

# Annual Report 2024





All portraits feature ODI participants and partners,  
we thank them for taking part

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# Our Purpose

is to enable equitable access to employability for marginalised people

# Our Vision

is of an inclusive Ireland, where diversity in business thrives and equitable measures are adopted to eliminate inequality so that everyone has fair access meaningful employability

# Our Mission

is to guide those who are facing barriers to employment and to support companies through collaboration and innovation



Watch: From language classes to career confidence — Esmat's Open Doors journey.



# Our Values

**Collaborative:** We leverage our unique position to foster collaborative working relationships among our partner companies, stakeholders and participants to magnify our impact and ensure the best outcomes

**Participant Centred:** We commit to the rights and needs of our participants in securing pathways to employability, guided by the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals


**Thought Leadership:** We work with our business partners and Government to embed Corporate Social Justice thinking and actions in all their organisations to have positive impact on business outcomes

**Open and Transparent:** We ensure openness and transparency through effective governance and clear communication with all board members and stakeholders

**Research Led:** We leverage and conduct relevant research to ensure our work is targeted and informed by lived experience

**Impact Driven:** We focus on high impact work that supports employability of marginalised people and changes the lives of participants and their families; we regularly monitor and evaluate our work to ensure maximum impact

**Agile:** We are agile in how we work and remain relevant in responding to both participant and business needs. This ensures we adapt to changes in the market.



[Click to watch: Ziqi Zhen shares how ODI helped shape her journey](#)

# Overview from Our Chair, Paddy Hayes

Welcome to the 2024 Annual Report for The Open Doors Initiative.

This report brings together the inspiring work of our partner companies, supporting allies, and dedicated participants who are committed to enhancing lives, to sparking positive social change, and to offering real hope through opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship throughout Ireland.

Our programs - including training, mentoring, internships, and hands-on support - have empowered refugees, individuals with disabilities, disadvantaged youth, and many others to overcome hurdles and pursue their dreams. Each success story reflects the power of determination, resilience, and the belief that every door can open to create pathways to work, education, and entrepreneurship for those who have been marginalised or overlooked.

Our partner companies have played a pivotal role in supporting the Open Doors Initiative. By embracing difference and fostering inclusive workplace cultures, they have enriched their own organisations and have shown what is can be achieved when every individual is valued. Together, we look forward to a future where diversity is welcomed as a source of strength and where opportunities are available and accessible to all.

While we celebrate the achievements of 2024, we are also mindful of the ongoing challenges. There is still much to be done to remove barriers that hinder

access to employment and opportunity. The Open Doors Initiative remains steadfast in its commitment to creating new pathways to work, education, and entrepreneurship for those who have been marginalised.

To all our partners, donors, volunteers, our dedicated team, and the communities we serve - thank you. Your belief, commitment, and generosity have been the foundation of our progress through 2024, and we are deeply grateful for your continued support.

The stories of hope, resilience, and transformation in this Annual Report underscore the critical work of the Open Doors Initiative team and our partner companies. We are determined, through 2025, to continue to build on these successes, working together to create more opportunity for those who need support.

**“I genuinely hope that partners of ODI can see our commitment and our value and potential and stand with us to help every individual realise their full potential to contribute.”**

- Ziqi Zhen  
Open Doors Participant



# Message from Our CEO, Jeanne McDonagh

Today, many people live with fear. Fear of change, fear of movement, fear of social upheaval. Some have to leave their homes and countries, some can't live in a society which disables them, some fear walking on the street with their loved ones, some are not accepted in the place where they come from.

World events are destabilising and having a chilling effect on social impact and positive change. People and leaders are being forced to rescind from their values to protect livelihoods and businesses, which is in direct contradiction to enhancing growth and development in a company or country. Countless studies show inclusion is vital to work.

Inclusion is business doing business.

So how do we get the pendulum to swing back to consensus, stability and economic prosperity? We know that Corporate Social Justice, through understanding and responding to the lived experience of the underrepresented and creating an environment where everybody thrives through the eradication of systemic inequalities, is the future.

