



INDUSTRY REPORT OCTOBER 2026

Closing the gap between social procurement goals and recruitment

Closing the gap between social procurement goals and recruitment: what construction procurement actually wants from recruitment partners

Findings from the Find Your People procurement roundtable, 12 October 2026

In brief

- Recruitment services around diverse talent delivery are now assessed and rated at pre-qualification, before a tender is scored, and winning a package can now rely on a diverse workforce.
- For the client, missed diversity targets cost money and reputation, and a contractor's record (including recruitment partners) now follows it from project to project across the client group.
- Clients want recruitment partners who are educated, aware and trained, with the initiatives, processes and partners to be noticed as leaders in diverse hiring and inclusive practice.

Definitions in this report:

Head contractor: the tier-one construction group that holds the main contract for a project and goes out to contractors and subcontractors to supply against it.

Contractor or subcontractor: a business engaged by the head contractor to deliver part of the project.

Supplier: any business a head contractor or contractor buys from, including its recruitment partners.

Recruitment partner: a recruitment agency or labour hire company that supplies people to a project.

Client: from the recruitment partner's side, the head contractor, contractor or employer it supplies.

Social procurement: the jobs and spend a project must direct to under-represented people and businesses.

DE&I: diversity, equity and inclusion.

Retention money: the part of each payment the client holds back until the job is complete.

Psychosocial hazard regulation: the work health and safety rules on mental health risks at work.

Kinaway and Supply Nation: the Victorian and national registers of Indigenous businesses.

Social Traders: certification and directory for social enterprises.

Pre-qualification: a separate questionnaire a head contractor sends before a business can tender. Its answers are rated before the tender itself is assessed.

Why we asked

Find Your People is a social enterprise, built to create fairer access to employment. Our vision is a world where there are no barriers to employment opportunity. We are building Australia's first DE&I focused employment marketplace for blue-collar contract and permanent hiring, and we lead institutional change by disrupting the recruitment industry for a fairer future.

In construction, every head contractor we speak to carries social procurement and workforce diversity targets. Every recruitment partner we speak to wants to better understand them to help deliver against them. Yet when a recruitment agency submits a tender response, it rarely finds out how its submission and the social procurement section were assessed, and most never learn what the client actually weighs up. On 12 October we ran a roundtable with procurement, social procurement, social impact, inclusion, resourcing and safety leads to discuss how to close that gap in the industry.

What we set out to uncover

Four questions, put to the people who assess tenders and deliver diversity targets on major construction projects:

- How does a head contractor actually score a recruitment partner, and does a recruitment partner's support for workforce diversity move the decision?
- What happens on a project when a diversity target or a recruitment partner's commitment is missed, and what does that mean for the recruitment partners supplying it?
- What can a recruitment partner put in front of procurement that genuinely lands?
- Why do people hired under a diversity target so often leave within six months?

Who was in the room

Senior procurement, social procurement, social impact, inclusion, resourcing and safety leads from Parklife Metro (Webuild), John Holland, Seymour Whyte and Helix Impact Solutions, hosted by Find Your People. Contributors:

Pippa Harrison	Parklife Metro (Webuild)
Jody Hallett	John Holland
Sarah Clark	Seymour Whyte
Karena Mitchell	Seymour Whyte
Morgan Rooney	Helix Impact Solutions

1. Where diversity sits in the tender

It gets you in the room but not a seat at the table.

What we discussed: how a head contractor actually scores a recruitment partner, and whether a recruitment partner's support for workforce diversity moves the decision.

Why: recruitment partners don't know the weight of social procurement responses or how they are assessed on tenders.

What we found: the top three decision factors when assessing recruitment partner tenders remain capability and delivery, cost, and compliance, risk and safety. Diversity is now assessed and rated at pre-qualification, which did not happen ten years ago, but it does not yet outrank those three. It gets you in the room but not a seat at the table.

"The top three are capability and delivery, competitiveness on cost, and compliance, risk and safety. Then sustainability, quality, environment and social impact come next. Those three are still the top requirements before you go into anything else."

A contributor

"Sustainability and workforce diversity are in the pre-qualification questionnaire, so it is assessed before it even gets to that point, and it is rated. We have the ability to review it now, which we did not have before. But if you asked me for the top three, it still would not be in there. Then again, nor would sustainability."

A contributor

Projects carry specific diversity targets written into their contracts. Parklife Metro is working towards 6% women in non-traditional trades, which Pippa Harrison called "a huge focus for me."

