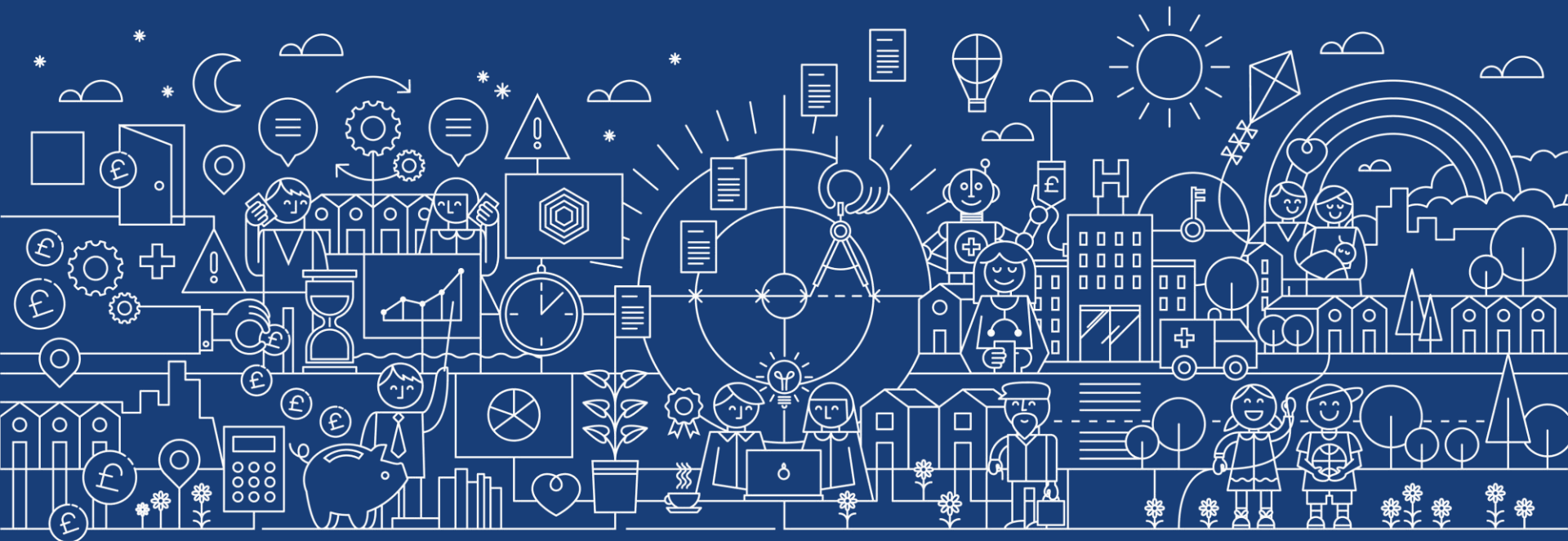


IMPOWER

EDGE
WORK

MCA Consulting Excellence IMPOWER's Commitments

April 2023



IMPOWER

As a proud MCA member and signatory to Consulting Excellence, IMPOWER adopt the thirteen principles of the scheme through our codes of practice, and day-to-day operations. Our commitments, grouped under the five 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 (CSR) and Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) 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 and in our strategic approach supported by specific initiatives.
- We have considerably augmented how we deliver social value when working with our clients and have worked this year to create our 'offer' to our clients so we can partner with them in an area reflective of their goals and our strengths.
- As part of our social value commitment, this year we have become a long-term legacy partner in a major UK city, by supporting over 250 children and young people on their educational development post-pandemic.
- We are driving a change, with our clients, in how they co-produce solutions to some of the biggest public sector issues of they day, including creation of a co-production toolkit and acting as thought leaders, bringing together colleagues across the public sector to explore and expand the topic within the sector.
- 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 match funding of charity endeavours from team members, raising funds through our away days, and we invite employees to speak about causes they are passionate about.
- This year we are starting a relationship with the Early Careers Foundation to support young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to raise their ambition and stay in education, considering consulting as a possible career path.

Ethical Behaviour

2. We conduct our business ethically.

- We only bid for work that we have the capacity and capability to deliver.
- 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, associates and 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.
- Our promotion process is transparent and open to all staff. We are committed to the Disability Confident Scheme to support disabled and neurodiverse candidates to apply to work with us. In the three months following the introduction of the guaranteed interview scheme for disabled and neurodiverse candidates, we increased our numbers of applicants with these attributes x 13.
- We encourage staff to record their time honestly, and not 'hide' time to distort project performance. Working hours are regularly reviewed and discussed to ensure any individual or project issues are identified quickly.
- Since 2021 we have used an online employee engagement system to ensure we can regularly and anonymously check in with our people and take action based on their feedback. This is now measured and reported at board level as part of our key organisational measures.

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.
- Approx. two thirds of our current clients worked with us in the previous year, 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 co-producing 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 and value that our clients are trying to achieve. We will challenge their specification if we feel it is not the best solution – even if that means a reduced role for IMPOWER.

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 is on building long-standing delivery partnerships with our clients, acting as their trusted advisors on a wide range of complex challenges and offering greater value, insights 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 demonstrating impact from the work we do with our clients. We help them measure the improvements in outcomes, financial performance, organisational resilience and system confidence that result from the interventions we deliver together.
- 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.
- Co-produced 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.

