



Improving Diversity & Inclusion in Intellectual Property Development and Management

A Guide for Organizations

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The information and recommendations in this Guide are based on research and insights that were shared during a series of closed-door roundtables convened by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Invent Together in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Arab region during the period from October 2021 to June 2023. In total, 72 representatives from corporations, technology transfer offices of universities and research centers, NGOs, and government agencies participated in these sessions, contributing their insights about the current state of intellectual property (IP) diversity, their reasons for prioritizing action in this area, challenges encountered, and actions taken to address the issue. While participants acknowledged that IP gaps affecting all historically underrepresented groups must be closed, these roundtables focused on gender. This is reflected in the Guide.

About Ethisphere

[Ethisphere](#) is the global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices that fuel corporate character, marketplace trust, and business success. Ethisphere honors superior achievement through its [World's Most Ethical Companies®](#) recognition program, provides a community of industry experts with the Business Ethics Leadership Alliance (BELA), and showcases ethics best practices in [Ethisphere Magazine](#). Ethisphere also helps to advance business performance through data-driven assessments, benchmarking, and guidance.

About Innovation Council

[Innovation Council](#) is a cross-sectoral innovators group, based in Geneva, that connects policymakers with organizations bringing new technology solutions to society, across sectors and regions. Innovation Council advocates for effective frameworks for IP protection and enforcement, and for inclusive innovation ecosystems. Jennifer Brant, the Director of Innovation Council, is a member of the International Gender Champions network, and she partners with WIPO to provide IP management training for female entrepreneurs in developing countries.

About this Guide

IP Diversity: Organizations and individuals benefit when innovation and the creation of intellectual property involves people from diverse backgrounds, and when the contributions of all participants are recognized and rewarded.

This Guide is intended to provide a straightforward roadmap for organizations wishing to improve IP diversity and inclusion in relation to how innovation, that is, the creation and management of intellectual property, is managed internally. The core goal is to reshape the processes for managing and rewarding innovation within organizations to make them more inclusive.

The Guide is written for the managers in charge of developing and implementing a program to improve diversity in IP development and management at all types and sizes of organizations, including companies, university technology transfer offices, and research institutes. It is also written for those people directly involved in IP development and management – from the identification of promising ideas all the way through the commercialization of new products and services based on those ideas – so they understand the importance of being included and getting credit for their contributions.

The focus of this Guide is on building and sustaining an effective program regardless of the size of your organization, or the location or nature of your business or other activity. Although some of the elements are more applicable to large organizations, the authors have made an effort to make it relevant to organizations of all sizes.

For many organizations today, regardless of the sector, intellectual property is their most valuable asset. Organizations should strive to create an inclusive culture that leverages all ideas and talent – a source of competitive advantage – and that appropriately recognizes and rewards all contributions to IP development and commercialization. Ultimately, this is an essential driver of not only personal opportunity and growth, but also competitive advantage for the organization.

In R&D-based organizations, IP management may be mostly focused on patents, since patents are public. Representation of female inventors on patents, in proportion to the number of women in technical roles, is a metric that is frequently used by organizations to assess IP diversity. Organizations should recognize that an IP diversity program may also touch on other types of IP rights.

The Guide takes you step-by-step through the key elements of building an innovation culture that delivers inclusion in relation to all aspects of IP development and management. The Guide contains resources and tools to help with practical implementation. You can go through the entire Guide or use each section on its own.

This Guide is divided into the following sections:

1. Building the Culture
2. IP Education
3. Establishing the Right Metrics
4. Promising IP Diversity Strategies
5. An Approach to Making Rapid Improvement

IP Diversity Gap: What & Why

The current state of IP development and management shows that there is a long way to go before diversity and inclusion within the IP space will be fully achieved. There are several underlying reasons, some at the societal level and some at the organization level.

Much has been written about the gender gap in terms of relatively lower participation by women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Although this does impact the pipeline of women inventors, there are other structural issues at play in organizations. Because STEM has been historically male dominated, in many organizations, there may be far more extensive networks of men in senior research and development positions, which contributes to the self-perpetuating lack of IP diversity.

Research has uncovered numerous barriers to inclusive and equitable participation in IP creation and in IP management, such as patenting. These affect independent inventors as well as those working in companies, universities, or other innovative organizations. People from historically underrepresented groups require access to technical education along with invention education, so they can learn how to identify and solve problems, and how to protect and commercialize ideas. Relatively less access to mentorship, lower participation in impactful social networks, and discrimination can make it harder for inventors from certain groups to participate in invention and to be recognized for their contributions. Within an organization, differential participation in teams that patent more intensively can also affect IP diversity.

In addition, in many societies, women are expected to be the primary caretakers for children, elderly relatives, and the home. These responsibilities can make it more difficult for women to participate in work sessions in evenings or during the weekends. Organizations need to recognize the societal pressures put on women, then proactively take steps to reduce the hurdles caused by the societal pressures.

In every society, organizations can create a culture that is inclusive and proactive from a diversity perspective, encouraging women and people from other historically underrepresented groups to fully participate in IP creation and management, and to seek credit. Diverse invention teams benefit from unique perspectives, different approaches to problem-solving, and the ability to create products and services for a broader customer base. Each organization can make a difference.

The Successful Strategies section presents actions that organizations can take.

Companies with above average diversity produce a greater proportion of revenue from innovation (45% of the total) than companies with below average diversity (26%). Forbes (January 2020) reports that this 19% innovation-related advantage translates into overall better financial performance.

According to WIPO, in 2023 only 17.7% of inventors worldwide were women. In 2023, WIPO economists updated analysis of international patent applications filed through the Patent Cooperation Treaty system. They determined that, at the current pace, the gender gap in international patenting will close by 2061. This means that the share of women inventors listed in patent applications worldwide is forecasted to reach parity in 38 years.

Introducing the Personas

Throughout this Guide, personas help to illustrate how four different types of organizations could use the recommendations and resources to build a vibrant, effective, and sustainable IP diversity program.

In this Guide, you will follow four IP diversity program leaders from varying backgrounds to see how the core concepts of building diversity in IP creation and management can be applied in organizations of different sizes and from different sectors.

Despite their different experience levels and core work duties, they all share a commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable culture for IP development and management in their organization. These four leaders will provide you with insights as to how you can create the right culture in your own organization. Look at what each leader does, regardless of the size or type of your own organization, because there could be useful techniques for you to apply.

Meet the IP diversity program leaders on the next page.



