THE EQUALITY STANDARD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last few decades, there have been significant changes in government, corporate and societal expectations about the goals that businesses should set in terms of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DE&I). This has created a need for effective monitoring and reporting systems that could set up a criterion to be applied and reported to identify performance related to DE&I.

With the world becoming more connected, DE&I is now seen as an important factor that can affect an organisation's performance.

Over the past few years, there is a significant change in government and societal expectations about the goals that the organisations should be setting and applying in respect of DE&I. It is becoming increasingly evident that a diverse and inclusive organisation performs better.

The reporting systems are being developed to communicate the performance of organisations within relevant periods to their stakeholders.

The costs of failed DE&I programmes, mismatch in expectations and perceived subjectivity in its application has led to several high profile lawsuits recently.

This has prompted the need for a Global Equality Standard which provides a framework that can help organisations develop strategy, organisational structure and reporting systems to understand and monitor their DE&I related performance.

As governments, organisations and society respond to all sorts of discrimination that threaten the society and economy at a global scale, comprehensive monitoring of the state of DE&I at all levels of organisations is now a must.

A DE&I framework that facilitates standard reporting whereby highlighting the contribution of DE&I in determining the performance of the organisation and its management is vital.

There is a need for an unprecedented wave of activity to recalibrate businesses' communications, behaviours and reporting towards DE&I leading to a sustainable future.

Despite the DE&I activities and efforts being fragmented and confusing, there is much unity and agreement on the synergy of DE&I initiatives.

A Global Equality Framework will help bring some order in the organisation's efforts, processes and reporting systems to identify, improve and make progress using the full potential of DE&I. This would also add to global sustainability efforts.

1. INTRODUCTION

This standard gives a standardised set of components, definitions, terms, and the characteristics of DE&I. This standard should replace the inconsistent discussions and activities related to DE&I into a known, transparent framework.

Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DE&I) reporting at the moment is a labyrinth of fragmented practices. Few organisations have developed some sort of monitoring of DE&I efforts and activities within the organisation. There is an ongoing global debate on current DE&I efforts, practices and reporting mechanisms.

Claims are routinely made over the steps that are being taken to show how the DE&I initiatives are linked to the organisation's strategy. These are steps that are welcome and in the right direction. However, routinely they take place at bi or multilateral bases.

In order to have a sustainable DE&I progress, these steps have to be simpler, more consistent, and standardised. The standardised framework will lead to a collaborative activity towards achieving sustainable DE&I efforts across the globe.

A standardised framework with a set of competencies, terms, components, definitions and characteristics will form the architecture for understanding the DE&I landscape. This will replace the inconsistent discussion and activities and create a transparent framework and reporting system to monitor progress on DE&I.

The standard consists of 3 key sections that provide an in-depth overview of DE&I, its relevance and impact on organisational strategy, and the development of a Global Equality Framework.

The first part of the standard considers why DE&I is important and how the landscape is changing. What is influencing DE&I, where these influences come from and how DE&I is impacting the development of organisations. In the second, the barriers to DE&I are considered and how these can be overcome with the help of a transparent and structured approach. This part also looks at various sections of the standard that would help in removing DE&I related barriers. The last part is the standard itself.

2. SCOPE

This standard aims to explains the need for an Equality Standard and how the Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DE&I) mapping and reporting will help governments, corporates, and communities on a global level to move towards a sustainable DE&I environment.

This standard focuses on the impact of DE&I and the importance of DE&I reporting and how organisations can provide quality DE&I reports to their stakeholders. This will help organisations understand and navigate through the changing environment as a result of increased global inter-connectivity.

Klaspad Equality Standard will result in a robust DE&I strategy.

Additionally, this will help in improved Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting whereby companies communicate their interactions with the local environment. This will also help organisations understand the financial implications of DE&I reporting.

This Equality Standard and the reporting system can be used by regulators. NGOs and civil societies will benefit through this as mapping against the standards will help them to identify gaps in DE&I efforts. The standards will provide evidence about the provisions and processes that directly or indirectly affect DE&I efforts at the national and international levels.

Corporate DE&I Reporting is an emerging discipline and, in most cases, lacks cohesion and standardisation.

A standardised, transparent, and commercially viable DE&I measurement and reporting mechanism would be a step in the right direction, towards sustainable DE&I progress globally.