We need to actively mitigate against harm and promote inclusion. Companies are catalysts for social change, good and bad, and that is being reflected in people acting with their values and choosing to support those companies that mirror their own.

Leaders working for positive inclusion can see a surge in income, employee retention, community support and societal cohesion. A peaceful society is an economically prosperous one.

At the Open Doors Initiative, we are proud to be at the forefront of this movement towards Corporate Social Justice. Through our unwavering commitment to empowering underrepresented individuals and fostering inclusive workplaces, we strive to build a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Profuse thanks to our corporate partners, donors, government, supporting partners, without whom our work would not be possible. They are all making positive change in society and we are thankful for this.

To my team – where would we be without them? They are brilliant, committed and live their purpose every day. They are kind and impactful and I am so grateful to them all for the work they do.

# Measurements and Reporting

The Open Doors Initiative collaborates with over 80 corporate partners to promote equitable access to employment for individuals from marginalised backgrounds. Together, this network creates scalable impact across Ireland, reaching nearly 30,000 people through direct support in 2024 alone.

The data presented in this report is based on self-reported figures from our partner organisations. All individual inputs were consolidated and analysed by the Open Doors team to provide an overview of the collective outcomes achieved.

When joining the initiative, each partner commits to opening pathways into the workforce for those most in need within Irish society. These opportunities take the form of training, mentorship, work placements, apprenticeships, community supports, and direct employment. In 2024, these collaborative efforts supported 29,708 individuals through direct interventions, a 14% increase from 2023.

However, many organisations highlighted the difficulty of tracking how many employees come from marginalised backgrounds, as disclosure of this information is voluntary and based on individual choice. As such, the actual number of people supported through employment is likely higher than what has been reported.

We are continuously working to improve our measurement processes to ensure a more complete and accurate reflection of the impact of our work. Below are some key highlights from 2024, representing just a snapshot of the progress made by Open Doors and our partners.

## OUTPUTS

### 1,240 INTERVENTIONS

Initiatives provided that aim to support individuals from marginalised backgrounds to access employment, education, or entrepreneurship

### 22,987 SKILLED

People who successfully completed an intervention led by ODI or a participant company that enhanced their employment prospects through the development or enhancement of market-relevant skills

### 6,721 MENTORED

People who received mentoring by employees from participant companies

### 33,593 SUPPORTED THROUGH FUNDING

Individuals supported through 173 interventions funded by Open Doors partners, with over 2.9 million expended

### 8,270 RECEIVED OTHER SUPPORT

Individuals supported through additional 87 activities such as language support, accessible materials, and others

### 60,526 HOURS

Time spent by over 7,400 staff from participant companies on interventions

## OUTCOMES

### 1,685 SECURED EMPLOYMENT

People who accessed permanent employment at a participant company and/or after completing an intervention. This represents a 275% increase compared to 2023

### 358 PAID INTERNSHIPS

People who secured a paid internship or placement in a participant company and/or after completing an intervention. This represents a 244% increase compared to 2023

### 47 NEW BUSINESSES

New companies created by 51 people who completed an intervention that enhanced their entrepreneurial skills

### 2,516 PROGRESSED TO EDUCATION

People who progressed to further education, training, or other employment schemes after completing an intervention



Watch: Raissa and Charles on giving back, rebuilding confidence, and the power of connection.





# Success Stories

## Pobal and the Open Doors Mentorship Programme

Pobal ran a pilot of the Open Doors mentorship programme in 2025 with five mentors. Dr. Toff Andersen, Corporate Lead Project Manager at Pobal, joined the programme with key three goals:

- Understand the challenges faced by communities accessing employment opportunities
- Improve inclusion in Pobal by addressing and removing barriers for inclusion
- Meet new people outside Pobal

Toff mentored ODI participant Nataliia, who wanted to find a digital marketing internship and expand her professional network in Ireland. Nataliia had recently moved to Ireland from Ukraine where she had worked for a number of years in banking and customer services. She met with Toff, having recently qualified with a level 8 qualification in digital marketing. She was struggling to find employment in this competitive field, with more employers looking for experience. Her ideal situation was to get a paid digital marketing role in Dublin.

