



GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2023-2025

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Definition of Terms

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| Employees / Staff | An Individual employed by SKA Observatory under the terms of a Contract of Employment |
| Diversity Champion | Member of a recruitment panel appointed to ensure that all panel members keep in mind the SKAO's commitment to Diversity throughout the recruitment process |
| IGO | Inter-governmental Organisation |
| EDI | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion |
| EDIWG | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group |
| EDITF | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force |
| Values Ambassadors | Provide an informal route for staff looking for support in relation to speak up matters and to access information to help guide and coach the SKAO Code of ethics. |
| STEM | Science, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics. Careers and jobs related to these disciplines. |
| Family Friendly | Policies and practices designed to achieve balance between work and personal life and to combat issues that can affect families such as childcare etc. |

1. Director-General's Foreword

The SKAO is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The SKAO aims to create an inclusive environment that values all, is free from bias and enables the Observatory to attract, retain and develop a diverse workforce, benefitting from the different talents and perspectives of all.

The SKAO has the ambitious EDI objective of becoming an exemplary employer in science, building on our organisational values and being an employer of choice for women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

The SKAO has placed particular focus on embedding gender equality as part of our EDI approach into everything we do, especially through recruitment, our policies, ways of working and communications, with outcomes measured and reported to our Council to help inform and drive continuous improvement. Guided by the implementation plan developed by the SKAO's EDI task force, this work aims to deliver gender balance, diversity that reflects our member countries and equity of access to all SKAO activities, including our science.

Significant progress on gender equality continues to be made on the actions identified in the EDI implementation plan. Most notable actions are around the compulsory 'Speak Up' training, the planned introduction of values ambassadors, the implementation of EDI-specific design, policy, and behavioural elements in remote accommodation facilities at the SKA telescope sites, celebrations of International Women in Engineering/Science Days through the featuring of our female experts and the promotion of female-targeted initiatives, and a dedicated Women in STEM page on the SKAO's website.

2. Introduction

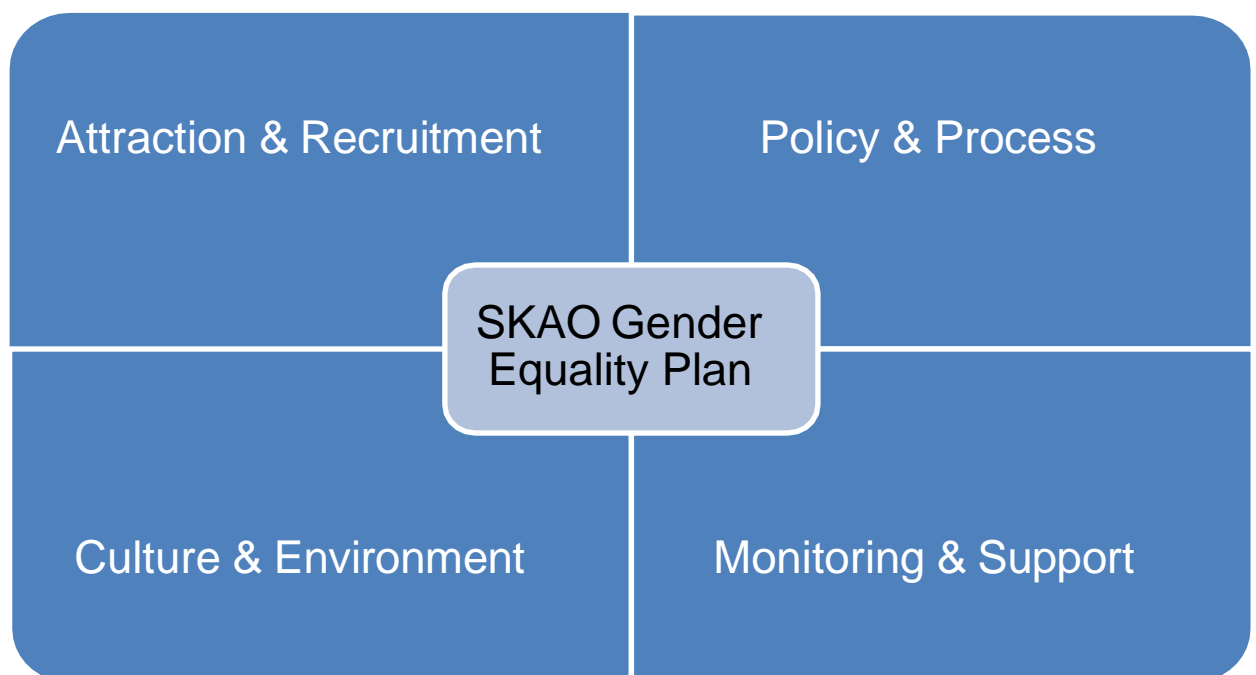
- 2.1. In its preamble, the Convention establishing the Square Kilometre Array Observatory explicitly expresses the SKAO's commitment to building an organisation where diversity and equality are promoted and respected.
- 2.2. In keeping with this commitment, the SKAO continues to build an Observatory where Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion, is a key priority, embedded in its operation.
- 2.3. With locations spanning three continents, and our member countries providing additional global reach, the SKAO maintains a diverse workforce with about 30 nationalities being employed at any one time. We have built a collaborative work environment that features a diverse pool of talented professionals from all over the world, working together for a common goal.
- 2.4. The SKAO recognises that a key strength of the Observatory can be found within its diversity. Every opportunity is taken to enhance our cause in this area and this document sets out our commitment to gender equality more specifically.
- 2.5. The SKAO is a young organisation, having only been established in 2021 and our Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for the period 2023 to 2025 demonstrates the