This standard provides a deeper understanding of DE&I and the need of a Global Equality Standard. It focuses on the DE&I landscape and how organisations could or should navigate it to reap the already proven benefits of DE&I.

3. AUDIENCES FOR THIS STANDARD

This standard is aimed at Governments, NGO's, Corporates, Investors and Civil societies. It argues for a standardised approach to understand, report and develop DE&I as a sustainable culture across the globe.

This is for those who agree that shared definitions, standardised reporting and monitoring are the pillars of achieving desired results. Hence, regularisation of disparity in individual efforts is needed.

The secondary audiences are academics and researchers who will have a standard to research upon and make well-researched comments and proposals to improve the current KLASPAD Equality Standard. They can also use references to this standard in their work.

4. DE&I PROGRESS INHIBITORS AND THE NEED FOR A STANDARDISED SYSTEM

"One is the loneliest number" – "Chances are, most people have experienced an "only" moment (Mckinsey, January 2019).

This sums up the DE&I challenge that organisation across the globe have. The solutions are there and there is a positive drive towards overcoming the barriers. A lack of standardisation has created a situation where organisations seem to be lost in the right direction.

DE&I Inhibitors:

Awareness

When it comes to DE&I most leaders think of race and gender only and have little or no perception of a complete picture of DE&I. It is easier for organisations to continue with a lack of awareness of diversity. Besides gender and race, the diversity in the current landscape covers age, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.

Howard J, Ross, founder of a diversity consulting company, extended his study beyond gender and race discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, and other protected characteristics (Kaupins, 2021).

Besides awareness about the full scope of DE&I most organisations still do not see the economic and far-reaching benefits of DE&I.

To overcome this organisations have to focus on educating the leaders with an emphasis on the benefits of having a better DE&I culture. The leaders have to understand that there is enough evidence to support this and their lack of attention to this important aspect might result in their organisation falling behind.

Social and cultural

The presence and pertinence of socio-cultural biases and discriminatory attitudes are major contributors to the slow adoption of DE&I. The acts of social exclusion prevent minority groups participation and inclusion resulting in disempowerment, hopelessness and despair. The inability to contribute to important decisions leaves minority groups voiceless.

Reflection on the intersectionality of social identities with a focus on majorities interaction with other minority social identities will provide the leaders with an insight into positive and negative interactions. Awareness of the history that has shaped such behaviour, empathy through active listening and experimental learning would help the leaders to build practices that enhance the ability to effectively communicate across the spectrum of the employees. This would also help in identifying the next steps towards a shared vision of DE&I.

Systemic discrimination

This is the result of inherent policies, procedures, practices and the organisation's culture as a whole. This deterrent to DE&I is often without intent and contributes to less favorable outcomes for minority groups. Systemic discrimination can operate across the full spectrum of employment, income, education, health, housing, culture, policing, public infrastructure, and beyond.

Uncovering systemic discrimination and making it visible by gathering evidence, engaging those who are affected, and monitoring incidents and patterns should be the first step in the right direction. This has to be followed up with developing systemic remedies by redesigning the systems that are deterrent to DE&I. Shared DE&I pro practices with stakeholders would help in overcoming this challenge

Micro aggression

Micro aggression at workplaces is one of the most serious challenges as organisations need to develop a culture of inclusiveness, making the individuals feel that they belong to the organization.

Unconscious bias

The conventional paradigm believed that discrimination in organisations is mainly conscious. It was considered fons et origo of racism. This however is not true. In the current landscape, most of the discrimination comes through unconscious bias.

Bourdieu's theory of habitus provides a useful way to conceptualise unconscious bias. Bourdieu asserts that the individual's habitus, defined as 'predisposition, tendency and propensity', is acquired through their upbringing and class, and is influenced by earliest experiences. The habitus developed in the family is diversified and transformed by schooling, and in turn, supports the structuring of further experiences, and so it continues.

Human perceptions about men and women develop from a young age over a period and begin to be reinforced as stereotypes informing our evaluations of people in the workplace (Akram, 2017).