Neena

Director

University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“I’m very aware of the disparity between male and female inventors. There are certainly cultural issues in our society that contribute to it. I am committed to doing what I can to build a more inclusive pipeline of inventors from underrepresented groups, including women. I want to promote the advantages of identifying and using IP created by people from these groups and make sure they are recognized for their contributions.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager

Research lab – 155 employees

“I’m responsible for keeping everything running here. I handle all of the Human Resource (HR) roles. The company founders realize they need to take DEI issues more seriously. I’m the IP diversity leader because it is seen as part of HR. I don’t have much knowledge on the topic, but I’m willing to learn, and I generally have a good relationship with everyone who works here.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer

Software company – 4,000 employees

“I’m sensitive to the fact that IP development has always been male dominated. We have lost a lot of great talent because women felt that it was too hard to break through our culture. They didn’t feel comfortable sharing their ideas. I am making it my personal mission to change the culture. Our General Counsel agrees it is important, and my challenge is getting senior management buy-in and then cascading gender equity throughout the company.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President

Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“We operate in over 50 countries and have R&D centers in 12 countries. We have policies on gender equity, but having policies is very different from having a culture that supports true equity especially in critical areas like invention and IP commercialization. Our business is built on good ideas and technologies. On a broader level, we’ve launched several DEI initiatives in the past two years. I’m trying to find ways to use those to address IP diversity.”

Building the Culture

An effective IP diversity program must embrace the philosophy of continual improvement because the challenges are always evolving, and there are always new people in your organization.

The ultimate purpose is to broadly raise awareness about the importance of IP diversity, and to influence the behavior of the people and the culture of the organization, in order to improve inclusion and equity in this area. To do this, you must break down any silos and work to embed gender diversity and equity considerations in the routine workflow of how IP is developed and managed. Naturally, this is not done in a vacuum; organizations operate within societal cultures that may make achieving equity more difficult. At the same time, it is the organization's responsibility to take reasonable steps to improve equity within its sphere of influence. To give an example, in a society where women are often expected to be the primary caretakers of children, elderly parents, and the home, the organization can implement a structured way for women to take part in drafting invention disclosures during normal working hours. It can also ensure diverse representation on the board that reviews invention disclosures.

Securing Management Support

Senior management support is an important element in creating a culture that encourages and drives IP diversity. Yet getting senior management support is easier said than done. In today's regulatory and social environment, senior management is inundated with a wide range of issues. Compliance. Environment, Social & Governance (ESG). Data privacy. Cybersecurity. All of these topics rightfully take the time and attention of senior management, as they are integrated at some level into the overall enterprise strategy.

Having the right strategies for IP creation and management is important for your organization's success. Your challenge is to elevate IP diversity so that it too becomes part of the senior management discussion. A persuasive case to senior management includes information on the importance of IP diversity for innovation and employee retention, both of which directly impact the organization's bottom line. We discuss specific metrics you may want to use in the section Establishing the Right Metrics.

Building a culture that promotes IP diversity requires identifying the underlying causes of the lack of inclusion, developing targeted programs to address them, then using short, frequent communications to build awareness, gain commitment, and prescribe the desired action. You can't skip a step.



Neena

Director
University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“I am part of senior management at our tech transfer office, and we are committed to DEI at our organization. My challenge is to influence the individuals, departments, and organizations we work with on both sides – the researchers developing intellectual property, and those protecting and managing the IP. We decided to hold a series of workshops for the IP developers to encourage them to focus on improving gender equity in all aspects of these processes. The parts of our organization that manage IP rights tend to be larger, so we started to publish a short monthly newsletter that highlighted the benefits of more diverse teams for commercialization and activities using statistics and stories.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager
Research lab – 155 employees

“Our senior management had talked generally about DEI, but we never went beyond talking. Because we are a research lab, our competitive advantage comes from attracting and retaining smart inventors. I presented a plan showing how we could make very simple changes to our HR policies and our recruitment communications to attract more women to our research and development roles. We also need to evaluate our processes to make sure that female employees feel truly included in all aspects of R&D. IP diversity became our first structured DEI initiative. Senior management was thrilled to go beyond talking to action on DEI.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer
Software company – 4,000 employees

“My strategy for getting senior management support was to focus on our ability to attract and retain talent. I worked with our HR department to collect statistics on the ratio of men to women in our IP development functional areas. We went a step further and analyzed the average length of employment for men versus women. We found that it was 40% shorter for women. Finally, we calculated the cost to the company of filling these openings – everything from recruiting to training to time to integrate into the development teams. Our senior management was surprised by the amount it was costing our company. We got their attention.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President
Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“As a global company, we have a lot of DEI initiatives underway. Senior management and the Board of Directors are focused on DEI in response to investor and societal pressure. Unfortunately, the DEI initiatives are not coordinated from region to region and certainly not focusing on IP diversity. My strategy was to go to senior management with a plan that built on the existing DEI initiatives. I showed them how an IP diversity program would actually help connect the regional DEI initiatives.”

Role of Management

There is no single right way to structure IP diversity leadership roles or teams within your organization. There are several factors that may influence the approach that you choose, such as industry, size of the organization, geographic footprint, and functional department structure.

In particular, you will want to consider the relationship between R&D, legal, HR, and other functional departments with involvement with IP development and management. This will help you to determine the optimal structure to enable authority and decision making. At a high level, it may be in your interest to think about reporting lines and the clear delineations of roles and responsibilities. This will help you to avoid duplication and gaps in accountability.

Once senior management is bought in, they play an important role in setting the “tone from the top” that IP diversity matters for the organization. “Tone in the middle” is of equal importance. Managers play a critical role in cascading messages and direction from senior management and, especially, in turning talk into action.

For your IP diversity program, communications that highlight the following elements need to cascade from senior management to the relevant managers, then to all levels:

- **Awareness:** What is the issue with the IP diversity gap in the organization?
- **Commitment:** Why is this important to the organization and to each person in their job?
- **Action:** What do you want people to do and how should they do it?

Importance of Cross-Functional Collaboration

Ultimately, the goal is to embed diversity and equity considerations into IP development and management processes in a practical way. IP diversity doesn't have to stay in a separate silo. The creation of a cross-functional team will be a valuable step in achieving your goals in this area. The team can be formal or informal; what matters is that IP diversity is a consistent topic. You may have an existing cross-functional team whose mandate can be expanded to promote IP diversity. IP development and commercialization has a clear relationship to R&D, product development and the legal functions in your company – but you should think beyond that. Human resources will be a key player and so will the DEI function, if your organization has one.

Your cross-functional team should include the functions that are involved with IP development and management and/or that have relationships with the third parties that do. These could include operations, IT, human resources, procurement, sales and marketing. You want to include people who are senior enough to have both authority and overall visibility into how their function operates. At a minimum, the cross-functional team should include the departments responsible for IP development and management, HR, legal, and DEI.

Building Effective Cross-Functional Teams

It can be challenging to get a time commitment from people from different functional areas. Getting senior management's buy-in for IP diversity can help.

One approach that can work is to form the team around defining and achieving a specific time-bound goal in 6 months or less. Seek their involvement to help define an IP diversity goal that is practical and impactful for all. This gives the team a specific objective, and those you approach will not see the team as another open-ended committee and series of meetings. The initial goal doesn't need to be more people from underrepresented groups named on patents. It can be related to higher awareness among people in these groups about your organization's processes for identifying and managing promising inventions, and for recognizing and rewarding those who contribute to their creation.