work already in place to support the ongoing process to protect, and improve, gender equality across the SKAO. Additionally, this GEP highlights the SKAO's commitment to continuous improvement, through implementing various policies and processes that promote gender equality throughout the Observatory.

- 2.6. The SKAO undertakes to meet the European Commission mandatory requirements for Gender Equality Plans (GEP). SKAO undertakes to ensure that this plan is publicly available; highlight the dedicated resources within the SKAO working to ensure that our gender diversity aims are met; highlight the SKAO's mechanisms for data collection and monitoring; and training for all within the SKAO Community on gender inclusivity.

3. The SKAO'S Strategic Approach

- 3.1. Our gender equality strategy forms part of the SKAO's broader Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, built around four key elements which all seek to work towards the Observatory's goal to build a reputation as an organisation recognised for its diversity and equality. Here, all individuals including women and other minority gender groups are valued, can thrive, and are supported to achieve their potential.



- 3.2. Through our recruitment approach, and our policies and processes, we aim to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse workforce supported by an inclusive culture and environment which allows individuals to balance their differing work-life needs. In particular, the SKAO aims to become an employer of choice for women in STEM fields.
- 3.3. The SKAO undertakes to ensure gender inclusive practices are embedded in our fabric and many of the activities included in the action plan at Appendix 1 are, or will be, embedded within our processes during the lifetime of this plan. The action plan includes targets that the SKAO is working towards to

ensure we become a model place of work for all genders.

4. Attraction and Recruitment

- 4.1. The SKAO aims to attract and recruit diverse candidates, with a particular focus on attracting women into both STEM roles and leadership positions, where women have historically been underrepresented.
- 4.2. The SKAO's recruitment process ensures that from job advertisement through to offer negotiation there is fairness and equity. All job advertisements clearly state our commitment to EDI and promote our flexible working culture, in the process attracting candidates who have caring responsibilities, and may otherwise hesitate to apply for roles. One specific tactic has been in targeted events such as Women in STEM careers fairs in which SKAO regularly participates.
- 4.3. Through our attraction processes, the SKAO seeks to establish as diverse an applicant pool as possible, often targeting specific underrepresented groups by targeted search and focused attraction methods. To achieve this, careful consideration is given to the best channels of attraction with proactive searches undertaken where applicable to encourage women applicants.
- 4.4. Care is taken when crafting the job advertisements to use gender neutral language and all advertisements are reviewed through a gender decoder prior to publication. In addition, mandatory role requirements detailed in advertisements are limited to only what is needed, and care is taken to ensure the SKAO's recruitment pages are as attractive as possible to diverse candidates through highlighting the SKAO's inclusive culture, ways of working and family friendly policies.
- 4.5. The SKAO regularly features women working in different teams at the Observatory on brochures, social media sites and the SKAO website. Highlighting female role models across the Observatory aims to encourage applicants thinking of applying for roles at the SKAO and showcases the diversity of background and origins of women and other gender minorities working at the SKAO.
- 4.6. Recruitment selection is conducted through diverse interview and assessment panels. These panels include Diversity Champions tasked to uphold the Observatory's commitment to equality and diversity through ensuring all applicants are assessed fairly, and challenging other panel members if required.
- 4.7. During the interview and assessment process, the SKAO ensures to communicate with candidates that reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate applicants with specific needs. In some instances, positive action within selection decisions may be taken to account for under-represented groups to seek a more diverse candidate pool.
- 4.8. The priorities in the action plan (Appendix 1) build on the positive work carried out to date in the attraction and recruitment of gender diverse candidates, with a focus on establishing clear measures and targets to drive continuous improvement.

