



Public Sector
Commission

*We're working for
Western Australia.*

Youth

Action Plan to Improve WA Public
Sector Employment Outcomes

2020–2025





We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to their cultures, and to elders past and present.

Public Sector Commission
2 Havelock Street West Perth WA 6005
T: 6552 8500 E: admin@psc.wa.gov.au
WA.gov.au

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From the Minister

The Government is committed to giving young people in Western Australia every opportunity for employment.

Secure employment is needed for young people to be financially stable, enhance their sense of belonging, develop their skills, contribute to the economy and engage in their communities.

As the State's largest employer, the public sector has an important role to play. Direct action and intervention are critical to providing secure employment pathways for young people so they can ensure their financial security, as well as build their skills and capabilities.



The decline in youth representation in the public sector's workforce over recent years means targeted and strategic intervention is required.

The Government has set an aspirational target of 5.8% and I expect agencies to work hard towards this.

Young people are a diverse and engaged cohort of the community which brings with it the potential for new perspectives and possibilities for change.

Our youth are key to helping the sector adapt and evolve for the future. A strong focus on increasing their representation and inclusion will benefit not only the sector but the future of our State.

Dave Kelly MLA
Minister for Youth

From the Commissioner

Workforce diversity is not only about everyone being treated with dignity and respect, it's key to improving productivity and innovation in organisations.

It's also important for our workforce – our people – to have diversity of thought. This means different and more expansive thinking beyond our worldviews.

To shift the focus of diversity from compliance to workforce imperative, we have to change gears. We must move from a singular focus on awareness raising to deliberate action and intervention – and see this move as both a personal and collective responsibility.

This action plan is part of the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025. The twin goals of the strategy are to increase the representation of people from different backgrounds at all levels across our sector, and to ensure all staff in the sector experience a sense of belonging and inclusion in the work environment.

Like this action plan that focuses on youth, there are also plans for women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with disability and people of diverse sexualities and genders.

There is no suggestion that achieving greater workforce diversity and inclusion is easy. However, we must do more to bring the knowledge, skills and perspectives of young people to our work as we deliver services to the people of Western Australia.



Sharyn O'Neill
Public Sector Commissioner

Aspirational target for youth

This plan aims to increase the representation of youth employed in the public sector to 5.8% and support inclusive work environments.

While this target is aspirational – and ambitious – progress is achievable over time if it is driven from the top.

Representation of youth in public sector employment has been declining over time. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated resident population data (2018) shows that 18.8% of working age people in Western Australia are between 15 and 24 years old.

ABS Census data (2016) for attendance at education institutions shows that slightly more than half of youth identify as studying either full or part time.

It can be inferred that those not studying are available for employment – that is, 8.6% of the WA working age population. If the decreasing trend in representation of youth in employment continues based on the last two ABS Census (2011 and 2016), it is anticipated this will decrease to 5.8% by 2025 when this plan ends.

The target has been set so the representation of youth in public sector employment matches the representation of youth in the WA working age population who are not studying.

Concerted effort is needed to first stop the current decline of youth employment in the sector and then increase it.

Research points to the trend of agencies abolishing training programs and outsourcing non-core activities as primary causes of the decline.

‘Classification creep’ also affects youth employment where lower level positions are abolished in favour of creating senior positions.

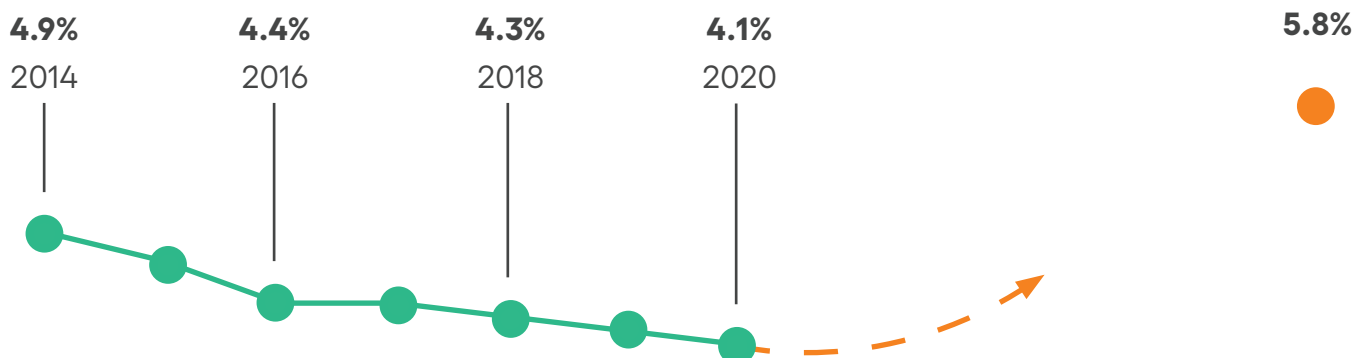
It will take time to see an increase in representation as actions are implemented and employment outcomes improve.

