



# IMPOWER

As a proud MCA member and signatory to Consulting Excellence, IMPOWER adopt the twelve principles of the scheme through our codes of practice, and day-to-day operations. Our commitments, grouped under the four themes of Consulting Excellence, are set out in this document.



# Ethical Behaviour

## 1. *We are responsible and good citizens.*

*IMPOWER's contribution to a fairer and more compassionate society is to increase the quality of citizens' lives by making meaningful and measurable improvements to local public services, making the best use of the public pound and with a particular focus on the most vulnerable in our communities.*

- Corporate Social Responsibility has an explicit role within our company strategy; we believe it enables us to increase our social impact, whilst facilitating our learning and the development of our staff. This applies at two levels - how we operate on a day to day basis as well as specific initiatives.
- In 2020 we surveyed staff and held focus groups to understand how we can develop and embed our approach to CSR as we continue to grow, in a way that is integral to our strategy. 87% of respondents agreed that CSR is integral to our reputation and growth and we are in the process of shaping our CSR strategy.
- We have an assigned Director Lead for CSR and are shaping a role of 'CSR champion' to support staff in delivering and capturing the impact of CSR activity.
- IMPOWER gives staff two paid days each year for CSR activity; this ranges from holding Trustee positions with charities to tutoring and sharing our skills with Voluntary and Community Organisations.
- In shaping our client partnerships we consistently see opportunities for CSR, including delivering skills training to local VCS organisations or shaping secondments with our clients.
- As a company we are committed to supporting the charitable sector. As examples we participate in the Give as You Earn Scheme, raise funds through events such as alternative Secret Santa and we invite employees to speak about causes they are passionate about at company events.
- We make ethical choices wherever we can, e.g. we use environmentally friendly cleaning products, provide bins for recycling, and source ethical gifts for our wellbeing initiatives.

# Ethical Behaviour

## *2. We conduct our business ethically.*

- We only bid for work that we have the capacity and capability to deliver.
- We price our work based on the number of days we think it will actually take to deliver it; we do not add in additional days to generate extra profit.
- We are always transparent regarding how our work is scoped and costed.
- We are honest with our customers about whether we think their desired outcomes are achievable.
- Our approach is founded upon sustainability, leaving the client with increased capability and more resilient. Skills transfer is explicit in our planning.
- We pay our subcontractors and associates promptly, and do not withhold payment until we have received payment from the client.
- We pay our suppliers promptly.
- Our staff are all paid above the London Living Wage.
- Where mistakes are made (e.g. incorrect invoicing), we take steps to ensure that errors are identified and corrected quickly.

# Ethical Behaviour

## 3. We foster an ethical culture.

- We care about outcomes for citizens and believe that better outcomes can cost less.
- Our 'In-flight' review process actively engages our clients in a conversation about the behaviour of our teams, including how they demonstrate integrity.
- Our weekly delivery-focused meeting provides a forum to explore any ethical challenges and client issues to ensure senior oversight and engagement. Each delivery team submits reports into this forum that highlights any areas where difficult decisions are required or integrity comes into play.
- We provide transparent platforms to challenge senior leaders and our colleagues. IMPOWER 'People Fridays' are one such example of a structured opportunity to do this. More informally, our senior team all operate an 'open door' policy and welcome suggestions on how things can be improved.
- We have a Whistleblowing Policy which sets out that staff members raising genuine concerns will not under any circumstances be subjected to any form of detriment or disadvantage as a result of having raised their concerns.
- Our process for promotion is transparent and open to all staff.
- We encourage staff to record their time honestly, and not 'hide' time to distort project performance.

# Client Service and Value

4. *We provide excellent consulting services which deliver the outcomes clients seek and need.*

*Complex social problems cannot be effectively addressed through narrow framing, a focus on single entities, linear processes or with a bias toward financial measures. By definition, collaboration is fundamental to creating better and more innovative solutions to complex problems. Collaboration, teamwork and developing strong relationships are our starting point.*

- EDGEWORK® is our unique approach to understanding and delivering change in complex systems. We developed this, in consultation with our clients, because we recognise that such work requires a different mindset, an ability to work with people – not just datasets – alongside unique methods and tools.
- c80% of our work is repeat business, evidencing that our clients are happy with the work we do and the outcomes we deliver.
- We carry out 'In-flight' reviews to ensure the quality of our work, flag any risks to successful delivery and maintain a focus on achieving outcomes.
- All of our projects involve coproducing outcomes with client staff; not only does this ensure better outcomes but it also means we can transfer skills and knowledge to local staff to ensure sustainability.
- Our project planning approach ('Storyboarding') means investing time in detailed planning and scoping to ensure that outcomes can be achieved within the project timescales.
- We focus on outcomes that our clients are trying to achieve and we challenge their thinking as we believe their specification will fail to deliver their needs, even if that means that our overall fee goes down.

