that the proposed policy/strategy development and implementation processes are agile enough to be able to respond if and when issues change.

Define the exact scope of the strategy and prioritise issues in accordance with their relative importance and urgency.

Conduct a readiness/capacity assessment.

Objective setting and action planning

Limit the number of objectives and actions to a set of focused and realistic priorities, avoiding a broad strategy that is difficult to implement; practise "the art of saying no".

Include short-term objectives for quick gains that lead to longer term objectives.

Calculate the costs of the necessary resources for each planned action.

Calculate the potential benefits of each action.

Assign ownership of each action.

Set timelines for each action.

Develop performance indicators, targets and measures.

Conduct an assessment of the appropriateness of the strategy, including a review of the evidence base for planned actions and sense-checking of these actions with those who will be implementing and impacted by the strategy.

Ensuring effective leadership

Create opportunities for visible endorsement of the strategy by key Ministers and senior public officials.

Identify an operational leader or leadership group to drive the strategy.

Ensure representatives on implementation and strategic direction structures are at a decision-making level of seniority without delegation.

Ensure that national and local-level leadership work in tandem to secure the conditions for effective policy implementation.

Develop broad ownership of the strategy through distributed leadership and delegation.

Ensure that there is a leader who is accessible to deal promptly with challenges, with the capacity and authority to deal with minor issues that have the potential to stall implementation as they arise and without having to wait for formal meetings.

Review evidence-based approaches to inclusive, diverse, rights-based leadership and explicitly embed this practice, and evaluation of same, into policy implementation.

Engage in succession planning so that there is long-term strategy for leadership development in the area of equality policy.

Securing adequate resources ●

Determine how the budget for the strategy implementation will be secured, where accountability rests and how accountabilities will be shared, if appropriate. ●

Secure multi-annual funding for the duration of the strategy.

Connect resources for equality policy with budgetary policy and mechanisms, including equality budgeting and obligations regarding use of European funding and monitoring of same. ●

Identify and secure the staff with the skillsets and expertise needed for the work.

Ensure that an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) lens is applied when securing staff with the skills and expertise to develop and implement equality policy; include experts from underrepresented groups in the hiring process.

Systematically review the resources allocated.

Instituting appropriate structures and implementation teams ●

Establish implementation teams with relevant expertise in policy development and organisational strategy, expert knowledge and boundary-spanning skills to guide the initiative. ●

Locate implementation teams in an appropriate setting, linked to a central department.

Ensure the implementation team has clear links to the strategy leadership.

Require the implementation team to report regularly to Government and Oireachtas in relation to meeting deadlines and targets or explaining why they have been missed

Creating an implementation plan ●

Adopt a project management approach to the implementation planning. ●

Outline the tasks and activities necessary to achieve the actions.

Identify who is responsible for the delivery of tasks.

Assign overall responsibility for implementation of the plan and for regular reviews of progress.

Articulate the inputs, outputs and intended outcomes of the implementation process.

Map the interdepartmental/interagency 'gaps' in information, capacities, funding, operational policies

Map interdepartmental/interagency connections and synergies.

Involve local delivery-level actors at the development stage of implementation plans.

Include information on monitoring, evaluation and feedback systems

Communicate the implementation plan to all stakeholders

Developing staff capacity

Determine and deliver staff training, capacity building and other support requirements.

Set ambitious targets for diversity amongst the teams responsible for leading and implementing the strategy.

Ensure a strong understanding of equality and related concepts (such as targeting and mainstreaming) among staff who are designing and delivering equality-focused policies.

Assess the career ambitions of staff regarding long-term involvement in equality policy.

Incorporate equality objectives into individual staff performance assessment objectives.

Cultivating a supportive culture

Align the strategic objectives with broader government priorities or goals.

Embed equality objectives in core government processes including procurement, evidence-based policy making, budget.

Ensure full implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Identify and address all tacit and explicit barriers to implementation, including sources of resistance to change.

Identify a network of equality 'champions' across government who can help to effectively communicate and mainstream the strategic plan across different policy areas.

Emphasise that the equality strategy needs to be everyone's priority and that all roles should contribute in some way to its delivery.

Identify and celebrate success. Recognise and reward innovation.

Monitoring and evaluation

Establish a robust system for gathering data, monitoring and evaluation, suited to the challenges of a whole-of-government context.

Use monitoring data and feedback to inform ongoing improvements or decisions; ensure that learning is fed back into the action plan.

Ensure monitoring systems are flexible and can incorporate examples of innovative implementation at local level.

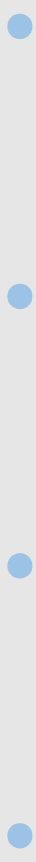Ensure a combination of quantitative and qualitative data is collected.

Develop data sharing agreements at the outset.

Incorporate an evaluation structure from the outset to avoid data being sought retrospectively.

Implement the European Guidelines on equality data and associated resources.

Learning from experience

● Set up formal systems to capture and share the learning and experience about the strategy implementation.

● Create and maintain a repository of knowledge that can be used in successor or similar strategies.

● Benchmark against international best practice.

● Facilitate peer-to-peer learning, team coaching, and learning networks to build a community of participants in equality policy.