What to do: treat the pre-qualification questionnaire as the place your diversity work is scored, and answer every one of its workforce diversity and inclusion questions in full: the social procurement plan, apprentices, the groups you place. Lead the tender itself with capability and delivery, cost, and compliance, risk and safety, because those three still decide. Where a project carries a named target, such as women in non-traditional trades, say in plain terms how your processes help meet it.

2. What happens when a DE&I target or a recruitment partner's commitment is missed

What we discussed: the real consequences of falling short.

Why: recruitment partners treat targets as aspirational because enforcement is rarely visible to them.

What we found: enforcement is uneven across different groups, contracts and states, but it is real, and the money is where leadership pays attention.

"The New South Wales policy still includes cost implications if you don't meet your Aboriginal procurement target, and we have it on our project. Having cost implications against one of the social impact targets absolutely gets the attention of the senior leadership team."

Pippa Harrison, Social Impact and Workforce Integration Manager, Parklife Metro (Webuild)

"In New South Wales, if you don't meet the Indigenous business spend targets in the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, the State Government withholds the shortfall from your final payment claim and donates it to an Indigenous charity."

Morgan Rooney, Director of Impact, Helix Impact Solutions

Morgan added that a missed target is technically a contract breach, with retention money at risk, and that state governments are now pooling data across government departments so a contractor's record follows it from project to project.

What to do: read the target as a contract term, not an aspiration. Before you supply a project, ask the head contractor which policy applies and which targets your placements count towards, then report in the form they report back: business name, ABN, value and services provided. A shortfall can be withheld from a final payment claim, retention money can be at risk, and a contractor's record now follows it from project to project.

3. Vetting and psychosocial safety

What we discussed: what a head contractor needs to know about the people a recruitment partner supplies, and about the partner itself.

Why: psychosocial hazard regulation now reaches into how people are recruited and placed, and Victoria has just tightened it.

What we found: safety leads want evidence that a recruitment provider has addressed the regulations and holds documentation, and they are starting to treat who you hire, and how, as part of managing safety risk on site. One contributor turned the question around, in relation to the Find Your People hiring marketplace: the marketplace vets recruitment agencies, but who vets the employer?

"I would personally want to know that a recruitment provider is adhering to the regulations. In Victoria we have just had recent changes. I would want to see that they have addressed those regulations and what documentation they have in place."

A contributor

"We are vetting agencies, but are we vetting employers? Are we checking that those employers are a safe workplace, or have a track record?"

Morgan Rooney

What to do: have the documentation ready before anyone asks for it. Show how your resourcing process addresses the psychosocial hazard regulations, including Victoria's recent changes, what your reference and police check standard is, and how you look after a candidate once placed. Labour hire licensing and the care of candidates are being scrutinised across the industry, and the recruitment partner that can show its controls is the one a safety lead can approve. The same question runs the other way: a candidate is entitled to know that the workplace they are going into has a safe track record, so ask it of the employer too.

4. What has to change: education, language and policy

What we discussed: what the industry and its recruitment partners need in order to close the gap, and why "social value", "diversity and inclusion" and "Aboriginal participation" are asked for in different words on every project.

Why: the people asked to deliver diversity targets are rarely the people trained to recruit, and each state's policy asks for the same thing in its own vocabulary.

What we found: nobody is taught this. Builders and project managers are asked to meet targets they were never trained to recruit for, and there is no shared language: Queensland runs a social procurement policy, New South Wales an Aboriginal participation policy and an Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program, and even the people who assess tenders hear recruitment partners ask whether one term means the same as another. The answer from the roundtable was education, awareness and advocacy: say plainly what you do, in the words the client in front of you uses.

"Education, awareness, advocacy. You don't know what you don't know, that is my favourite saying in social impact. A lot of the time we ask people to know things they have no experience or expertise in. We ask builders to meet DE&I targets, or you are talking to a project manager who knows how to build a shopping centre, not how to recruit in a meaningful way... So: education, education, education."

Morgan Rooney

"Language is a big thing in social impact. Everyone calls it something different: social value, diversity and inclusion. People say, what is that? Is it the same as this or the same as that?"

Morgan Rooney

"Even the policies are different. Queensland has a social procurement policy, New South Wales has an Aboriginal participation policy. Very different."