Unconscious is also the root cause of microaggression, and this inhibits the progress of DE&I within an organization.
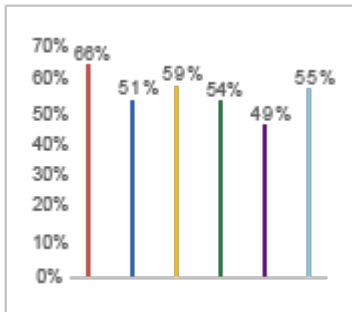
A survey conducted by Mckinsey & Co. (June, 2020) found that women, racial and ethnical minorities, and LGBTQ+ respondents report experiencing more microaggressions then others (%).

● Women   ● Ethic or racial minority   ● LGBTQ + respondents
● Men   ● Non-minority respondents   ● Non-LGBTQ + respondents
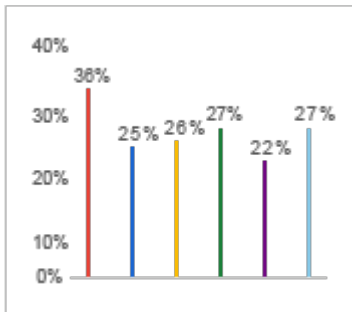
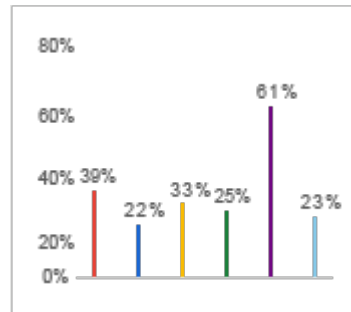### Not receiving credit for your ideas

Being asked to speak as a representative for a group of people like you
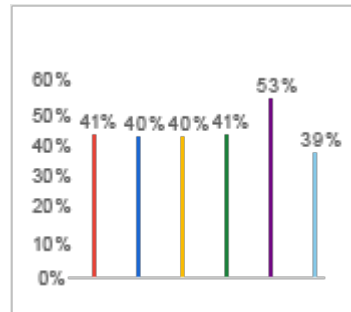
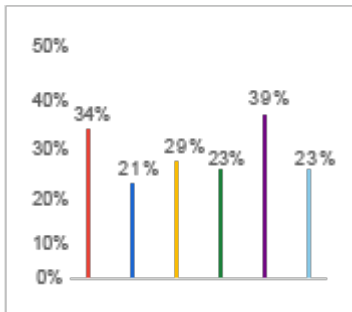### Being coached to communicate in a way that feels inauthentic to who you are
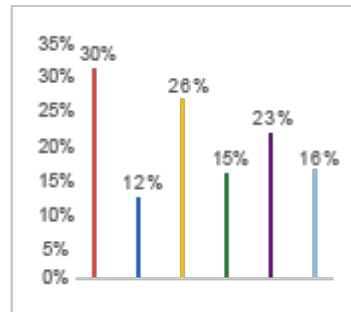

Needing to correct others' assumptions about your personal life

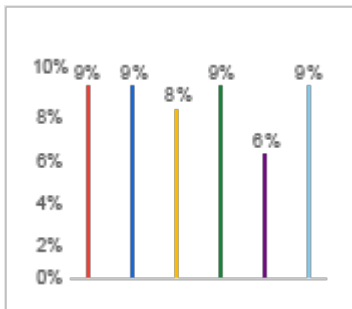
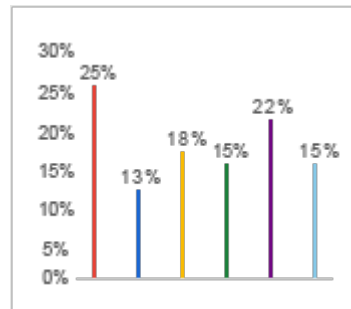### Hearing derogatory comments or jokes about people like you

Being excluded from social events

Receiving suggestions to switch to a less demanding part of the organisation

Receiving comments about the way you dress

How can an equality standard help?