As you develop your organization's IP diversity program, and any related policies or procedures, it is important to get input from all relevant functions to make sure that the policies are practical.

Tailor your communication and invitation to each functional department to highlight the benefits to their department. Think about what's in it for them. Examples: for HR, highlight better employee retention; for R&D, highlight the benefits of leveraging good ideas from more people.

Getting input during development is a great way to break IP diversity out of a silo and show how it can be embedded into their function without major changes in their existing workflow or, ideally, as a way to add value. Beyond the initial program development, you will need the support and cooperation of these functional areas to make the program come to life. Ultimately, it is likely that you will want to identify an IP diversity "champion" or ambassador in each function. Forming the cross-functional team early on will lay the foundation for identifying and recruiting these leaders. If you have an existing champion program, you might see if you can use a segment of that champion network to concentrate on IP diversity.



Neena

Director
University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“Given our size, our meetings are always cross-functional. My initial approach was to focus on the IP development side and build awareness of how being recognized and rewarded for inventions and IP development impacted career development. I found that many women did not realize the importance of being identified as an inventor. We made it tangible by showing real examples of how this leads to promotions and raises.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager
Research lab – 155 employees

“We’re a small company so our executive leadership team became our cross-functional IP diversity team. We added IP diversity as an agenda item to our weekly meeting. I gave a short update on our progress and got feedback and decisions as needed. Just having it on the agenda kept IP diversity on our radar. We identified a champion in each area, and I did a one-hour champion training session to get them going.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer
Software company – 4,000 employees

“I had built a good relationship with our HR department before seeking senior management support. I worked closely with HR to expand collaboration to involve all key functional areas. We built on our retention cost calculations to show how improving IP diversity could have a bottom-line benefit to each department. In building the cross-functional team, we were clear the team was being formed to achieve a specific six-month goal. I didn’t want them thinking this was a permanent committee. The response was great.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President
Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“Senior management sent a communication to all regional directors and functional leaders announcing that IP diversity would be the global focus of the DEI initiatives for the upcoming fiscal year. I followed up with the key leaders to present our overall global strategy and get their input on how it could be localized. They appreciated being connected around a unified purpose with clear performance metrics.”

Raising Awareness Across the Organization

One of your most critical roles is to build awareness in your organization about diversity in IP creation and management. To effectively implement IP diversity processes, all relevant employees and others with whom you work need to be trained on the processes and know how to follow them. To build awareness, you will need to go beyond once-a-year training to include short, frequent communications. Think of it more as an ongoing communication program, rather than an annual training program.

To be effective, you will need to tailor your message to different audiences:

- Senior leadership
- Managers
- People, women as well as others from historically underrepresented groups, who are involved in developing and managing IP
- People from other historically underrepresented groups involved in developing and managing IP

Effective training follows three progressive steps to influence human behavior and start to change the organization culture. Skipping steps results in a wasted effort, generating little or no change. As you develop targeted IP diversity programs, and training and communication materials, you can think about three stages of messaging for employees:

- **Awareness:** What is the issue with the IP diversity gap in your organization? It is important to get their attention and help them realize this is an issue that matters.
- **Commitment:** Why is it important to the organization and to me in my job? Once you have their attention, the next step is to convince them that this matters. The goal is to engage their head and their heart.
- **Action:** What do you want me to do and how should I do it? Now that you have commitment, it is time to provide simple clear guidance for what you want them to do. It is important that the new actions do not conflict with their day-to-day job responsibilities.

In addition to the formal training, it is important to frequently communicate about the IP diversity program to build and maintain awareness. This is true for your communications to champions – and for champions’ communications to employees in their area. Here are some methods that have proven to be effective:

- Regular column in the company newsletter
- Posters
- Postcards
- Email templates
- Screensavers
- Micro-learning modules (60–90 second audio or video)
- Hand-out on myths and realities about diversity and invention
- Monthly meetings to discuss relevant new research, legislative updates, etc.

Building an IP Diversity and Inclusion Culture

Ultimately, the goal of getting senior management and middle management support is to build a culture that promotes IP diversity as a core value of the organization. The increasing focus on DEI has led organizations to implement a variety of methods to build a sense of inclusion and belonging across the IP development and commercialization process for people from diverse backgrounds. DEI initiatives generally focus on recruiting, retaining, and developing talent from diverse groups. These methods can be readily applied to IP diversity, in particular. Here’s a quick rundown on some of the common methods:

- **Affinity Groups** (also known as Employee Resource Groups): Employee groups organized based on social identity, shared characteristics, or life experiences.
- **Employee Focus Groups**: Small groups of employees participate in a facilitated discussion on a certain topic. These are often used to gain more insight into the results of employee surveys, or to provide information that informs survey design.
- **Employee Culture Surveys**: Measure the point of view of employees to assess if employee perception aligns with that of the organization or its departments, and the degree to which the organization’s initiatives are effective.
- **Employee Engagement Surveys**: Measure employees’ commitment, motivation, sense of purpose and passion for their work and organization.
- **Mentor programs** (covered in detail later in this Guide): Within a structured program, an advisor, or mentor, provides guidance to a mentee, sharing valuable experience, skills and knowledge.

- **Data Collection and Progress Tracking** (covered in detail later in this Guide): Selecting metrics and establishing the baseline is a valuable step in prioritizing areas to improve.
- **Internal Processes:** Adjust processes for identifying promising inventions (such as the invention disclosure process, and the process for reviewing disclosures) to ensure all contributors to an invention receive credit. Ensure more qualified employees have the opportunity to rotate into the most innovative teams.
- **Internal and External Communication Practices:** Build internal awareness about the IP diversity program by sharing progress reports and success stories. Communicate externally as a means to attract new talent.

Five Tips for Building an IP Diversity Culture

1. Align the IP diversity program with business objectives
 - Build a quantifiable business case by linking program maturity metrics, business performance metrics and employee perception metrics (more on this in the Establishing the Right Metrics section)
 - Get senior management support to create the “tone at the top”
2. Break down the IP development and commercialization silos
 - Create a cross-functional team to help establish a strong culture
 - Define new policies or workflows that are practical based on input from the team
3. Train managers to play a role in building the culture
 - Create the right “tone in the middle” since employees tend to mirror the behavior of their supervisors
4. Implement a communication program to complement the training and reinforce learning
 - Use champion or ambassador programs
 - Celebrate successes and share the stories in your organization
5. Use data to create a “measure and improve cycle”
 - Use maturity metrics and performance metrics
 - Prioritize and capture the right data



Neena

Director

University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“The newsletter we started proved to be an effective communication tool. It only takes a few hours each month. We’ve gotten good feedback from the organizations we send it to, and the process of researching and writing it has really enhanced our understanding of IP diversity issues and ways to address them.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager

Research lab – 155 employees

“Our IP diversity champion program made a huge difference in building awareness of the issue and changing attitudes. We held a brief champion meeting once a month to share ideas on how to maintain momentum. I would provide the champions with new communication materials they could use. Because we’re small and all work in one location, the printed posters and flyers were the most popular.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer

Software company – 4,000 employees

“Our cross-functional team decided to include IP diversity targets into the performance evaluations of key managers. We linked the performance metrics to the broader IP diversity goals. There was some pushback when we introduced the new performance evaluations to managers because it impacts their bonus. We explained the importance of IP diversity and showed how they could actually get a larger bonus because delivering IP diversity could boost innovation and help our company’s overall bottom line.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President

Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“Our regional DEI leaders decided to start a friendly competition to see which region could improve its IP diversity metrics the most each quarter. The metric we chose was the percent of women listed on invention disclosures. Each region took baseline measurements using the performance metrics. I created a global scoreboard that we would update each quarter during a group call. I would present the winning region with a recognition award signed by our CEO. That really reinforced the importance of IP diversity.”