Pippa Harrison

What to do: use the words of the client in front of you. Queensland asks for social procurement, New South Wales for Aboriginal participation, and the next project may call the same thing social value, so check which policy the project sits under before you write a word. Many head contractors have already built guidelines for their subcontractors on what to do and which industry bodies to approach: ask for them. Then say plainly what you do, and teach the people who hire through you, because the project manager asked to meet a target was never trained to recruit for it.

5. Keeping people

What we discussed: what happens after the door opens, and why targets stall.

Why: a placement that fails inside six months counts against everyone.

What we found: the hardest work is keeping people in the job, and it is won by teaching workplaces how to support the people they have hired.

"Opening the door is the first step, and the first step only. It is keeping people... you opened your door to somebody who is going to need extra support, and now you need to actually walk the talk, because you will lose them within six months."

A contributor

"People from minority groups generally come with extra barriers, layers of oppression, and trauma, which are all barriers to employment. Some of the biggest gains in actually keeping people in employment come from teaching workplaces how to accommodate people. We can't be naive: it comes with extra challenges and extra support needed in the workplace."

Morgan Rooney

What to do: when hiring people who experience barriers and exclusion, plan the support before the start date, not after the first wobble. Brief the site team that a person hired under a diversity target may need extra support in the first months, agree who provides it, and treat a performance plan as the last resort rather than the first. The roundtable was clear that without the right interventions people are lost within the first six months.

6. How a recruitment partner becomes preferred

What we discussed: what a recruitment partner can put in front of procurement that actually lands, and how diversity is now assessed before a tender is even scored.

Why: this is the gap we exist to close. Recruitment partners rarely learn how their social procurement answer was weighed, or how to shape their services to it, so most never learn what to show.

What we found: diversity targets and services are now checked in the pre-qualification questionnaire before the tender is assessed, with around ten questions on them, and clients are not asking for a framework. Taking on DE&I initiatives, and changing your services so that what you offer helps a client meet its targets, will be noticed on a tender. So will how else you help the community: pre-employment programs, give-back initiatives, the make-up of your own workforce and any certification you hold. Decide which initiatives you are highlighting, then put them on the tender and the capability statement in plain terms, because the people reading it will notice.

"It is becoming a requirement upfront, not a nice to have. Winning a package could now rely on that diverse workforce and showing you are able to meet those workforce requirements."

Pippa Harrison

"We have about ten questions on workforce diversity and inclusion in pre-qualification: whether they have a social procurement plan, whether they can take on apprentices. It does count. I just don't think it is seen as the biggest priority yet."

A contributor

"We don't give subcontractors a big framework for what they need to show us, so initiatives go such a long way when they come across our desk... put it on your tenders, put it in your capability statement, because the people reading it will notice."

Pippa Harrison

"We have built our own guidelines for our subcontractors on what they could do, even the industry bodies they could approach. When we speak to our subcontractors now, it is not a surprise that during the tender process they have to answer questions around underrepresented groups. The education piece is starting to flow down."

Pippa Harrison

"We have suggested industry bodies or platforms that people could go to, and I was thinking Find Your People would be perfect for it, because we share that with our subcontractors."

Pippa Harrison

"We all make value-led decisions commercially now. If you have two prices exactly the same, and with one you just get a building, and with the other you still get your building but from someone who runs pre-employment programs, some of those decisions are no-brainers. So share your values. If 70 per cent of your agency is women, we would like to know that. Share who you are as a business, what you care about, what you do for the community, your give-back initiatives, what you do for people entering the workforce. The special things you do that other companies don't."

Morgan Rooney

Certification is checked, not assumed. Registration with Kinaway or Supply Nation is something clients look for, so a certified recruitment partner should make it visible on every submission.

"If we want to know that somebody is Kinaway or Supply Nation registered, that is very important."

A contributor

What to do: decide which initiatives you are highlighting and put them on the tender and the capability statement in plain terms:

- The pre-employment programs you take candidates from
- Your give-back initiatives
- The make-up of your own workforce
- Any Kinaway, Supply Nation or Social Traders registration or membership you hold
- Your DE&I recruitment processes

Clients are not asking for an exact framework. They are asking to see what you already do.

Find Your People

Find Your People exists to close the gap this report describes, from both sides of it.

Education and training for recruitment partners. Most recruitment firms are asked to meet social procurement expectations that nobody has explained to them. We train recruitment partners, and the teams that hire through them, in inclusive recruitment: where bias and discrimination enter a hiring process, how to remove them, and how to describe what a firm already does in the language procurement teams assess.