# Client Service and Value

## 5. We are transparent with clients and respond to their concerns.

*We work with integrity to improve quality of life. Respect for all people – local citizens, clients, partners and colleagues – in ways that they themselves understand and value is therefore essential.*

- Where data or resources provided to us are insufficient to deliver the project outputs, we flag this to the client and look to re-scope the project to take this into account.
- Our 'In-flight' reviews give our clients the opportunity to raise any concerns with a member of IMPOWER's leadership team. The review involves a thorough assessment of risk across the project and provides an opportunity for further mitigating actions to be undertaken.
- Our contracts include clear processes for change management; we recognise that client needs change over time and we have processes to ensure that we can capture and respond to these in a flexible way.
- Our contracts stipulate the need for regular and on-going meetings with project sponsors to ensure their views are regularly captured and reflected in the work undertaken.
- Our focus has shifted to building long-standing delivery partnerships with our clients, founded on being their trusted advisors and being able to offer greater value and economies of scale over the longer-term.

# Client Service and Value

6. We always strive to improve the value we can deliver to our clients.

*We are committed to demonstrating our impact, leadership and professionalism with clients and colleagues alike. We hold ourselves and each other accountable for our commitments, making clear recommendations and decisions, and communicating them effectively.*

- We employ empathetic and experienced people who are passionate about transforming public services.
- We invest time in developing new tools and propositions to enable our clients to deliver sustainable change.
- We are committed to delivering impact for our clients, and have developed a framework to capture this. Every project reports impact on a monthly basis covering four key areas – improved outcomes, financial impact, developing organisational resilience for the client and supporting them to deliver social justice.
- All of our projects are subject to a 'Lessons Learnt Review' so that we can capture areas of success, and areas for improvement, and ensure that these are fed back in to how we scope and deliver future work.
- Coproduced with our network, IMPOWER Shared Learning Events foster sector collaboration, supporting knowledge-transfer across organisational boundaries.

# Professional Development

## 7. We undertake training and professional development planning each year.

*Through our projects, we create a discovery mindset to continuously uncover insights about human behaviour, complex systems and public service outcomes. We learn from our successes and mistakes, and we share these insights so that our teams draw from best practice. We encourage innovation, and we share our ideas and insights externally to influence public debates and national decisions.*

- Training and education around creating a trust culture and greater autonomy of our people which feeds in to the transparent and fair culture that we want to build on.
- We recognise that all functions contribute to the success of the business – recognising the strength of our People/ IT /Finance function of supporting our people and therefore the clients.
- We prepare an annual training and development plan based upon the assessed skills gaps and needs of each individual. IMPOWER allocates all employees with a Performance Manager and Team Leader to help effectively support them in the bi-annual appraisal process and provide constructive feedback.
- We hold internal masterclasses so staff can share skills and techniques learned.
- For the first time in our organisations history we are in the process of appointing a Chief People Officer. This is a reflection of our growth, whilst also recognising the strategic importance of developing and supporting our staff.

# Professional Development

*8. We promote strong core consulting capabilities and specialisms in our consultants and teams.*

*We believe that public services should promote people's independence, empowering them to help themselves with better information and support. Our teams empower our clients to make difficult choices that will improve outcomes. We empower our consultants and teams through training, development, good management and clear leadership.*

- Productive and cohesive team working is fostered at IMPOWER with the provision of team and support networks, and professional development around team behaviour.
- We strive to build a solid foundation of consulting skills through the provision of core consulting training, and regularly assess capabilities against current and emerging business needs.
- IMPOWER encourage employees to pursue activities and events which enable them to increase their specialist knowledge and gain industry insight.
- We are focussed on behaviours, from the recruitment phase where we recruit on this basis, through to the promotion process.
- We put provisions in place to support our people and strengthen both their personal and professional resilience; this ranges from subject matter or setting-specific training, to Mental Health First Aid.