IP Education

IP Basics

This section of the Guide primarily focuses on the development and management of innovations that are protected and managed using patents and trade secrets. The same approach to creating more diversity and equity in IP creation and management is applicable to any type of innovation. For different types of innovations and other IP rights, such as copyright, organizations will need to adapt the ideas in this Guide.

The process of securing and effectively managing IP rights, such as patents, is complex for independent inventors as well as for innovators in corporate and academic settings seeking to navigate their organizations' processes. Employees from historically underrepresented groups should be trained on these processes from start to finish, to ensure they understand how IP is created, identified, protected, and managed within their organization to deliver novel products and services to customers. Knowledge enables inventors to recognize and flag IP creation, and the right processes ensure that they receive credit and can participate in moving their innovations to market. New research underscores the critical role that trust plays in IP diversity within an organization as well as more generally within an economy (Invent Together, 2024).

IP rights, whether registered or unregistered, can be used to protect and manage intellectual property (IP). Below are the five recognized categories of IP rights, as defined by the World Intellectual Property Organization. This Guide focuses on patents and trade secrets.

Patents are the exclusive right granted for an invention. A patent is an exclusive right to a product or a process that generally provides a new way of doing something or offers a new technical solution to a problem.

Trade Secrets are a key component of IP portfolios, helping businesses protect their secret formulas, know-how and other key information that gives them a competitive edge.

Copyright is a legal term used to describe the rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works, ranging from books, music, paintings, sculpture, and films to computer programs, databases, advertisements, maps, and technical drawings.

A trademark is a word or mark capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one enterprise from those of other enterprises.

Designs are unique creative forms that can be protected by registering them, including two-dimensional designs such as fabric patterns and bottle labels as well as three-dimensional forms, such as watches, lamps and chairs.

You may need to make some adjustments in how your IP diversity program is implemented depending on your organization's innovations and the type of IP rights most frequently used.

WIPO provides useful information about all types of IP rights, the processes to secure and enforce IP rights, and strategies for managing them during the different stages of IP creation and management. WIPO also supports organizations of all sizes with [guidance for managing a range of IP-related challenges and opportunities](#).

Why Participation in IP Development Matters to Career Development

In today's economy innovations and intellectual property, which can be protected by IP rights, are among an organization's most valuable assets. IP generates value in several ways. It can be used internally in products and services to build competitive advantage. It can also be used externally, to allow a company to exclude competitors, or through licensing it to other organizations. IP is an important asset in an organization's valuation and sustainable competitive advantage.

A common way to be recognized for having contributed to IP development is to be named on a patent or to be recognized within the organization as having been part of trade secret creation.

Because IP is such an important asset, organizations tend to recognize and reward the people that are directly involved in developing it, or in bringing it to market in the form of a product or service. The organization needs to educate the workforce about how participation in IP creation has a direct link to career progress. Use examples and stories so everyone understands the connection, particularly women and people from other historically underrepresented groups. Feature success stories of innovators from a wide variety of employees .

Because participation in generating inventions can be so important to career development, it is critical that all of the people involved are listed as part of the development team. The organization should make every effort to be inclusive. It's also important that every good idea be appropriately evaluated and recognized; diversity within the teams that review ideas and inventions can be important in this respect.

An effective IP diversity program is essential to leveraging, as well as recognizing and rewarding, the contributions of more women and people from other underrepresented groups within your organization and helping them to advance. Talent attraction and retention is a growing concern for organizations of all sizes. Your IP diversity program can showcase your commitment to DEI and be used as a powerful competitive advantage in attracting talent. Retaining talent is equally important; showing women and people from other underrepresented groups a career path is a proven way to reduce the loss of talent.

Talent retention is especially important for innovation and IP development. Every time a person leaves, valuable knowledge and ideas are lost – potentially going to a competitor – or not being brought to a population in need of solutions.

Steps to Being Named on an Invention Disclosure or Patent

Each organization has its own process for identifying promising inventions, evaluating their potential, and developing a management strategy, including recording who was responsible for the invention, and identifying who participated in the invention team. What is critical is that the process at each organization is clear, widely communicated, and inclusive. Here we focus on the invention disclosure process, but it's important that employees be educated about the entire IP creation and management process.

Taking invention disclosures as an example. Here are the typical steps within a company:

1. An invention disclosure form is completed by those responsible for the invention;
2. The invention disclosure form is submitted to the IP committee (or invention disclosure review board), which consists of technical experts and IP legal experts;
3. The IP committee interviews the inventor(s) and determines who should be listed on the patent application or on the internal trade secret listing.

There are three points in the process where processes can be designed to help ensure that women and people from other historically underrepresented groups are included. First, check that the composition of the IP committee or review board is diverse; in a university setting, this may involve confirming that the TTO team is diverse. Second, when the invention disclosure form is being completed, make sure that it is an inclusive process. The form should be reviewed by all participants in the invention team before it is submitted. Another approach is to require a brief investigation when an invention disclosure form is filed, to evaluate whether everyone who contributed to the invention has been named. Also, contributors can be asked to identify the sections of the patent application to which they contributed. Third, the meeting between the invention team and the IP committee or IP management team should be scheduled when all participants are available. In order to ensure equitable engagement, all innovators need to have a seat at the table.

The same management systems that are used to identify, protect, and otherwise manage trade secrets can be used to track who participated in their development. This can help your IP diversity program expand to include trade secrets.



Neena

Director
University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“We are primarily focused on patents. We developed and distributed an invention submission form. We also wrote guidance on making sure that the form was completed and reviewed by the full invention team before submission. Our form asks for the demographic information of the invention team so we can start to track IP diversity more accurately.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager
Research lab – 155 employees

“I realized that the committee that reviewed inventions had no diversity at all. We expanded the IP committee and specifically added women and representatives of other underrepresented groups. This helped to change the dynamics of the review process. It proved to be a valuable step in making the process more inclusive and less intimidating for inventors from all backgrounds.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer
Software company – 4,000 employees

“I found that there was no consistency in how different departments dealt with IP, including when it is first identified. The lack of consistency certainly contributed to a culture where IP diversity and fairness weren’t a priority. The first step I took was to develop a standard process for writing up and submitting new IP that the development teams thought had promise and that could or should be patented or protected as trade secrets.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President
Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“Although we are a very large global company, IP development usually happens in small departments. In the past, the IP development teams were often disconnected from each other. They were also disconnected from the teams in charge of managing IP rights. We have made a big effort to create communication channels that connect people and departments so they can learn from each other. Part of that is sharing knowledge about how to improve IP diversity and equity. It’s also about raising awareness about our IP management processes among more people.”