According to a survey conducted by HR.com (February, 2021), more than 35% of the leaders felt that a standard to measure DE&I progress and practices would help them.
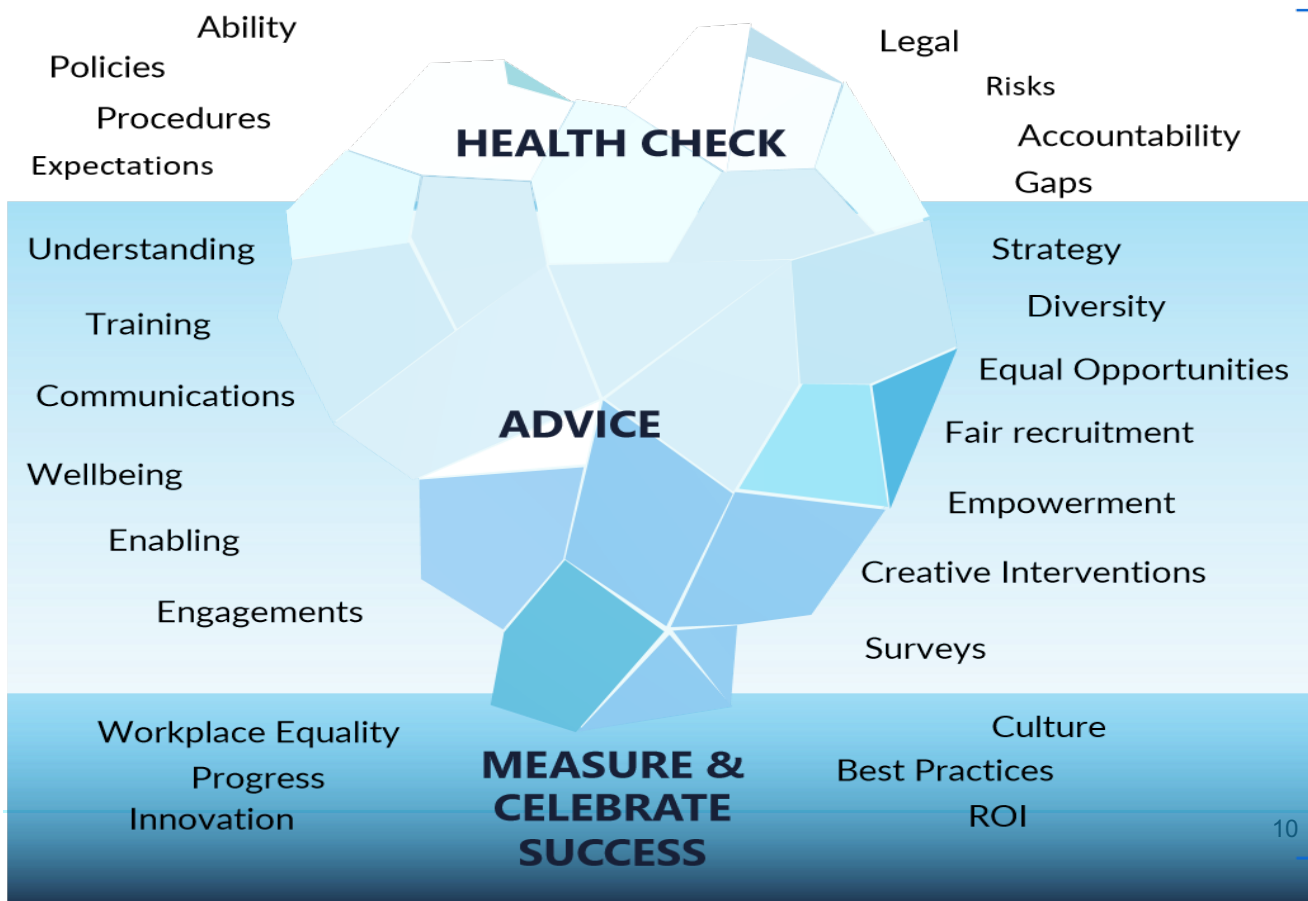
A three-pronged strategy (Health check, Advice, Measure and celebrate success) and a standardised framework is needed to enable the organisations to start reaping the benefits of inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion cannot be a one-time campaign or a one-off initiative. Promoting them in the workplace is a constant work-in-progress and should be maintained and nurtured to guarantee effectiveness. Empathetic leadership is key to this transformation. For real change to happen, every individual leader needs to buy into the value of belonging – both intellectually and emotionally.

The framework should cover the strategic goals of the leadership and the measurement of all aspects of DE&I at different levels of the organisation. An Equality framework would enable the organisations to do a proper health check of the existing policies, procedures and identify the gaps by comparing their findings with those of the standard. Once the benchmarking is done and the gaps identified the leadership will be in a position to make changes in the policies, procedures, processes, and the communications to meet the requirements of the standard.