Data reform work across the sector (see the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for more details) includes reviewing collection, definitions and methods applied to diversity groups. This work will be used for the ongoing refinement and implementation of the strategy.

Given the changing nature of the workforce – including higher levels of education for some entry level positions and staff working beyond the traditional retirement age – the relative representation of youth in public sector employment is decreasing. In the future, the methodology for setting targets will be reviewed to ensure it accounts for these changes.

The next ABS Census in 2021 will provide more contemporary population data and projections. Workforce diversity targets, including targets for youth, will be reviewed in line with the data reforms and new Census data.

Such reforms are critical to develop a complete picture of the workforce and changes over time to better shape workforce strategy, policy and practice.



Key actions to achieve the target

Increasing the representation of youth employed in the sector requires sustained effort, a different way of doing things and stronger accountability.

All agencies are responsible for working towards the aspirational target. Actions taken also require collaboration with young people whose ideas and participation are essential in making our sector as inclusive as possible.

Actions for the Public Sector Commission are described in this plan, alongside a suite of actions for agencies to implement.

Most value can be gained by considering actions across the four improvement areas rather than actions in just one or two areas.

As agencies have differing needs and contexts, they should adopt those actions appropriate to their circumstances in ways best suited to their needs.

This action plan has four key areas for improvement that flow across the strategy and other action plans:

1

Educate and empower

A knowledge and capability uplift is a priority consideration in workforce planning for youth.

2

Attract and develop

Recruitment and development practices proactively identify and support the talent of youth.

3

Lead and build

There is deliberate leadership to build organisation cultures where all people are treated fairly and respectfully.

4

Account and celebrate

Responsibility is taken for improving the representation and inclusion of youth in public sector employment.

1 Educate and empower

Actions for the Commission

Provide tools

- 1.1 Work with young people to develop a guide for agencies to increase awareness of and strengthen inclusive work practices.
- 1.2 Develop a guide to ensure managers and staff are aware of and promote the use of flexible working opportunities.

Understand impact

- 1.3 Understand and consider the impact of whole of government reforms and workforce policy changes on youth employment.

Recruit for diversity

- 1.4 Provide guidance on the use of provisions in the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to specifically target employment of youth.

Use data analytics

- 1.5 Provide agencies with comparative data to support greater insight into performance and workforce planning.
- 1.6 Review data on the retention of youth in employment after centralised graduate, internship, traineeship and other programs.

Partner for greater impact

- 1.7 Partner with education institutions to provide opportunities to support career pathways through work experience, internships and traineeships.

Build employee networks

- 1.8 Promote and leverage the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) Young Professionals Network to inform policy and practice.



1 Educate and empower

Actions for agencies

Know your structure

- 1.1 Assess agency structures to identify entry level pathways and opportunities for the progression of young staff.
- 1.2 Analyse the impact of planned agency restructures and position classifications on the representation of young staff.

Mentoring

- 1.3 Introduce mentoring opportunities (including reverse mentoring), and invite young staff to contribute their ideas, knowledge and experiences to service design and delivery.

Make better use of data

- 1.4 Use public sector youth workforce and community representation data to set specific agency targets, and inform recruitment and workforce planning.
- 1.5 Review data on the retention of youth in employment after graduate, internship, traineeship and other programs.