Protecting and Managing IP

All inventors – whether independent inventors or employees – need to understand the importance of protecting and appropriately managing IP, whether with formal IP rights, unregistered rights or other strategies. They must also respect others' IP. An organization or individual that fails to protect its IP, or that doesn't respect the IP rights of others, faces tremendous risks. Without IP protection, products can be copied by competitors and trade secrets can be stolen, causing an organization to lose revenue, customer loyalty, and market share. Organizations that infringe on others' IP rights can be forced to stop production, have their shipments held at customs, and pay heavy fines. Even an organization that judiciously manages IP can suffer damages and a disruption in operations if one of its supply chain members is involved in IP infringement.

Effective IP management is not an option in today's global economy. It is essential for business survival. Organizations must minimize IP-related risks within their organization and throughout their supply chain.

In many industry sectors, obtaining patents on novel inventions is one of the crucial strategies used by innovative organizations. Patents enable innovators to get a return on their investments, so they can invest in further R&D. Patents also help organizations to put a value on their inventions, to license and share technology, and to otherwise realize an intellectual currency from the inventions they develop. And patents can be critical enablers of partnerships and collaboration, making it possible to share ideas and inventions with others without losing control over them.

Organizations can also protect their competitive advantage using other IP rights, such as trademarks and design rights – and, as mentioned, by taking steps to keep certain valuable information secret. Trade secrets, a form of unregistered IP rights, differ depending on the organization and industry. They can involve things like the confidential design of a unique product (e.g., a highly efficient racing tire), the inner workings of a technical system (e.g., an electronics or software product, or online service), or proprietary business information or know-how (e.g., customer lists, financial data, or new and better ways of manufacturing).

Trade secrets have a different set of protection challenges than registered rights like patents. To benefit from trade secret protection, an organization must show that reasonable steps were taken internally to protect the trade secret.

Unauthorized disclosure and use of confidential technical or business information is a growing problem for organizations, both internally and among their suppliers and partners. Once the trade secret is no longer held exclusively within the company, protection is lost and the information is considered to be in the public domain. Absent careful management, trade secret theft and misuse can result in the loss of an organization's crown jewels, the basis for crucial product and business advantages.

Trade secrets need to be managed both within an organization and also among suppliers and business partners. Given that the value of trade secrets depends entirely on controlling their access and use, both within an organization and among its partners, management systems for identifying and tracking valuable confidential business information, and for maintaining confidentiality and security of that information, are vital.

Establishing the Right Metrics

Measure and Improve

It's important to have metrics for the overall IP diversity program. Metrics are important to the whole idea of continual improvement because what gets measured usually gets more attention. The metrics for your IP diversity program will show shared success between all of the participants – and how the company has benefitted.

Metrics allow progress to be tracked and reported. They also help you to communicate about the program's effectiveness. The metrics can be used to communicate your progress to senior management, the program participants, and the organization as a whole. Beyond that, metrics can be communicated to external stakeholders and used to attract talent by showing that you are committed to equity and inclusion.

Metrics can be developed in three distinct but related areas to build the case for the IP diversity program. Keep in mind that while the business case is important, your program is about individual opportunity and fairness – not just the performance of your organization.

- IP Diversity Program Maturity Metrics
- Performance Metrics
- Employee Perception Metrics

Together, the data from the three types of metrics can be correlated to provide powerful intelligence for building a business case for IP diversity, and to accompany arguments related to individual opportunity and fairness. Using data to show the correlation between program maturity, on the one hand, and better people and organizational performance, on the other hand, will help ensure that you get the attention of all areas of senior management. It will also transform IP diversity and equity from a goodwill effort into a business imperative.

IP Diversity Program Maturity Metrics

Program maturity metrics measure the elements of your IP diversity program itself. Program maturity metrics are broadly used across a wide range of topics, from quality control to health and safety to cybersecurity. Typically, a 1-5 scale is used for assessing program or process maturity. Using a maturity scale has several proven advantages. It establishes a baseline measurement and provides a clear path to improvement. It makes it easy for you to know what needs to be done to move up a maturity level if desired. Also, target maturity levels can be set as a way to communicate expectations to different departments.

The short description of each maturity level is:

1. Initial, little or nothing in place, and limited awareness
2. Reactive, beginning to manage some aspects in response to events or incidents
3. Managed, some systems in place with inconsistent implementation

4. Quantitatively and consistently managed using metrics
5. Continual improvement process

Below are elements of your IP diversity program that you should consider measuring. You can use the rating scale to determine the maturity of your organization or department.

- **IP Diversity Policies & Procedures:** Do you have documented policies and procedures that clearly define the expectations for IP diversity?
- **Leadership:** Do you have senior management support that is broadly communicated and an established cross-functional team?
- **Training:** Do you have an ongoing training program that includes relevant managers and is specifically designed around the Awareness, Commitment & Action framework?
- **Communication:** Do you have a communication program that uses frequent short communications to cascade the message from senior management to create a culture that promotes IP diversity?
- **Monitoring:** Do you regularly monitor the performance and quantifiable impact of the IP diversity program?

Performance Metrics

Performance metrics measure your IP diversity program's results and impact. Generally, a more mature program will generate consistently better results.

You may need to develop separate performance metrics to track patent creation and management, and trade secret development and management. Some organizations are choosing to treat certain inventions as trade secrets rather than patents. As a result, unregistered rights may be equally, or even more, valuable to an organization. It is important to formally recognize the people involved in intellectual property creation, regardless of the tools used to manage it.

Getting the data you need from other departments can sometimes be a challenge, especially in large organizations. You may be seeking information that is not currently collected. Your request may be seen as extra work and a low priority. If you have established a cross-functional team and gained senior management support, your task will be easier. Even with that advantage, it can help to approach the other internal departments with a data-trading mindset. In other words, think about what data you may have that would be helpful to them. Also, look for existing programs that you can leverage so your activity is not seen as a new initiative but, rather, as expansion of an existing one. Convince people from other departments that your participation could put more resources into their effort.

Based on a patented invention, here are some IP diversity performance metrics that you can consider. (Note: these are not specific to gender and could be modified to track impact for people from other historically underrepresented groups. Or an organization can simply collect the information, then report on different metrics using the data set.)

- % of people listed on invention disclosures that are women
- % of people listed on patent applications that are women
- % of people listed on granted patents that are women
- % of the total patent development team that are women
- % of commercialized products that rely on patents that list women as inventors
- % of patents with women listed as inventors that are licensed
- % of total revenue generated from products or licenses that list women as inventors

The same metrics can be used for trade secrets. However, your organization may need to develop additional procedures for tracking the people involved in the development and management of trade secrets.