As Nataliia was relatively new to this field of work, she decided that it might be a more sensible idea to try to gain experience through an internship programme as well as applying for roles. During this mentoring programme, Nataliia and Toff worked together on her CV, cover letters, job searches, internship searches, interview preparation and practice, and post interview reviews. There had also been lots of discussions about Irish work culture and how to keep positive when looking for work.

After applying to numerous businesses, Nataliia was offered two part time internship roles which she took on and completed. Towards the end of the internships, Nataliia was also asked to interview for a role with an organisation who had previously interviewed her. This role was not in digital marketing, but it was a paid role. She was successful in getting the job which gave her experience in the office environment.

**“I met my mentor Toff and I’m so happy I met this person. She became my mentor and I think my friend. I was struggling to find my first job for eight months. I can say that this programme helped me to gain confidence, and I understood that I’m not alone. If you want to find a job, your way, of yourself even, it helps. The meetings, the networking, the help and practice, everything is useful.”**

**- Nataliia Mironova  
ODI Participant**

**“Nataliia is a very talented individual with excellent skills. I’ve never met anyone more determined and focused on getting a job and doing it well. She put hours into what we were working on, always doing her best. Nataliia wanted to learn and actively sought suggestions for improvement. She kept working on the documents until they were perfect and blossomed during this process, growing in confidence every time we met. The effort she made inspired me and made me more committed to the programme, to support her in finding secure paid work.**

**- Toff Andersen  
Corporate Lead Project Manager, Pobal**



**Watch: Nataliia and Toff on mentorship, growth, and finding your way.**



## Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Public Relations Bursary

The DEI Bursary (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Bursary) was originally established in 2022 by the Open Doors Initiative and the Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII). The goal from the start was to improve diversity within the public relations and communications profession in Ireland, specifically supporting people from under-represented or marginalised backgrounds to pursue the PRII Diploma in Public Relations.

In 2024, marking its 15th anniversary, Harris PR partnered with PRII and ODI to enhance this initiative by including a nine-month paid internship at Harris PR. The inaugural recipient of this combined scholarship and internship was Carolina Lucca, who moved to Ireland from Brazil in 2017. With over nine years of experience in customer service and relationship building, Carolina aimed to transition into a career in public relations.

The Open Doors Initiative plays a crucial role in this collaboration by providing guidance and expertise during the selection process.



**Click to Watch: Sonia Harris Pope on opportunity, inclusion, and impact.**

**“By establishing the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion bursary with Open Doors and the Public Relations Institute of Ireland, we’re providing a pathway for people from underrepresented backgrounds to train and develop in public relations and communications.**

**Our bursary candidate is five months into her role with us and her diploma course with the PRII. We believe the best way is to learn on the job. We provide rotating mentorship within the agency to ensure she’s fully supported and has account managers who genuinely care about her development.**

**We’d like to see our peers in the industry consider how they too can take an inclusive approach to nurturing new talent. If the industry continues hiring the same type of people from the same type of backgrounds, year after year, we’ll end up shouting into an echo chamber.**

**Ireland is changing and growing for the better – and so must our industry, so we can continue to communicate to multiple audiences in an inclusive and relevant way.”**

**- Sonia Harris Pope  
Harris PR, Founder and  
Managing Director**



## Dalata Hotel Group and Down Syndrome Ireland

Dalata's Inclusion and Diversity strategy is a mixture of implementing progressive policies, promoting good practice through education, awareness, and training; identifying and removing barriers and most importantly to measure their performance and get employee feedback to ensure continuous improvement.

Dalata aims to show leadership within the hospitality industry and this is best shown, from a diversity and inclusion perspective, through their partnership with Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI). Dalata first reached out to DSI pre-covid to plan how they could best work together. Their aim was to create a successful pathway for adults with Down Syndrome to gain paid employment in the hospitality industry.

Once Covid had dissipated, Dalata restarted talks in early 2023 and launched a pilot placement programme. They worked closely and diligently with DSI to tailor a bespoke pre-employment training and placement programme in their food and beverage departments. This included adapting their training plan, investing time and effort as they understood this would be crucial for success.