5. Culture and Environment

- 5.1. In order to achieve our aim of being an employer of choice, especially for women in STEM, the SKAO is committed to creating an environment and culture that supports gender diversity through everything that we do, as

detailed below.

- 5.2. The culture of diversity and inclusion of the SKAO is set out clearly within its founding treaty where the SKAO Convention declares us to be “committed to an organisation where diversity and equality are promoted and respected.”
- 5.3. The SKAO culture is further embodied in our Values established through extensive staff collaboration and consultation. One of our five core values is that of Diversity and Inclusion stated as:
"We aim to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong, there is fairness and respect for everyone as an individual, and diverse perspectives and ideas thrive."
- 5.4. Our flexible working culture supports staff in achieving a balance between their personal life and work commitments. Supported by individual Team Charters, this enables staff to manage their hours and location of work for mutual benefit, within the bounds of the SKAO’s flexible working guidelines.
- 5.5. The SKAO Recognition Scheme celebrates the demonstration of the SKAO Values expressed each day by our staff members. This recognition, through annual awards, recognition slack channels and other mechanisms, set out in the recognition toolkit, enables good practice to be recognised and shared. Focusing recognition in this way seeks to further embed the Values into the everyday culture of the SKAO.
- 5.6. The SKAO seeks to celebrate and recognise days of cultural significance to help embed our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. A number of International days have been identified as part of the EDI Taskforce recommendations, along with several other locally recognised days in our host countries in the UK, Australia, and South Africa. Several of these observed days focus on our value of EDI and seek to celebrate the role of Women in STEM careers.
- 5.7. The priorities in the action plan (Appendix 1) focus on policy-led discussion and development to ensure that SKAO promotes a culture of gender inclusivity through our policies, ways of working and by making it part of the SKAO discourse.

6. Policy and Process

- 6.1. The SKAO supports our gender diversity aims through having established policies and processes which enable and support a gender-diverse workforce.
- 6.2. The SKAO has implemented a suite of foundational policy documents which embed and support SKAO’s culture, Values and ways of working. These include a range of policies designed to support women at work and more broadly embed our values where respect and inclusion are at the heart of how we operate as a diverse organisation. In particular, the SKAO has established family-friendly policies to help all staff achieve a balance between their personal commitments and working life. These include policies on flexible working, parenting and family leave, sabbatical and career breaks, working patterns, and time away from work.
- 6.3. Other policy documents, which set out our expectations and ways of working, are designed to create an environment where staff and the broader SKAO science community, irrespective of their gender, may contribute and thrive at work. These include:
 - a. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. This outlines the

Observatory's commitment to being an equal opportunities employer that encourages equality, diversity and inclusion within a working environment promoting dignity and respect for all.

- b. Standards of Conduct and Behaviour. All staff of the SKAO are required to adhere to the Standards of Conduct and Behaviour which defines specific responsibilities for staff in relation to the protection and safeguarding of employees, the reputation of the SKAO, compliance with policies and legal responsibilities. It defines our overall expectations for staff and guides all those who work for us to ensure a working environment that is in the spirit of our culture and Values.
- c. The SKAO Code of Ethics. This defines the standards and professional behaviours expected of the SKA Community and sets out the minimum standard of ethical behaviour relating to work carried out in support of the SKA Observatory. The code applies in the workplace, and outside the workplace where actions could cause SKA Observatory reputational damage.
- d. The Code of Conduct for SKA Meetings and Events. This applies to all SKAO organised or hosted events. All participants at these events are bound by this code to provide an environment that encourages the creation of ideas, recognises and values difference and celebrates the diversity and contributions made by people from a range of cultures and backgrounds.