Employee Perception Metrics

The third type of metrics specifically looks at how employees perceive your IP diversity program and its impact. Creating a culture where IP diversity and equity are embedded in your organization may require a shift in employees' attitudes and behaviors. The employee perception metrics complete the overall picture, providing you with critical information on how well your program is being received by employees. If your organization currently does culture surveys or engagement surveys, you may be able to add IP diversity questions for relevant employees.

Here are some recommended employee perception metrics, using a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the highest indicator. These can be adapted to track impact for different underrepresented groups.

- Prior to the IP diversity program, how well were women included in, and recognized as contributors to, the IP development and management process?
- Rate your overall awareness of the IP diversity program.
- Rate how well the training program materials and delivery have been localized or customized for your function or location.
- How effective has the program been in improving or reinforcing the inclusion of women in the IP development and management process?

- If you had an idea for an invention or innovation, do you know the process you would follow to disclose your idea?
- Would you recommend working here to a friend who identifies as a woman that is a qualified researcher and/or inventor?

How to Establish Baseline Metrics

You want to be able to report on the IP diversity program's impact. In order to report on improvement, you have to establish a baseline. Usually it is your role, as the program leader, to collect and manage the metrics. To create a strong foundation for your efforts, it is best to collect baseline metrics in all three areas.

Depending on the current maturity of your IP diversity program, you may already have some of the needed baseline maturity, performance, and/or employee perception metrics. For example, you may know the percentage of patents granted to your organization that list one or more women inventors. Check within your company for any existing baseline statistics.

The process of collecting metrics will be more efficient if you have already established an informal or formal cross-functional team. If not, this is a great opportunity to reach out to the relevant departments and involve them in the program. Ultimately, you will need their support to collect that data. You don't necessarily need special software. But it is important to give this task to someone approved to handle personal information, with the appropriate training and approval.



Neena

Director

University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“Our role is to help bridge IP development by one organization or individual with IP management by a separate organization. We looked at our internal program maturity, and we also helped some of the organizations we work with on both sides to start measuring their IP diversity program maturity. We don’t use fancy analytic tools but having a common metric has helped to improve communications and strengthen our role as a bridge. We’re trying to build a case for improving IP diversity that makes sense to all parties.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager

Research lab – 155 employees

“Establishing a baseline for the maturity metrics was pretty easy because we were at the very beginning. We didn’t have an IP diversity program. It took a little research to establish a baseline using the performance metrics. We went through all of our patent filings for the past five years to look at the percentage of women. The number was surprisingly low. This helped to shine a light on the need for our IP diversity program. We used our champions to collect the employee perception metrics, using a mix of surveys and short interviews. It was a quick process.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer

Software company – 4,000 employees

“I wasn’t familiar with the use of maturity metrics, but I discovered that our software development team used process maturity metrics. I got a quick briefing from them on their value and how to do the baseline. From the beginning, I built a quantifiable business case for IP diversity in order to get senior management support, so we had the performance metrics in place. I worked with my colleague in HR to add some new questions to our annual employee survey. We were most interested in how the new performance evaluations were being received and if they were influencing attitudes and behavior. We got good news on both fronts.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President

Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“As a global company, we have a lot of data. The challenge I had was finding the relevant data in all of the silos in our organization. Our regional DEI leaders decided to start a friendly competition to see which region could improve its IP diversity metrics the most each quarter. Each region took baseline measurements using the performance metrics. I created a global scoreboard that we would update each quarter during a group call. I would present the winning region with a recognition award signed by our CEO. That really reinforced the importance of IP diversity.”

Measuring Performance: Using Qualitative and Quantitative Metrics

Part of your ongoing responsibility as the program leader is to oversee collecting the metrics. How you do this will vary based on your company. Don't forget about this critical aspect of your program. The metrics are a key part of your reporting and are needed as the basis for continual improvement. Remember that metrics can show the progress made and the benefit to your organization.

The Performance Metrics are quantitative metrics. They involve counting things that can be measured, like the percentage of patents granted to your organization that list women as inventors. Both the Program Maturity Metrics and Employee Perception Metrics are a blend of quantitative and qualitative metrics. They involve assigning a numerical value to things that are subjective. The answers to the following questions are somewhat subjective. Is our IP diversity program consistently implemented in each department or location? Do employees feel that IP diversity and equity has improved? One of the strengths of the maturity assessment and the employee survey is to turn something that is subjective into something that can be measured and tracked.

As you begin to prepare reports for senior management and others in the organization, it will be important to show the relationship between the three types of metrics. In your report, go beyond the numbers and bring the numbers to life by adding a few stories and testimonials. Give some examples of how the IP diversity program has made a difference for people and their commitment to the organization.

Follow up your employee survey by interviewing a few people in all parts of the program to get their perspectives on the impact of your IP diversity program. Use these stories to supplement the quantitative metrics. This will highlight the human impact and make your report more compelling.

Promising IP Diversity Strategies

There isn't one strategy that is best for every organization because each has its own structure and culture. Below is an introduction to different approaches being used by organizations around the world to successfully influence and change employee behavior. It is the behavior change by individuals that ultimately leads to a broader culture change in the organization. Review the following strategies to see which ones might work in your organization. You'll see there is some overlap between the various strategies. The following section, Rapid Improvement Steps, provides a framework for putting the strategies into action.

IP Awareness Sessions

Provide short training sessions that provide background on IP creation and IP management processes at your organization, and the importance of not only participating in the process but also being recognized for it from a career advancement perspective. The sessions should explain how inventions and other valuable information are protected and managed using IP rights such as patents. These sessions can be led by champions or carried out in association with one or more affinity groups. If appropriate, they can be customized using scenarios and stories targeted to women and people from other historically underrepresented groups.

Mentor Program

A mentor program is a structured program in which an advisor, or mentor, provides guidance to a mentee, sharing valuable experience, skills, and knowledge. Building a mentoring program in the workplace facilitates one-on-one educational opportunities that can help employees advance in their careers and facilitate an inclusive corporate culture.

Being a mentor is not a major time commitment but, ideally, it is something that is recognized as part of the mentor's job responsibility. The amount of time required will vary from week to week. Try to scope the role so that it doesn't exceed one hour per week on average. Of course, in part, the amount of time depends on how much their mentor role overlaps with their job. Typically, a mentor is assigned to between 1-3 mentees so they can develop a close working relationship with each.

An effective mentor program has four legs, like a chair: senior leader or sponsor, mentor program leader, mentors, mentees. An IP diversity mentor can share information about IP creation and management processes with mentees. He or she can also accompany inventors from underrepresented groups as they navigate these processes in relation to a promising idea or invention. Mentors should receive appropriate training, have publicly expressed support from the organization's leadership, and receive incentives for taking on this role. Also, mentoring should be performed during normal working hours.