In the pilot programme last year, 5 adults with Down Syndrome took part in pre-employment training before joining their hotel teams on a 6-week placement. The placement was two hours per shift, two days per week working in the food and beverage departments.

Each placement student was assigned a buddy who would support them in their work during their

placement. Training was also provided for their teams and the nominated buddies to best prepare them and remove any fears that may have been in place.

Following the pilot programme, 2 people took up paid employment in Dalata hotels and work 3 days per week which suits their own life balance.

In 2024, they have completed another programme with DSI and increased the number of participants to 7 across 6 hotels in Ireland. The 7 adults with down syndrome completed the pre-employment training and workplace programme and 6 of the graduates have taken up permanent paid employment with Dalata in the hotels they were on placement with.

"In total we now have 12 graduates from the two programmes to date, 8 of which are in permanent paid employment in Dalata and they add so much value to our hotel teams and the business.

Internally, all of our hotels are looking to get involved in future programmes such is the success that this programme has been. We are currently planning the next two programmes with DSI and we can only see the partnership going from strength to strength.

As we are an international company, we have also begun discussions with equivalent down syndrome organisations in the UK and also looking at continental Europe to replicate the programme with our teams there.

The positive impact on the participants, their families and our colleagues in Dalata is priceless. A quote from one participant really summed it up -

"I am now going to work like my sister and brother."

However, the real success is we have achieved our initial aim and created a pathway that works and we are now ready to grow the programme to positively impact multiples of this in consecutive programmes.

"This is a Diversity and Inclusion initiative that has a positive impact on society and business and one that we are extremely proud of in Dalata." - Shane Mulchrone, Dalata Hotel Group





## Workday and TU Dublin: Adam's Learning with Disabilities Internship

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Workday believes that skills, passion, and determination should drive opportunity.

Adam Lalor joined Workday as a Learning Pathways Intern. From Clonee, Adam is a student at TU Dublin and stands out with his energy, his kindness, and his love for football, especially his favourite team, Celtic.

As part of his internship, Adam plays a crucial role in keeping the office running smoothly. He ensures the workplace is presentable, the printers are working, and the stationary is stocked. He takes pride in his work, making sure everything is in its place. Adam's favourite part of his job is being behind the reception desk. At reception, Adam truly shines – he loves talking to people, making everyone feel welcome.

"I love working in Workday. Everybody is so nice to me. Happy working as part of the team."

Through this experience, Adam has gained confidence, built new skills, and most importantly, formed lasting friendships. Since joining, Adam has made a valuable impact on Workday's Real Estate & Workplace and Site Operations teams in Dublin.

This internship, in collaboration with TU Dublin, highlights Workday's ongoing commitment to creating an inclusive workplace where every individual can thrive.



**“I’m very grateful  
to be a part of the  
Towards Work  
coaching programme  
as it is exactly what  
I needed to build up  
my confidence and  
my profile to be as  
competitive as I can  
at the moment.”**

- Open Doors Participant



# **Work of the Open Doors Initiative**

# Our Work with Participants

At The Open Doors Initiative, our core mission is to support individuals from marginalised backgrounds in accessing employment, entrepreneurship, and education. Through partnerships with inclusive employers, training providers, and educational institutions, we offer a range of programmes designed to equip participants with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to achieve their career goals.

## Pathways to Progress

The programme's aim is to support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Ireland to navigate the Irish job market, build up confidence, and develop the skills they need to achieve their career goals.

Pathways to Progress supports people in Ireland by providing tailored career guidance, skills development, and networking opportunities. In 2024, the programme delivered 4,680 direct participant engagements through individual support, workshops, and programmes, and over 21,400 indirect engagements through the Migrant Hub and social media outreach - a 53% increase compared to 2023.