A Global Equality Standard shall result in accumulation and analysis of data gathered against well-defined competencies. This would in turn help in a better understanding of the DE&I landscape and contribute towards developing educational tools, policies and procedures that could drastically help.

5. THE EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

THE EQUALITY STANDARD (Core competencies)							
1- CONTEXT OF ORGANISATION	2- GOVERNANCE	3- Management	4- HUMAN RESOURCES	5- OPERATIONS	6- EXTERNAL	7-MONITORING	8- SUSTAINABILITY
1.1 Ability	2.1 Policies & Procedures	3.1 Equality & Inclusion	4.1 Fair Recruitment	5.1 Workplace equality	6.1 Engagement	7.1- Compliance	8.1 Goals
1.2 Need	2.2 Legal	3.2 Culture	4.2 Equal opportunities	5.2 Innovation	6.2 Suppliers	7.2- Actions planning and implementation	8.2 Best practices
	2.3 Accountability		4.3 Empowerment	5.5 Embedding	6.3 Clients	7.3- Data	8.3 Creative Interventions
	2.4 Audit		4.4 Wellbeing		6.4 Industry network	7.4- Review	
STANDARDS FOR CORE COMPETENCIES							
1- CONTEXT OF ORGANISATION							
1.1 Ability	CO1.1.1.A - Gender diversity	CO1.1.1.B - Representation of minority groups	CO1.1.1.C – Understanding of Equality and Inclusiveness.	CO1.1.2.A - Equality Strategy	CO1.1.3.A - Equality Budget	CO1.1.4.A - Tools	
1.2 Need	CO1.2.1.A - Awareness of the benefits of Equality and Inclusion.	CO1.2.1.B - Relevance of Equality and Inclusion	CO1.2.2. A - Scope of E&I	CO1.2.2.B - Business objectives	CO1.2.2.C - Goals		
2- GOVERNANCE							
2.1 Policies & Procedures	GO2.1.1.A - Policies with	GO2.1.1.B - Revision of policies	GO2.1.1.C - Risk register				

	defined sections on E&I					
2.2 Legal	GO2.2.1.A - Legal aspects of E&I					
2.3 Accountability	GO2.3.1.A - Leadership accountability for E&I					
2.4 Audit	GO2.4.1.A - E&I Audit	GO2.4.1.B - Cultural audit				
3- MANAGEMENT						
3.1 Equality & Inclusion	MA3.1.1.A - Diversity as a leadership competency	MA3.1.1.B - Action plans for E&I	MA 3.1.1.C - Training of managers			
3.2 Culture	MA 3.2.1.A - Inclusive culture	MA 3.2.1.B - Communications	MA 3.2.1.C- Engagement	MA 3.2.1.D - Impact of E&I actions on organisation's culture		
4- HUMAN RESOURCES						
4.1 Fair recruitment	HR 4.1.1.A - Recruitment practice	HR 4.1.1.B - Recruitment process	HR 4.1.1.C - Unconscious bias	HR 4.1.1.D - Use of technology		
4.2 Equal opportunities	HR 4.2.1.A - Procedures	HR 4.2.1.B - Workplace	HR 4.2.1.C- Advancement			
4.3 Empowerment	HR 4.3.1.A- Career paths	HR 4.3.1.B - Learning & development	HR 4.3.1.C - Whistle blowing	HR 4.3.1.D - Recognition		
4.4 Wellbeing	HR 4.3.1.A - Health & Safety	HR 4.3.1.B - Equal treatment	HR 4.3.1.C - Working environment			
5- OPERATIONS						