Cross-organization Mentor Program

Cross-organization mentoring takes the mentor program and expands it beyond the walls of one organization. Cross-organization mentoring can be appropriate in non-competitive situations. For example, one organization could contact other organizations in their area to form a mentoring program for women in the R&D department. A tech transfer office could set up a virtual mentoring program that connects senior inventors in their network with younger female inventors in other regions.

Champion Programs

Champion programs are a proven way to broaden the reach of ethics and compliance programs and embed a specific topic, like IP diversity, into the culture. Also, known as ambassadors or advocates, champions are a cost-effective way to cascade training and communications throughout your company. These programs identify a champion within relevant business functions or geographic locations to drive implementation and messaging for the IP diversity program. They act as a point of contact for employee questions about where to find policies, resources, or programs. The champion is someone employees can go to with concerns or with positive feedback. Unlike a mentor, a champion is not expected to establish a one-on-one relationship with anyone. Similar to mentor programs, it is important for the champion program to have senior manager support and incentives, and for their champion-related activities to be carried out during normal working hours.

Some organizations decide to identify possible candidates and then see if they want to become a champion. Some organizations go through an open application process and let people apply to be champions. There is no right way. What is best for your organization may be based on the scope of your champion program and the number of potentially qualified candidates.

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups are often used in larger organizations as a way to pull together people with similar backgrounds. Consider establishing a “Diversity in IP” group. It is important to allow time during the workday for the group to meet, whether in person or virtually, and to give it a purpose. Appoint a group leader who is responsible for scheduling the meetings and preparing the agenda. Give the group a purpose by focusing on topics like:

- Perception of current IP diversity within the organization
- Possible hurdles to achieving IP diversity and equity
- What is working in the IP diversity program
- Ideas for enhancing the program

Invention Disclosure Day

Set aside part of a day every month or quarter dedicated to completing invention disclosure forms. By doing this during the workday, it doesn't put people that have more responsibilities at home at a disadvantage. For example, men may have more flexibility to stay late or work on weekends to complete the invention disclosure form, whereas women may have more personal responsibilities that may make it more difficult to complete them outside of normal working hours. Make sure to adjust the workload for attendees so that invention disclosure day does not cause them to fall behind on other responsibilities. As part of invention disclosure day, you can explain the other steps in the organization's process for identifying, protecting, and managing IP through commercialization. It's important that invention disclosure days not replace essential conversations, early and often, with the IP team about promising ideas, in light of the need to file patents in a timely manner.

Inclusive Brainstorming Sessions

Invite 8–12 people from various IP development, IP management, and commercialization teams to attend a cross-functional brainstorming session. The people should be an equal mix of senior IP leaders and women and people from other underrepresented groups. Use alternating seating to mix the group. Identify a specific problem for the group to focus on. It could be a problem with one of the current R&D projects or a new business problem that needs a solution. To start the session, have each person write down their idea for a possible solution or a direction to explore, then pass their idea to the person next to them, who adds their ideas. Continue passing the papers until each person has participated in every possible solution. Finally, present all of the solutions to the group. These types of sessions can help to create a feeling of inclusion and highlight the advantages of diverse perspectives. They must be organized at a time when all people can attend (during normal working hours), and they should only take place if a variety of voices are confirmed to participate. And all ideas shared should be properly accredited.

Recruitment & Retention Programs

The ability of an organization to attract and retain talent is a growing focus, especially in certain fields and roles. Proactively build a program that attracts talent from diverse backgrounds. Pay particular attention to the language you use in recruitment materials, and to showing a viable and attractive career path to potential hires. The IP diversity program can be a powerful tool in recruiting, retaining, and rewarding diverse talent. Equally important is to make sure that the promises made in recruiting about equity and inclusiveness are a reality in the workplace. Use the metrics to show progress in IP diversity and use stories to make it come to life.

An Approach to Making Rapid Improvement

Introduction to Driving Rapid Change

Improving IP diversity will require changes in your organization – changes in processes, changes in people’s attitudes and behaviors. Change management is a natural extension of the program maturity approach and the continual improvement cycle. Your organization may already do change management for other important areas like research and development, quality control, or health and safety compliance. The challenge is for your organization to embrace the idea of always trying to improve processes for IP diversity as well. One of the most effective ways to do this is by becoming more sophisticated in how you drive and manage change.

This may not require implementing entirely new management systems in your company, but rather integrating IP diversity into existing change management systems. Change is a constant in any organization. There are new employees and new R&D programs. There are new products and new technologies and new manufacturing processes. New locations are opened. Maybe a new organization is acquired. All of this change puts pressure on management systems. All of this change can put pressure on your IP diversity program.

As your IP diversity program matures, you should consider root cause analysis to look more closely at the underlying causes behind the metrics. Once you carry out a more detailed root cause analysis, you will see a clear link between your analysis and change management. With root cause analysis, you can identify the underlying causes of problems. You will start to develop targeted process improvements to prevent these problems from recurring.

In an organization, process improvement involves people. It involves changing the way people do their jobs. That is where change management comes in. You need to understand how to effectively change people’s behavior. Maybe they need new skills, maybe they need additional knowledge, or maybe they need to change their attitude. Although none of this is easy, all of this is part of continual improvement.

The key to effective change management is to define a clear path to improvement so everyone knows where they are going, and to create small steps so the journey seems achievable. The best way to do this is to set quantifiable, short-term improvement goals.

The three types of IP diversity metrics are a great foundation for setting quantifiable, short-term improvement goals. These are: Program Maturity Metrics, Performance Metrics, and Employee Perception Metrics.

Setting Powerful Goals

Setting the goal right is a critical first step in your IP diversity program. The goal needs to be measurable, challenging, and timebound (but no longer than 6 months). The goal needs to create a sense of excitement and urgency in the project team – and also beyond that team – in the organization. It is important that the goal setting is done by the cross-functional team and that there is unanimous support and enthusiasm for the goal. Going after low-hanging fruit is not a successful path to effective transformation and sustainable change. When this is the approach, people tend to do the same thing they have done in the past, just a little faster for a little while. Experience shows that, too often, this results in no sustainable change.

An effective goal statement is one sentence that clearly defines what will change, how much it will change, and when the change will happen.

Look at your baseline metrics to see if there are specific areas that stand out as requiring attention. Think about how you can create a single goal, with supporting milestones that weave together improvement across several metrics. Review your maturity metrics and think about the hurdles in your company that are slowing down the achievement of IP diversity.

An inclusive brainstorm session is one technique for producing an effective goal statement around a common problem. Another approach is to have each team member list a problem they are trying to solve in their department that is related to IP creation and management. You don't need to limit the initial brainstorming to equity and diversity issues. Just look for general problems from each perspective, then identify the common problems that span departments, and see how IP diversity could be part of the solution. This can be a winning strategy for gaining buy-in and enthusiasm.