## Key Achievements in 2024:

- 2,800+ participants attended workshops and events
- 500+ participants completed one of six Job Ready programmes
- 200+ received individual CV reviews, mock interviews, or LinkedIn support via the Employment Expert Programme
- 59 took part in English language courses, including Business English, English for Employment, and English for Hospitality
- 25 completed the Digital Sales Talent Initiative in partnership with Microsoft
- 20 refugees participated in Entrepreneurship for Refugees, a TU Dublin programme funded by Broadlake
- 870+ received direct advice and guidance from the ODI team
- 147 were matched with a mentor through the Open Doors Mentorship Programme
- 200+ attended our World Refugee Party in June at The Digital Hub
- 56 scholarships awarded for INCO Academy courses and the TechFoundHer bootcamp for female entrepreneurs
- 11,000+ visits to our Migrant Hub
- 3,800+ views of our educational videos on YouTube



A programme of the  
Open Doors Initiative

## Funding

The programme is funded by the European Social Fund (€161,706) and Bank of America (€42,620)

## World Refugee Day

Open Doors celebrated WRD for the second time in 2024, with a party for over 200 attendees at The Digital Hub in Dublin 8.

Open Doors partner The Good Eating Company (Sodexo) presented delicious traditional dishes from different corners of the world. The evening also included a live music performance by Sunshine Music Duo, DJ Donal Scannell and an interactive dance performance by UMAKOKO.

This event represents an opportunity for staff, partners and participants of Open Doors to come together and connect with people from different cultures and backgrounds.



Watch: Basira on celebration, community, and connection



"We had several celebrations within the Open Doors Initiative that gave me the opportunity to feel at home and at the same time enjoy and meet more people from asylum seeker communities and make friends."

- Basira Paigham  
ODI Participant

"I arrived in Ireland in 2021, I was looking for a job in my own field. I sent my CV to Open Doors, they connected me with a research team in UCD, and then I got a job as a Clinical Research Assistant. My biggest achievement is that I gained experience in clinical research projects, and I completed my master's in clinical research in UCD. If you're struggling in finding a job, or if you have a problem in getting back to education, just get in contact with Open Doors. They are very supportive and very helpful, and they could help you with your dreams and your future path."

- Nijat Ahmad  
ODI Participant



Watch: Nijat on finding purpose, support, and a future in clinical research.





Watch: Temwachi Manda on finding the right job  
— and real opportunity

## Towards Work

Towards Work serves as a central resource hub for people with disabilities in Ireland, offering tailored support, skills development, training to help individuals access meaningful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. By working with Open Doors partners, Towards Work encourages the creation of placements and job opportunities that enable individuals with disabilities to gain hands-on experience and develop in-demand skills so they can start and progress their careers.

### Key Achievements in 2024:

- 3,000+ visits to the Towards Work Online Hub
- 114 people with disabilities received individual support and guidance
- 12 Skills & Information sessions covering job interview prep, disability confidence, positive disclosure, and more
- 205 individuals attended workshops, webinars, and information sessions
- 20 completed the Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities course (TU Dublin, funded by AIB)
- 54 received individual mentorship and/or coaching
- 43 participated in a Job Ready programme



**Towards  
Work**

A programme of the  
Open Doors Initiative

### Funding

The work of Towards Work is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disabilities, Integration and Youth (€140,000)





Click to Watch: Basira Paigham on celebration, community, and connection

"This was a no-brainer, working with ODI, because I have personal experience and professional experience of working with ODI. It's just the support we got from them, and the hand holding at the start.

Just from a personal perspective, my daughter was actually the first person we brought in on a work programme with ODI. We tailored our DEI policy and processes from her learning experiences with us.

My daughter has a hidden disability, and we actually did some work on hidden disabilities within our own company, so we adapted a lot of our work processes because of that information, so I'm really proud of that. We do a lot of surveys, and what came through was our staff's appreciation of what we were doing from a DEI perspective.

They were really proud of what we were doing, and they saw it as valuable and they brought it up with the people they meet on a daily basis. I'm really proud of what we do with ODI and to be honest, everyone to do it."

- Gillian Quigley, SIRO

"I am so happy and grateful to be one of the participants of the ODI Mentorship Programme. I value the 'new me' after the enlightened sessions with my mentor. I'm now well informed about jobs for people with a disability. Got a flexible part-time job and still hunting for more. I'm confident including my disability in job applications. I'm in school and do group projects with other students. I look for opportunities to interact more and improve my communication skills."