6.4. Through our processes we look to ensure our approach reflects our policies and aligns with our commitments to gender equality.

6.5. Our Career Framework and Pay Structure documents, which were both introduced during 2021, ensure that all positions offered are in line with the evaluated role size and subsequent placement within the framework. The regularly reviewed pay structure aligns to the Career Framework ensuring all staff are rewarded equitably for the work they do. This Career and Pay Framework has been designed to eliminate bias and support equal pay using the Hay job evaluation system, one of the most globally recognised and established job size methodologies.

6.6. The SKAO aspires to increase the number of women in senior management/leadership roles as set out in the action plan (Appendix 1) below this includes targeted coaching for women aiming to develop their leadership skills.

7. Monitoring and Support

7.1. The SKAO seeks to protect, embed and monitor our approach to gender equality.

7.2. The Observatory is committed to acting ethically and for our people to be aligned to our Values. The Guide to the SKAO Values was launched in 2022 and provides all staff with a detailed insight into our Values and examples of the related behaviours that are expected.

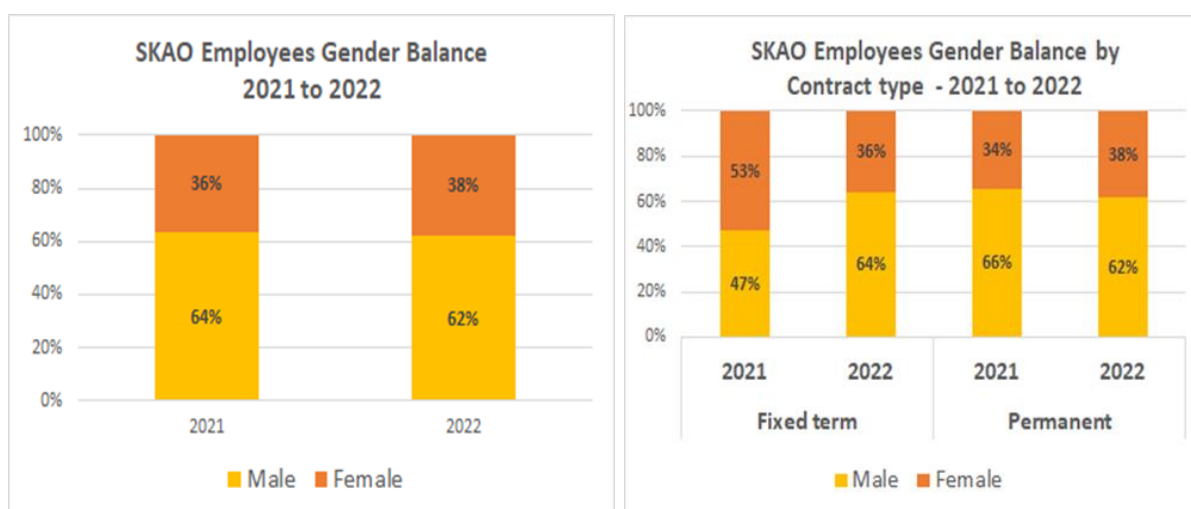
7.3. We support staff by providing access to essential learning designed to support our cultural aims. Our online learning platform, SKAO Learning, was launched in December 2022 and part of the initial learning modules cascaded to all