Creating Powerful Goals

Focus on results rather than process. Don't confuse milestones with goals. Reduce the scope to make sure each goal is challenging and also achievable in less than 6 months – ideally in just 3 months. Here are examples of how to turn a weak goal into a powerful goal.

Weak Goal

Develop training material intended to encourage IP diversity from a gender perspective.

Hold invention disclosure preparation meetings during normal working hours.

Send out regular communications about the IP diversity program.

Powerful Goal

100% of employees in the R&D department pass a quiz on the new IP diversity program in 3 months.

Within 6 months X% of invention disclosures are completed during normal working hours with full participation by invention teams.

Improve the employee awareness of our IP diversity program by X% in 4 months, confirmed by employee surveys.



Neena

Director
University technology transfer office – 8 employees

“I decided to focus on the inventor side to systematically increase our involvement with inventors and invention teams with women and people from other underrepresented groups. To do this we had to make sure that our IP diversity program was strong and effective. Our team came up with this goal statement: Over the next 6 months, 25% of the IP we evaluate for tech transfer possibilities will come from women and people from other underrepresented groups. We used our performance metrics to establish the baseline, which was only 15%. We realized we had a lot to do. Our next milestones were to develop a communication package targeted to attracting diverse inventors and to establish communication channels to reach our audience. Part of our strategy was to partner with affinity groups.”



Steve

Operations & Quality Manager
Research lab – 155 employees

“I wanted to focus our improvement project on making our IP diversity program more mature and sustainable. I focused on training and communications because I felt that improvement there would also elevate our leadership maturity. My goal statement was: 100% of employees pass a quiz on the new diversity focus across our IP policies and procedures in 3 months. My major milestones were to formalize the cross-functional team, draft and approve new policies and procedures with input from all departments, develop the training materials, deliver the training and analyze the quiz results.”



Roberta

IP Lawyer
Software company – 4,000 employees

“Our senior management is revenue focused, so we focused our goal on something that would have a bottom-line impact. We focused on the area of attracting and retaining research talent. Our goal statement was: Within 6 months, 80% of the employees involved in the IP creation process will say they “would” or “definitely would” recommend that their qualified female friends work here. Our first milestone was to carry out a baseline employee perception survey to see where we were. The next milestone was to establish policies that promote gender diversity. We followed that with a training program to introduce the new policies and show our commitment. The final milestone was to redo the key questions from the employee survey.”



Jennifer

HR – Senior Vice President

Global manufacturing company – 20,000 employees

“My goal was focused on building global awareness for our IP diversity program. I wanted to get the DEI leaders more engaged in building and sustaining awareness in their regions. So I set a goal that measures the effectiveness of their communication in building employee awareness of IP diversity and why it matters.

Our goal statement was: Improve the employee awareness of our IP diversity program in the EU region by 20% in 4 months. We already had baseline data from our employee perception survey. The major milestones were to develop new communications materials, distribute them in the EU region, conduct a follow-up employee perception survey, and analyze the results.”

Establishing the Right Milestones

Once you've agreed on a goal statement, break the goal down into key milestones. Try to identify milestones that will improve your IP diversity program maturity in a couple of categories. It can be useful to break the milestones into tasks and assign the tasks to project team members. Your company may have a standard project management methodology and that's fine to use. But don't over-plan. Keep it flexible and let the project team experiment as they create the path and steps to the goal. Here's an example of how a powerful goal was broken down into milestones and tasks.

Illustrative IP Diversity Program Goal, with Milestones

Goal: 100% of relevant employees pass a quiz on the new IP development policies and procedures that promote diversity in 3 months.

Milestone	Tasks
Formalize the cross-functional team	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify relevant departments2. Write a purpose and scope document for the team3. Recruit people from the relevant departments
Draft and approve new policies and procedures for IP creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review relevant existing policies and procedures2. Collect input from all departments on the team on gaps and suggested additions3. Draft updated policies4. Get required senior management approval
Develop the training materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop outline for short training program2. Determine how training will be delivered (online, in-person, etc.)3. Survey the team to identify specific scenarios to include in the training4. Finalize training materials and quiz
Deliver the training	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Qualify people to deliver the training2. Conduct the training and collect the quizzes
Analyze the quiz results	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine effectiveness of the training2. Identify any gaps or hurdles in implementing the policies and procedures3. Make any needed adjustments in the policies, procedures or training

Making It Happen: Achieving Your Goal

Getting the goal and milestones right is half of the battle, but you've still got to make it happen. Hopefully, the goal setting created a spark of excitement among managers and innovators, who now understand why IP diversity matters for the organization as well as for individual innovators. Now it is time to ignite the team and start the sprint. Because the initial phase of the IP diversity program will be a sprint, you don't have time to go off track for long. However, don't just try to do the same thing just a little faster, or slightly better. You will need to experiment and innovate while keeping your eye on the goal. Think about whether to break down barriers and smash silos – or if it makes more sense to go around the hurdle.

Part of making it happen is keeping the cross-functional project team engaged, and part of keeping the team engaged is to generate ongoing interest and support from senior management. Hopefully, you intentionally designed your goal to actively involve different departments. One of the keys to success is getting input from all departments to make sure any planned changes are practical. Too often changes are made in one department that have negative, unintended consequences for other departments. Use the IP diversity program to create new workflows and processes between departments that can be sustained. This will help break down the silos and spread awareness in all departments.

Celebrating & Sustaining Success

It is important to pause and celebrate success when you achieve your goal by having a formal meeting involving senior management. This gives the project team well-deserved recognition for achieving the initial goal and lays the foundation for sustaining success. The agenda should include a review of how your team met the goal. It is important to cover what hurdles you encountered and share the details of how you overcame – or went around – the hurdles.

As part of this, provide a report on any new processes or workflows that have been established to help you sustain the improvements that were made to meet the goal. Many organizations find it useful to reassess their diversity program maturity at this point.

Finally, this is a great time to start the cycle again by defining the next IP diversity improvement goal or goals. This may be an expansion of the initial project to a new region or department, or something in a related area.

Working towards a goal in your IP diversity program creates a spark of change in your organization. Each spark brings together a cross-functional group in a new way to define and meet a challenging short-term goal. You can orchestrate a series of projects to accelerate your IP diversity program maturity and improve performance and employee perception metrics.



Onward and Upward. Together.

Improving IP diversity is a journey. Regardless of where you are today, this Guide provides you with specific actions that you can take to advance. Whether you are an executive, a program manager, or an inventor, you play a key role in creating a culture in your organization that promotes diversity in IP development and management.

We encourage you to get started. Reach out to others in your organization to create a cross-functional team and build awareness. Select the metrics that fit your organization and start to collect baseline data. Launch a pilot using the diversity strategies described in this Guide. Take small steps if needed. Get in touch with the sponsoring organizations for more information or assistance. What is important is to get moving on this important journey.

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INNOVATION COUNCIL

For more information about this IP Diversity Guide, please contact [Craig Moss](#) of Ethisphere or [Jennifer Brant](#) of Innovation Council.