Learn to target

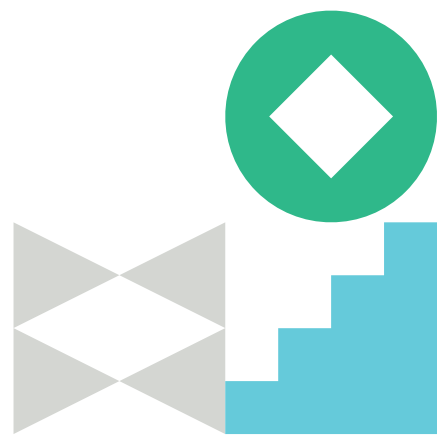
- 1.6 Trial the implementation of section 66ZP of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to target recruitment and development opportunities to increase representation and progression of youth in public sector employment.

Establish agency networks

- 1.7 Consider establishing an agency network for young staff for collegial support, and to contribute to the review and design of practices that impact employment outcomes.

Establish community links

- 1.8 Consider establishing links with youth community groups to improve service outcomes.



2 Attract and develop

Actions for the Commission

Strengthen the rules

- 2.1 Remove opportunity for discriminatory practices to occur when reviewing recruitment, selection and appointment legislation, instruments and policies.

Partner to extend reach

- 2.2 Promote the use of specialist employment service providers and networks to attract young job seekers.

Set up youth hacks

- 2.3 Establish youth hacks for staff to collaborate and present innovative solutions to complex challenges.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.4 Work with agencies to provide guidance on initiatives that name and remove bias such as de-identified job applications.

Strengthen talent pipeline

- 2.5 Review existing youth entry pathways including traineeship and graduate programs with a view to expanding certificate offerings and career paths.
- 2.6 Partner with education institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake work experience and internships.

Move towards direct employment

- 2.7 Explore direct employment pathways into agencies for graduates of traineeships and other programs.

Promote the sector

- 2.8 Promote the public sector as an employer of choice for youth.

2 Attract and develop

Actions for agencies

Identify barriers and develop solutions

- 2.1 Examine agency job applicant data and information to identify and address any barriers to the recruitment and progression of youth.

Assess brand for attraction

- 2.2 Evaluate agency brand to assess potential factors limiting the attraction of youth.
- 2.3 Consider innovative recruitment techniques that increase youth participation.

Partner to extend reach

- 2.4 Partner with specialist employment service providers and networks to attract young job seekers.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.5 Develop initiatives to remove unconscious bias in recruitment, training and workforce practices.

Identify jobs

- 2.6 Identify suitable entry level positions in the agency for youth.

Promote the agency

- 2.7 Participate in career expos, and university and training provider open days.

Host youth

- 2.8 Host youth through traineeship, graduate and other employment and training programs.

Advertise opportunities broadly

- 2.9 Distribute all advertised positions through Jobs and Skills WA and other employment providers, networks and on social media.

3 Lead and build

Actions for the Commission

Lead from the top

- 3.1 Conduct an annual review for the Public Sector Leadership Council to consider progress against the aspirational target.

Create incentives

- 3.2 Explore opportunities to improve the availability of entry level positions in the sector, including in regional areas.

Set up mobility

- 3.3 Establish a mobility program and flexible working options for youth to broaden skills and experience.

Build diversity into planning

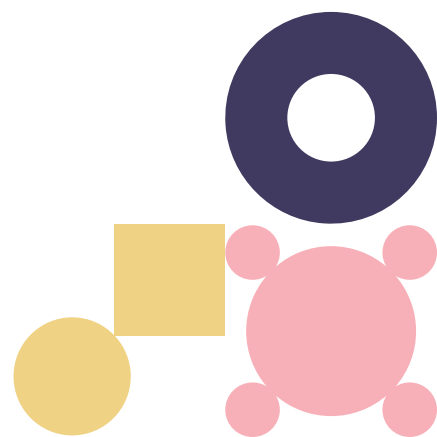
- 3.4 Provide model workforce and diversity plans for agency use that feature strong measures for increasing employment and progression of youth.

Improve culture

- 3.5 Crowdsource innovative ideas for improving employment outcomes for youth.

Promote respect

- 3.6 Explore the development of a respectful relationships program to support the sector.



3 Lead and build

Actions for agencies

Lead change

- 3.1 Deliberately plan for youth in workforce and diversity planning activities, and link strategies to business and operational plans.
- 3.2 Reinforce zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment, and provide a clear complaints pathway for staff to feel confident in raising issues.