staff included those relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

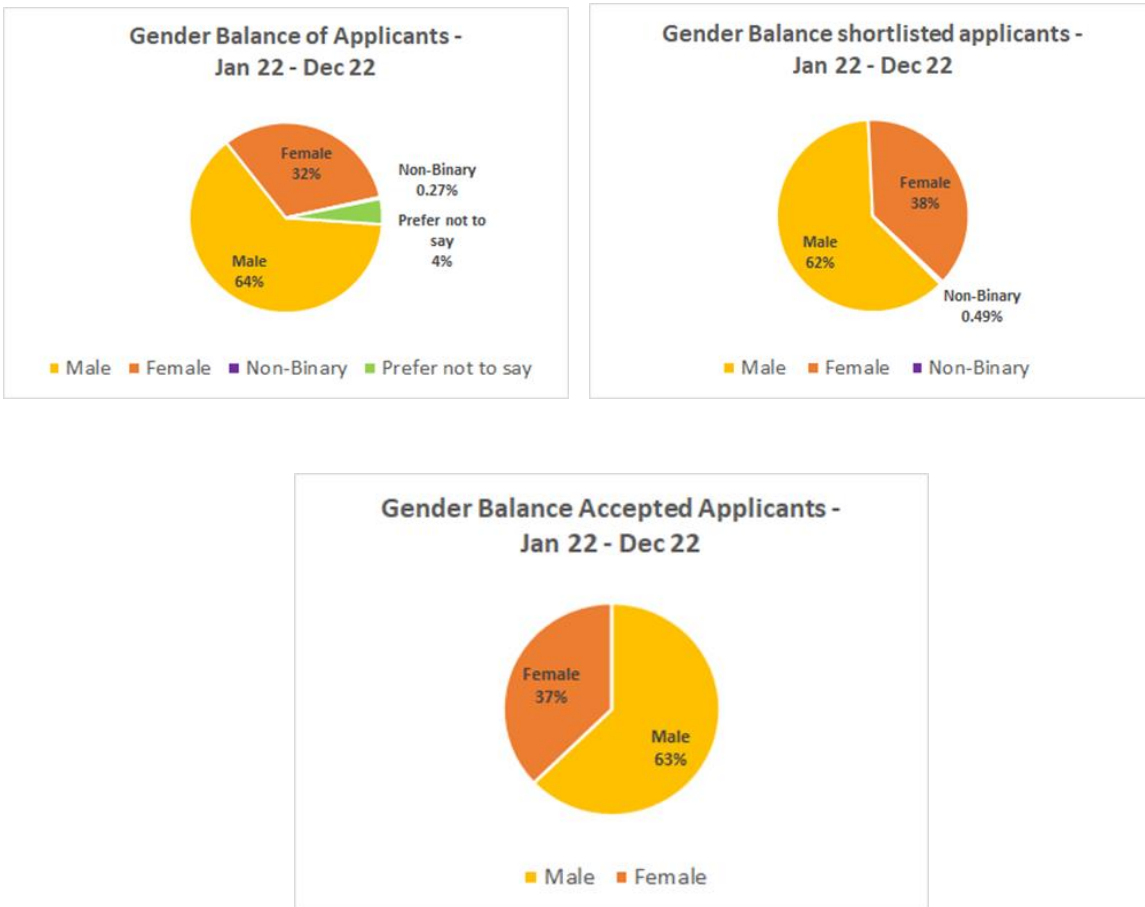
- 7.4. Over the lifetime of this GEP, SKAO learning will be developed to further support our diversity and inclusion objectives as set out in the action plan (Appendix 1). These will include specific courses relating to Gender Equality, Gender Identity, Respect in the Workplace and Unconscious Bias.
- 7.5. Should staff be subject to, or witness, behaviour that is in breach of the Observatory policy and/or Values we have an established Whistleblowing policy and process to support the reporting of ethical concerns anonymously for all colleagues.
- 7.6. Values Ambassadors to be launched during the lifetime of this plan will be situated in each of the SKAO's facilities and will be available for staff who may have concerns about practices or behaviour they have witnessed.
- 7.7. Our Staff Association provides an additional channel for our staff to raise concerns to ensure that the fair treatment and ethical values the Observatory holds in such high importance are upheld.
- 7.8. A 'Speak Up' initiative launched in 2023 will encourage a culture of confidence and build an environment where staff feel able to call out poor behaviours and provide peer-to-peer intervention and coaching. This will be driven through mandatory training for all staff and supported by our Values Ambassadors
- 7.9. SKAO Learning Modules such as Recruitment Standards, SKAO Values and new starter Induction are being introduced to further support staff in fulfilling their responsibility to our Culture, Values and commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 7.10. We will continue to actively gather and monitor data, and will use this date to inform and develop future versions of the Gender Equality Plan

8. The SKAO's Gender Profile

- 8.1. The SKAO HR department collates anonymised employee data. This is shown below for the period from the SKAO IGO inception in 2021 to December 2022.



8.2. We also collect anonymised data relating to the recruitment process and this is shown below for the period January to December 2022.