# Professional Development

## *9. We support our employees' career progression, professional development and welfare.*

- IMPOWER welcomes all requests, where appropriate, for flexible and alternative ways of working. During the pandemic we actively encouraged flexible working to support welfare and established a range of support forums.
- All staff are encouraged to provide feedback on our culture and working practices which we are committed to using as a base for continuous improvement.
- IMPOWER provides all new hires with a thorough and comprehensive induction schedule, covering introductions to all areas of the business and including protected time for project shadowing.
- As a company we champion our comprehensive competency framework and use this as a consistent base for measuring performance.
- Consultants are encouraged to honestly reflect upon their performance, both with regards to specific project work and overall picture, and highlight any areas for development.
- Staff can draw from an annual personal development budget to support their skills and wider learning.
- We identify where high potential employees' strengths and weaknesses lie, and codesign bespoke development plans that stretch them in their weaker areas and help them finesse their areas of strength.
- We implemented a range of initiatives to support staff through the pandemic, focused on wellbeing and learning how to adjust to remote working. Many of these will now become business-as-usual.

# Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

*10. We respect & embrace diversity & inclusion, & understand the importance & positive benefit of people from different backgrounds working for our companies & our clients.*

- Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has a clear place in our company strategy and our approach in this area continues to be strengthened. As an organisation we have collectively developed the following D&I Charter that reflects how we work:
  - We are committed to ensuring that our culture prioritises D&I; this is the right thing to do. It will also ensure our client work is more creative, more insightful and of higher quality.
  - We have adopted a learning mindset, with an ongoing commitment to improving our understanding of colleagues, clients and the communities we work with.
  - We are committed to creating an environment that enables employees to bring their whole selves to work and allows them to be vulnerable, recognising the strength in that.
  - Senior leaders model a 'speak up' culture to ensure people know they will be listened to.
- During 2020 we engaged staff extensively on D&I, through a survey and forums. This has helped us to shape and implement a range of ways we can strengthen D&I.
- We have an assigned Director Lead for D&I as well as a D&I 'champion' at each grade to act as an advocate for D&I issues but to also support other staff members on related matters and act as a reference group for D&I considerations.
- We have overhauled our website to be more representative of ourselves, the organisations we work with and their communities.
- In many areas our client work helps remove bias from client approaches, thereby supporting D&I e.g. an assessment framework based on need for Children in Care and those with High Needs, and the listening tools that support clients to remove bias from resident feedback (e.g. identifying differential outcomes achieved for vulnerable cohorts and supporting the organisation to train staff to address this).
- We are looking ahead to refining our Inventive Methods (key consulting tools and approaches) to support greater inclusion in our engagement with clients and ensure the D&I benefits are articulated.

# Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

*11. We recruit & retain people from a diverse talent pool & strive to build cultures where difference is valued, respected & celebrated at all levels. Furthermore we are committed to developing diverse future leaders & ensuring their progression in the industry.*

Increasing our diversity is a strategic priority for IMPOWER. As a starting point we have prioritised gender and increasing the cultural diversity of our workforce.

- As a company, we recognise that women are currently underrepresented at senior levels and have proactively sought to address our gender imbalance.
- In the past year, 50% of admissions to the Director team have been female. We have also promoted or appointed three female Assistant Directors, alongside numerous promotions of high-performing women within the company, helping us to move toward greater balance.
- As a business we recognise how gender manifests internally but also in our clients. This year we have made the investment decision to roll out specific training to all IMPOWER's women throughout the year in FY21 to support them to thrive.
- We are building an inclusive culture, with Directors, senior staff and D&I 'champions' actively role modelling the behaviours that we want to make the norm.
- We have established monthly forums as a safe space to explore topics in relation to D&I. We also encourage participation in relevant industry forums/ webinars e.g. Women in Consulting run by the MCA.
- We recognise and celebrate significant cultural events e.g. Diwali, Purim.
- We celebrate diversity through recognition of events such as International Women's Day, Black History Month and their application to our work.
- We support colleagues to work effectively when they have a specific need e.g. Access to Work assessments for colleagues with Dyslexia, and financial support for associated coaching and support.
- We are now actively looking to recruit from more diverse backgrounds.

# Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

*12. We support industry efforts to improve progress on diversity & inclusion, implementing best practice & monitoring the diversity of the consultancy sector workforce over time. This includes encouraging the collection of data to assess the effectiveness of D&I policies & participating in the MCA annual report.*

- We surveyed the whole company on D&I with c80% completion rate. This helped us understand where and how we could improve. We developed and implemented an action plan for immediate changes and have also embedded D&I into our wider activity such as recruitment, to ensure it is at the heart of how we operate.
- We will be conducting the survey again in 2021 to understand progress and highlight areas requiring further focus.
- In responding to the survey we held focus group discussions with each grade to explore the findings and ways to improve.
- In 2021, with the arrival of our new Chief People Officer, we will be setting and publishing targets for D&I.
- We will support the MCA in any way we can to understand progress and impact across the consulting industry.

# Contact

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