Challenge inappropriate behaviours

- 3.3 Ensure senior leaders act as role models, demonstrating respectful behaviour and challenging inappropriate language and attitudes.

Listen to youth

- 3.4 Include youth in policy making and service design through innovative initiatives such as youth hacks and pitch days.

Mentor to transfer corporate knowledge

- 3.5 Establish a mentor program partnering senior staff with young staff.

Support networking

- 3.6 Encourage young staff to participate in sector wide youth networks such as the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) Young Professionals Network.

Connect by social media

- 3.7 Explore agency social media tools to connect young staff to professional support networks.

4 Account and celebrate

Actions for the Commission

Listen and respond

- 4.1 Introduce the requirement for agencies to include staff perceptions of workplace inclusiveness in annual reports.

Set targets

- 4.2 Establish targets to increase the representation of youth, and monitor sector and agency progress.

Account for progress

- 4.3 Add diversity targets for youth into the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement and annual reporting guidelines.
- 4.4 Identify opportunities for agencies to monitor and report on innovative initiatives that increase the representation of youth and promote inclusiveness.

Improve use of data

- 4.5 Review qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies to ensure the best information about the employment of youth is gathered and used to inform improvement.

Share good stories

- 4.6 Publish stories and share initiatives about better employment and inclusion outcomes across a range of communications channels.



4 Account and celebrate

Actions for agencies

Work towards target

- 4.1 Set explicit expectations across the agency to work towards the aspirational employment target for youth.

Report progress

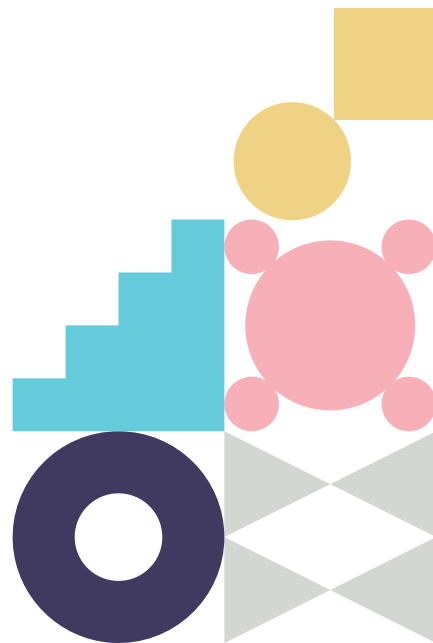
- 4.2 Monitor and report progress against the aspirational employment target for youth, including in the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement.

Celebrate

- 4.3 Commit to proactively seeking nominations for State and national awards to acknowledge the achievements of young staff.

Share success

- 4.4 Highlight positive stories and achievements of young staff through internal and external communications, including annual and other reports.



Principles, monitoring performance, data and definitions

Principles

Sustainable improvement in workforce diversification is driven by four principles guiding agency actions.

Leadership

Public sector leaders are visible advocates who take strong and deliberate action to drive improvements in workforce diversification, and lead a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

Collaboration

Public sector agencies work together to improve diversity employment outcomes and share best practice.

Accountability

The head of each public sector agency is accountable for improving workforce diversification.

Cultural inclusion

The public sector has culturally inclusive workplaces where staff are supported and valued for their contribution, and where managers are diversity aware.

Monitoring performance

Equal employment opportunity and diversity related information collected by the Commission will continue to be used to monitor progress against the targets and action plans. Outcomes will be reported through the state of the sector report and other workforce reporting.

Under the strategy, the Commission will work with key stakeholders to identify and refine reporting obligations currently required across multiple agencies for identified diversity groups.

Data

All public sector data used in this strategy and the supporting action plans are based on the March point in time series.

There are further [data definitions and methods](#) on our website.

Definitions

The terms used in this strategy and the action plans are defined below.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

People who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Culturally and linguistically diverse people

People who are born in identified countries which are not mainly English speaking.

People of diverse sexualities and genders

People of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

People with disability

People who have a mild or moderate core activity limitation.

Women in the SES

Women who are part of the Senior Executive Service.

Youth

People who are aged 24 years and under.