9. Addressing Challenges

- 9.1. From the analysis of data, we regularly identify, review and document our challenges seeking to establish continuous improvement, whilst recognising that in many cases there may not be one simple course of action. Our main challenge continues to be the attraction of women into STEM based positions. Efforts to attract more candidate diversity are detailed in section 4 above with further analysis and actions being examined.
- 9.2. The SKAO performs Employee Engagement and EDI staff surveys across the Observatory in alternating years. These surveys are used to consult with staff and the key outcomes implemented to support continuous improvement. An EDI survey is planned in 2024 and the results will be analysed and discussed through staff focus groups to determine our key priorities for EDI improvement over the coming months and will inform the review and update of the Gender Equality Plan for the period 2025 to 2027.
- 9.3. In 2021, the SKAO established an EDI Working Group that aimed to identify actions that enable the building of a culture at the SKAO that embraces Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and ensured the Observatory is committed to:
 - Recognising and building on the EDI milestones already achieved.

- Realising our vision of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where:
 - there is fairness and respect for all as individuals; and
 - diverse perspectives and ideas can thrive.
- Ensuring that our processes and working practices deliver equity of access for all, both in the workplace, and to the Observatory.
- Promoting a culture of dialogue and inclusion that honours the rich diversity of the organisation and ensures everyone feels they belong.
- Paying attention to diversity in all its forms and ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

9.4. The EDI WG produced an action plan for consideration by the SKAO EDI Taskforce, established by the Director-General during 2022 to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implementation plan.

10. EDI Taskforce Implementation Plan

10.1. The EDI Taskforce published their Implementation Plan in July 2023. This identified the nine specific actions of highest priority for rapid implementation across the SKAO, addressing the three themes:

- Gender balance;
- Diversity that reflects the member countries; and
- Equity of access to SKA activities, including science.

10.2. The areas for immediate action identified by the EDI Taskforce were:

- To focus on diversity and equity through recruitment;
- Embed equity and inclusion in the tools and systems of the Observatory, and in its culture, as the Observatory grows;
- To continually communicate SKAO's commitment to the principles of EDI, including measuring and reporting on outcomes and using metrics and KPIs to drive improvement.

11. Conclusion

11.1. SKAO's Gender Equality Plan will be monitored and reviewed in relation to the progress of our aims and success of our actions.

11.2. Data analysis and surveys shall be the primary tools used to establish our success and consider the outcomes of these in our future endeavours.

11.3. The Gender Equality Plan will be reviewed annually and updated accordingly.

11.4. Standard circulation of the Gender Equality Plan will be to the Executive Leadership Team with a copy available to all staff on the HR pages of the Intranet.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

| Key Actions | Success in this area will include but is not limited to: | Dedicated Resource |
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| Action 1- Attract and recruit women and other gender diverse minority groups to promote Gender Equality at SKAO | | |
| <p>Attract and recruit women and other gender diverse minority groups across all roles of the SKAO.</p> <p>Ensure fairness and equity in SKAO's recruitment process.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that, for roles where women and other gender minorities are underrepresented, all roles are advertised in forums aimed at women in STEM. • 100% of job advertisements are written with gender neutral language. • SKAO's gender inclusivity policies and processes are promoted throughout recruitment to encourage applications by women and other gender minorities. • All SKAO published material presenting staff provides a visible representation of women and other gender minorities at the SKAO. • 100% of recruitment panels include a Diversity Champion to ensure compliance with SKAO's EDI requirements. • Training to be developed, including Diversity training, by Mid-2024 with 100% of hiring managers to complete that training. 100% of all staff involved in recruitment completed training to ensure compliance with SKAO's EDI requirements by 2025. • Recruitment data showing that we achieve diversity that outperforms the diversity of the market in which we are seeking to attract candidates. • Over the lifetime of the plan, increase by 5% | <p>HR Diversity Champions in recruitment panels</p> |