- We invest in training and education to allow trust and facilitate 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 / Finance / Operations functions in supporting our people and therefore the clients.
- We prepare an annual training and development plan based upon the assessed skills gaps and needs of the business and our clients, as well as individuals' development plans. 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 have an established People team led by a Chief People Officer, with internal resource dedicated to planning and operationalising learning and development for our team. This is a reflection of our growth, whilst also recognising the strategic importance of developing and supporting our staff.
- We have rejuvenated our Core Consulting training for new starters in our business; we have planned and delivered training on people management skills; and set up a formal mentoring scheme and reviewed our onboarding process to support new starters with a full programme of induction, a buddy and a learning group.
- We support our experienced professionals towards gaining Chartered Management Consultancy status and are looking this year at how we can accredit our internal programmes in line with MCA standards.

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 have renewed our onboarding process for new starters including the introduction of a buddy scheme, a 'Netflex' group for new starter training and networking and a thorough schedule of meetings, training, networking and shadowing for our new starters. We also provide externally industry standard Core Consulting training.
- This year we will be working on measuring our internal consultancy training against MCA standards, therefore providing accredited professional development to our consultants.
- 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 courses.

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. This work continues as we increasingly support hybrid ways of working and flexible working patterns.
- 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.
- We strongly believe in supporting our staff with families and ensuring that parents feel able to remain working in a consultancy career. To this end in 2021 we significantly enhanced our maternity, paternity and adoption provision to above industry average levels.
- 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.
- We work with each employee to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and co-design 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 are now 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, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) 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 a DEI Charter that reflects how we work:
 - We are committed to ensuring that our culture prioritises DEI; 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 2022 we launched and reported on our first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion survey to the business, reporting a successfully high rate of colleagues who felt that our culture was inclusive.
- This year we are strengthening our work on DEI issues, with our DEI strategy for the next 3 – 5 years to be created as part of our long-term planning process in early FY24.
- 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 DEI e.g. an assessment framework based on need for Children in Care and those with High Needs, and the “Listening Tool” 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 also refine our Inventive Methods (key consulting tools and approaches) to support greater inclusion in our engagement with clients and ensure the DEI 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 and feeling of inclusion is a strategic priority for IMPOWER.

- As a company, we recognise that women have historically been underrepresented at senior levels and have proactively sought to address our gender imbalance through promoting and recruiting two new Directors who are women in 2023. We have now reached almost 50/50 at Senior Leadership and Leadership Team levels.
- In the past year, we have promoted 30% of our workforce internally (up from 25% the year before). 72 % of those promoted are women, 14% from a global majority background.
- As part of our commitment to becoming a Disability Confident Employer, we have reviewed and made changes to our recruitment process, introducing a guaranteed interview scheme for the first time and using our ATS to ensure all candidates are anonymous at the 'first sift' point of the process.
- As a result of our guaranteed interview scheme for disabled or neurodiverse candidates, we have increased our number of applicants from those groups by more than 13 x.
- We celebrate diversity through recognition of events such as International Women's Day, Black History Month, Mental Health Awareness Week, Pride Month and their application to our work.
- We support colleagues to work effectively when they have a specific need e.g. occupational health assessments for colleagues with Dyslexia or mental health conditions.
- We actively look to recruit from more diverse backgrounds, including the use of diversity job boards, anonymous CVs, and using diversity as a selection criteria for our recruitment partners. We also review the wording of our job adverts to ensure a lack of gender bias.

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 and participating in the MCA annual report.

- Following highly representative and actionable surveys in previous years, in 2022 we launched our first benchmarked survey specifically on DEI issues, using our new employee engagement tool which allowed us to benchmark against industry standards and start to set appropriate targets which will be able to report and benchmark progress against.
- We will be running the survey again in 2023 and working with the findings to create both our long and short term strategies for DEI within our business.
- In responding to the survey we will work with our existing DEI Group and hold focus group discussions to explore the findings and create actions based on those.
- In 2023 we are launching our new work shadowing programme in partnership with University of Westminster as part of the Disability Confident Scheme. This programme has been designed to support neurodiverse and disabled university students and provide them with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience.
- We have established forums as a safe space to explore topics in relation to DEI. We also encourage participation in relevant industry forums/ webinars e.g. Women in Consulting or Young Consultants run by the MCA.
- With a company representative as part of the MCA D&I Working Group, we will continue to support the MCA in any way we can to understand progress and impact across the consulting industry.

Commitment to Sustainability

13. We commit to ensuring that our firms operate in an increasingly sustainable way and strive to ensure that sustainability is considered by our clients in our work with them.

- When working with our clients we develop the skills in local workforces by providing coaching and mentoring to client staff as part of the delivery of our work to ensure our clients become more resilient and sustainable once we conclude our support.
- As part of delivering our client work sustainably we aim to deliver social value initiatives in the places we work. For example supporting a client in their latest social value policy we delivered two workshops to local VCSE groups on “Developing a strong bid” and “Impact and performance” which were co-produced with a VCSE rep, and delivered a workshop on “Using applied behavioural science to tackle climate change” to client staff.
- We make environmentally sustainable choices wherever we can, e.g. we use environmentally friendly cleaning products, provide bins for recycling, and source ethical gifts for our wellbeing initiatives.
- Recognising that our teams work away from home we promote using local products and services, prioritising social enterprises and community groups.
- Specifically on climate sustainability, we have committed to Net Zero by 2030 and are currently baselining our carbon footprint to ensure we can measure progress. Reflecting our need to travel we use a travel booking system which calculates the carbon footprint of our travel, collects the monies generated into a pool, and invests the funds in VERRA certified carbon-offsetting projects.
- We are currently working with our benefits management company to move our pension scheme to a green pension fund, which will in due course become our default fund for new starters.

Contact

IMPOWER Consulting Ltd.

enquiries@impower.co.uk

www.impower.co.uk