- Towards Work Participant

"I'm very grateful to be part of this programme. It's exactly what I needed to build my confidence and profile to be as competitive as I can. Something I've struggled with for a long time."

- Towards Work Participant

"I started unsure of myself and my abilities. My coach helped me find tutorials and worked through interview prep with me for five interviews - I was successful in one! I've accepted a temporary role in the Mental Health Commission dealing with decision-making. I'm delighted and feel I wouldn't have been successful without my coach's help!"

- Towards Work Participant

## Open Doors Participant Training

In partnership with leading organisations, ODI provides free online training resources to help participants develop confidence and employability skills. These courses are accessible through the ODI website and include:

### Accenture Skills to Success Academy

This free and interactive training supports Open Doors participants to plan their career, get a job and build skills for the future.

### Accenture Digital Skills

Accenture offers Open Doors participants the full benefits of learning digital skills online for free. CPD certified courses in Digital Marketing, AI, Data Analytics, and more are available.

### Solas eCollege

A leading online learning platform, allowing participants to learn at their own pace. Courses include: project management, information technology, graphic design, web design, digital marketing, software development and basic computer literacy.

### INCO Academy

In partnership with Open Doors, INCO Academy offers 100% funded courses in Digital Marketing, Data Analytics, Cybersecurity, and Green Digital Skills. The courses are delivered virtually through hands-on workshops and real-world projects.

### Generation Ireland

Free skills bootcamps to help anyone facing barriers to employment launch thriving and sustainable careers in tech and sustainability. Courses include AWS re/Start, IT Support with Cyber Security, and Solar Installer.

## Job Ready

The Job Ready Programme is a six-week online training initiative designed to equip participants with the skills, confidence, and knowledge needed to navigate the job market successfully.

Through a combination of live workshops, on-demand training modules, and individual guidance, participants gain practical job-seeking skills, enhance their CVs and interview techniques, and build the confidence needed to secure sustainable employment.

Delivered in partnership with leading employers and recruitment experts, participants attended sessions on CV writing, job applications, interview techniques, networking, workplace culture, employee rights, and more.

### Key Achievements in 2024:

- 555 participants completed one of six Job Ready programmes
- More than 43% secured job interviews during the period of the programme
- 48% secured employment during the programme or within six months of completion

“Participating in the Open Doors Job Ready Programme has been an incredibly rewarding and meaningful experience for me. This programme provided a unique opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and skills necessary for successful employment in today’s competitive environment. Thanks to participation in Open Doors Job Ready, I not only gained new knowledge and skills, but also felt supported and inspired for further career growth. I am confident that this experience will provide me with a solid foundation for achieving my professional goals. I recommend this program to anyone who strives for development and a successful career.”

- Job Ready Participant

“My experience on this programme has been rewarding, it has helped me build my confidence and helped me to integrate easily.”

- Job Ready Participant

“I’ve gained enormous experience and now I feel more confident than ever before.”

- Job Ready Participant

## Other Activities



### Cairde

Cairde – the Allies Network is a partner organisation of The Open Community. It is run by The Open Doors Initiative with the purpose of creating links with key areas of Irish society such as business, education, sports, the religious and other groups who can leverage their connections to enable families to integrate. This can be by a number of ways and we encourage innovative and creative thinking. The North Star is to welcome families and help them create a home from home.

Community Sponsorship was pioneered in Canada in the 1970s. After four decades of the programme's success, we know that this is hugely positive for the lives of both refugees and local communities.

Refugees referred to the Community Sponsorship programme go directly to the community where they will reside and immediately begin the process of settlement. Under community sponsorship, private citizens and community organisations, rather than government officials, become the face of welcome for resettled refugees arriving to their country; supporting them through the process by providing a range of social and emotional supports, as well as providing accommodation, assisting in learning the language and seeking employment, enrolling in schools and any other necessary assistance.

With Community Sponsorship programme in Ireland, communities will be supported to provide direct

assistance to refugees settling in their locality through a structured programme backed by a unique collaboration between government, UNHCR, NGOs and civil society

Cairde is the means by which all of society can link in with this work and create a home from home. We look forward to future engagement with existing and other partners in this work

Open Doors secured legal and insurance support for the work and several corporate partners to help amplify its aims. We continue to grow this area of work



### Computers for Participants

47 participants from The Open Doors Initiative have received laptop donations in 2024, provided by partners HRM Recruit, LinkedIn, Accenture, SIRO, Flutter, EY, AIB and Workday amongst others.