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| <p>Collect and review data and statistics on diversity of applicants and candidates throughout the recruitment process and implement measures to address any imbalances in diversity in specific recruitment process.</p> | <p>the appointment or progression of women and other gender minorities to SKAO roles across all levels of the Career Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity statistics for the candidate pool provided in 100% of briefing packs prepared for the recruitment panel. | |
| <p>Action 2- Build a culture of inclusivity where gender diversity is valued and prioritised in the execution of SKAO's mission</p> | | |
| <p>Ensure that the SKAO has policies that promote a culture of gender inclusivity and make it part of the SKAO discourse.</p> <p>Promote visible representation of women and other gender minorities at SKAO, while recognising the impact of intersectionality in the experience of women in workplaces.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote open and policy led discussions on women-related issues such as menopause and the impact on workplace inclusivity. • Deliver and implement Observatory wide guidance on menopause. • Review SKAO EDI Policies, on a minimum two-year cycle, to ensure they remain fit for purpose and capture best practices in gender inclusivity. • Ensure opportunity for women and other gender minorities at SKAO to represent SKAO at public events. • Over the lifetime of the plan, increase, by 5%, women in senior management/leadership positions at SKAO. • Celebrating Women in STEM pages published on the SKAO internet site, sharing the stories of women in STEM at SKAO | <p>HR Communications team.</p> |

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| <p>Implement guidelines for gender-neutral language in all official documents, communications and publications.</p> <p>Promote Gender focused learning and development.</p> <p>Celebrate key diversity days and months such as International Women's Day, International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Pride Month etc.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace gender-specific terms with neutral alternatives (e.g. chairperson, instead of chairman, parenting leave instead of maternity leave). • Train employees to understand and use inclusive language effectively and develop resources and tools such as glossaries of inclusive terms and phrases. • Promote learning modules on SKAO Learning on gender inclusivity. • Good levels of staff engagement on EDI and gender diversity as measured against external benchmarks. • SKAO to actively participate in external Gender Equality events to learn from and drive continuous improvement of our approach. • EDI Calendar published on SKAO intranet showing the international days identified by SKAO as significant in our field and linked to our values. | |
| <p>Action 3- Implement policy and processes that promote gender diversity across the SKAO</p> | | |
| <p>Ensure visibility and clear communication of SKAO's gender equality policies.</p> <p>Ensure SKAO policies supports all people with caring responsibilities, including the return to work following periods of</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible EDI policies on SKAO's website and intranet • 100% of staff aware of where to find SKAO Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct and Behaviour • By end 2025 review SKAO flexible working and leave policies and guidance to ensure they remain fit for purpose in the context of gender | <p>HR</p> |

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| <p>parenting leave.</p> <p>Identify and address gender pay gap across the Observatory through collection of data.</p> <p>Address gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination, ensuring a culture of openness where all personnel feel able to speak up.</p> | <p>equality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure annual pay increases by gender to ensure the delivery of SKAO’s commitment to equal pay. • Speak up campaign launched in 2023 aimed at giving colleagues the confidence to recognise and call out inappropriate workplace behaviour, including gender-based harassment, bullying and discrimination. • Mandatory Speak Up training completed by 100% SKAO Staff. • 100% of new starters to complete mandatory Speak Up training within 2 weeks of starting employment with SKAO. • 100% of gender-based discrimination issues are reported and acted upon in accordance with SKAO policy and in a timely manner. • Employee Assistance Programme accessible by 100% of staff to support with issues outside the workplace, including relating to gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination. • By Spring 2024 implement Values Ambassador roles, providing staff with a further route to the support needed to speak up and access information to help guide and coach them. • Ethics page published on the SKAO internet including a Code of conduct for meetings and | |
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| <p>Implement Ways of working and living on remote telescope sites that recognise gender diversity, and ensure that everybody feels comfortable, safe, supported and respected.</p> | <p>events that is applicable to 100% of SKAO-organised or sponsored events and setting out how to report inappropriate behaviour and the consequences that might apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and minority genders report feeling respected, safe, and supported as measured through periodic pulse surveys. • 100% of issues dealt with in a timely manner, recognising a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviour at all times | |
| <p>Action 4 – Continuous monitoring and data collection to ensure SKAO supports gender minorities and implements data driven policies and processes</p> | | |
| <p>Monitor, protect and embed SKAO’s approach to gender equality.</p> <p>Ensure periodic EDI surveys to obtain feedback from the SKAO Personnel</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce regular reports on the diversity of SKAO’s recruitment and workforce statistics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EDI data is monitored on a monthly basis. ○ EDI reports shared with Executive Leadership Team and at Council Meetings (every 4 months) ○ Published in Annual Report • EDI survey launched in 2024, and to run alternate years there after | <p>HR</p> |