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5.1 Workplace equality	OP 5.1.1.A Commitment	OP 5.1.1.B Incident reporting				
5.2 Innovation	OP 5.2.1.A Co-creation & sharing	OP 5.2.1.B- Taking risks	Sub section OP 5.2.1.C- Measuring success			
5.3 Embedding	OP 5.3.1.A- E&I Calendar	OP 5.3.1.B- Social activities	OP 5.3.1.C- Digital activities	OP 5.3.1.D- Training	OP 5.3.1.E- Showcases	OP 5.3.1.F- Celebrations
6- EXTERNAL						
6.1 Engagement	EX 6.1.1.A Communication Vehicles	EX 6.1.1.B Audience	EX 6.1.1.C Approach			
6.2 Suppliers	EX 6.2.1.A Guidelines	EX 6.2.1.B Involvement				
6.3 Clients	EX 6.3.1.A Service teams	EX 6.3.1.B Client engagement				
6.4 Industry network	EX 6.4.1.A Knowledgebase	EX 6.4.1.B Interactions				
7- MONITORING						
7.1- Compliance	MO 7.1.1.A Governance	MO 7.1.1.B Leadership	MO 7.1.1.C HR	MO 7.1.1.D Operations	MO 7.1.1.E External	
7.2- Actions planning and implementation	MO 7.2.1.A Targets	MO 7.2.1.B Actions	MO 7.2.1.C Systems			
7.3- Data	MO 7.3.1.C Verifiable	MO 7.3.1.B Authentic	MO 7.3.1.C Reports			
7.4- Review	MO 7.4.1.A Data analysis	MO 7.4.1.B Benchmarking	MO 7.4.1.C ROI			
8- SUSTAINABILITY						
8.1 Goals	SU 8.1.1.A SMART	SU 8.1.1.B Action plans with KPIs				
8.2 Best practices	SU 8.2.1.A Practices	SU 8.2.1.B Feedbacks				

8.3 Creative Interventions	SU 8.3.1.A Mental health	SU 8.3.1.B Drug and alcohol misuse	SU 8.3.1.C Stress management	SU 8.3.1.E Disabled & vulnerable support			

6. CONCLUSION

This stndard provides a review of key developments relating to DE&I within the corporate world and company culture. The significant relationship of DE&I as a key factor to organisational performance further highlights its relevance in today's competitive environment. Whilst its relevance is clear embedding DE&I principles, monitoring its success and reporting on its key metrics to stakeholders remains an area for further development. The paper proposes on how the a Global Equality Standards would address this through providing a standard which would ensure consistent understanding and application of the DE&I principles within the corporate world.

COVID 19 has affected lives of every individual directly or indirectly and has highlighted the issues related to discrimination. It is time for the leaders to start benchmarking DE&I efforts. The question to be asked at each level is :
Am I doing enough to bring about Equality that leads to inclusion and a feeling of belongingness in the organisation
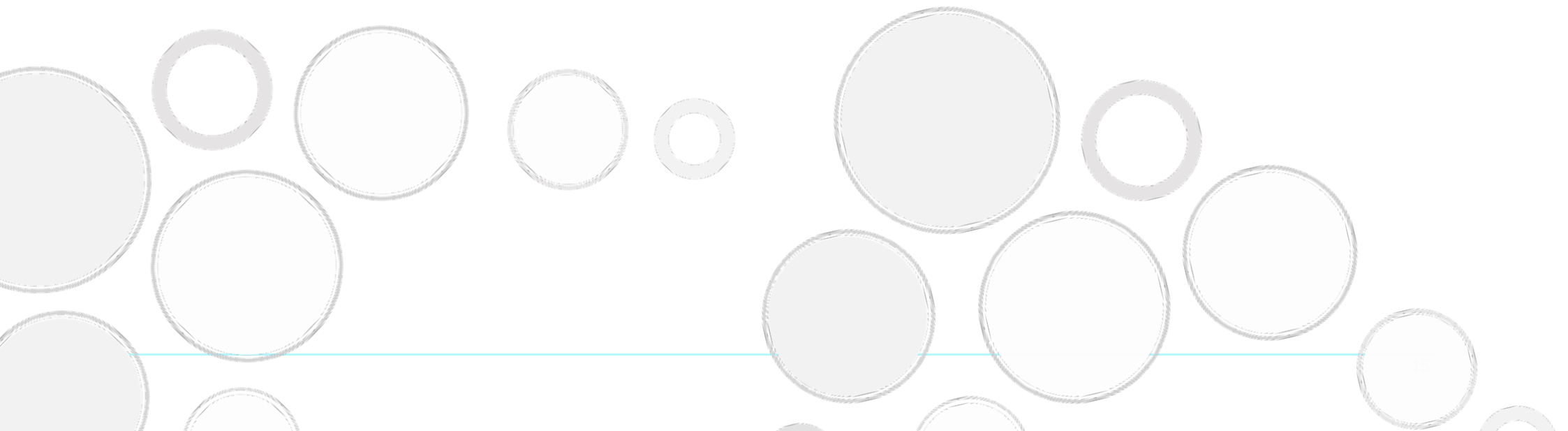
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