A hiring marketplace that manages the bias triggers. Recruitment partners list their candidates as skills-first profiles with identifying details removed, so an employer sees what a person can do before a name, a photo or a postcode. Blind screening removes bias at the first look, and recruitment partner diversity badges make inclusive practice visible. From the roundtable, we are working towards Supply Nation and Social Traders filters, proof of psychosocial safety practices when a recruitment partner joins, employers declaring their own workforce make-up and earning a diversity badge of their own, and a directory of DE&I support services for employers and candidates.

Support for diverse contractor workforces. Every placement produces diversity data that an employer can report its targets against. A recruitment partner using Find Your People can put this straight into a tender, which employers see favourably. A diverse workforce stops being a claim and becomes a record.

What the roundtable said about the Find Your People hiring marketplace

"That dashboard could be really useful for a labour hire company: export the insights they have through the platform, put them into a tender and show the statistics they now have through working with Find Your People. Someone like me, looking at the tender documentation, would see it straight away."

Pippa Harrison

"Building capacity for some of the smaller agencies is something we on [the project] have been really keen to do, so knowing that could still happen within the platform would be important to us."

Karena Mitchell, Industry Capability and Inclusion Lead, Seymour Whyte

"Honestly, I think 90 per cent of the hard stuff is done. It is the little tweaking that comes next, but you have everything thought about, for the most part."

Morgan Rooney

Before the roundtable

One contributor had seen the hiring marketplace before the roundtable. From a first conversation with Find Your People in May 2026:

"There is growing expectation that the New South Wales policy may evolve towards a broader social procurement model from Aboriginal participation at some point, and that's just New South Wales. We require them (contractors) to reach out to social enterprises and Aboriginal businesses as part of their agreement with us; it's written in their contracts. If you're a social enterprise, then they can report that they're also working with a social enterprise as part of that."

Tier 1 Social Impact Manager

Other significant contributing comments from the industry

The people below were not at the roundtable. Each saw the Find Your People marketplace in a separate demonstration between June and October 2026, and each is quoted anonymously, by role only.

"What you're doing is amazing... I think it's going to be a huge success, because everyone's looking for how to get rid of that unconscious bias."

A diversity and inclusion lead at a tier-one head contractor

"I wonder whether this is a tool that makes it easier for subcontractors and labour hire providers to meet our expectations, because so many of them will say, 'there's no one around... we would hire, but we can't find anyone.' And I know that's not the case."

A social impact manager at a tier-one head contractor

"This is quite unique. It's not something that we have. I can see this being quite useful for the major projects that we operate across... one source of truth."

A resourcing lead on a major rail project

"I've seen platforms where people can refine searches by equity. I've seen people that can refine searches through regions. But what I haven't seen is the connecting to an agent. That is the first time I've seen it... It's the closest thing that I have seen that bridges that gap."

A women in trades program manager at a state training provider

What to do in the next 30 days

1. Find out which policy and which targets apply on each project you supply, and ask the head contractor for its subcontractor guidelines.
2. Ask every client what its DE&I goals are. Put the question into your job briefings, your client meetings and your pitch.
3. Write down what you already do, in the client's words: pre-employment programs, community initiatives, the make-up of your own workforce, and any Kinaway, Supply Nation or Social Traders registration.
4. Research the partners, suppliers and community initiatives you could work with, and shape a DE&I strategy that meets your clients' needs.
5. Put your psychosocial safety documentation and your reference and police check standard in one place, ready to show.
6. Brief the site teams you supply on supporting new starters before the start date.
7. Put all of it on your capability statement and your next pre-qualification questionnaire and tender response.
8. Book your training with Find Your People. We tailor it to your current process and leave you with practical changes you can make from the next day. Add this training to your next tender.

Book your training session

Inclusive recruitment training built on your own specialisations and processes: where bias enters your hiring, how to remove it, building a diverse talent pipeline, and how to describe what you already do in the language procurement teams assess.

[Book a time with us](#)

Secure your seat at the 11th November panel event

The Find Your People procurement panel, Sydney, 11 November 2026: hear head contractors answer the questions this report raises, in person, and ask your questions directly.

[Secure your seat](#)

Employers, head contractors and subcontractors who want to pilot the hiring marketplace: it is free for employers, with no tricky integrations. Find out more at findyourpeople.tech