## Entrepreneurship Programmes

### Migrants, Refugees, Asylum Seekers and People with Disabilities

Our entrepreneurship programmes empower refugees, asylum seekers, and people with disabilities to develop business ideas and gain practical skills for self-employment.

- The Self-Employment for People with Disabilities course ran for its fourth consecutive year (Sept 2024 – Jan 2025), funded by AIB and supported by ODI.
- A bespoke entrepreneurship course for refugees and asylum seekers, funded by Broadlake, was delivered by TU Dublin to 20 participants over 12 weeks.

Both courses are NFQ Level 6 certified, awarding 5 ECTS credits upon completion. Participants were also matched with business mentors to develop their business plans.



Watch: Siún and Aoife on ambition, support, and building something real

“My experience working with Open Doors has been really amazing. They are a fantastic organisation with real social impact and that’s really who you want to be working with. We know that in the world talent is distributed evenly amongst people but opportunity isn’t. This is where Open Doors really plays a key role.”

- Aoife Mulqueen, AIB, Group Inclusion and Diversity Lead

“As a result of Open Doors, I’ve been able to set up my production company after doing an entrepreneurship course for people with disabilities thanks to AIB. It’s been kind of life changing, really. The way they structured it and the way they broke it down weekly, I felt capable and I felt like I could complete this task. I just felt like there was a future actually, which I wasn’t feeling at the time. It’s been on my list to set up a production company for years and I just couldn’t. I would get so far and it would just become overwhelming and I couldn’t do it. To have support and to recognise that you need support... so I’d say go for it.”

- Siún O’Connor, ODI Participant



“Open Door’s Inclusive Recruitment training provided our Company’s with valuable insights for fostering diversity and inclusion in our hiring practices. The training was engaging and applicable to all our participants and we would recommend this training to organisations committed to building inclusive recruiting practices.”

- Exertis  
ODI Partner Company

“It was wonderful to have the opportunity, particularly with the generous support of my employer, to take part in such an important programme (The Open Doors Mentorship Programme). There were learnings on both sides and it was great to be able to share our experience and ideas with each other. I’d highly recommend others to partake and employers to support their employees to take part in such an important programme.”

- Lisa Nic an Bhreithimh  
Communications Co-ordinator  
for Social Inclusion and Inclusive  
Employment at Pobal

“On 30th May, we hosted an event with over 100 of Open Doors’ participants to share insights on our culture, EDI practices, recruitment processes, interview skills and CV-building. We are proud to stand with the Open Doors Initiative in their mission to create a more inclusive and equitable society and we look forward to continuing our strong partnership into the future.”

- Victoria Mackechnie  
Director Public Policy &  
Corporate Affairs at Workday

I would highly recommend this training as it provides practical strategies and advice on how to actually implement diversity and equity in the hiring process. It was a great reminder to our team of the inherent barriers and bias within the recruitment process, in addition, it was a great opportunity for us to reflect (as a team) on our current process and the small changes we can make that will make a difference. One of the steps we have taken was to redesign our job description template at GOAL to be much clearer, using straightforward language (with less Jargon) encouraging applicants to ‘select in’ to our process instead of ‘selecting out’.”

- Andrew Weighton, Goal

# Our Work with Employers

Open Doors is dedicated to supporting employers to create inclusive workplaces where people from marginalised backgrounds can thrive. It also aids employers in a number of key business areas such as recruitment and retention of employees, sustainable practices, training, mentoring, research in various areas to further business development, working with government through several fora and collaboration with government bodies and business to advocate and work for Corporate Social Justice and support sustainable businesses practices.

## Employer & Partner Engagement

The work of ODI is continuously supported by our company partners in a myriad of ways. There are over 80 partner companies as part of the ODI network who strive to enable equitable access to employment. We in turn support their Inclusion work with training and seminars in a range of areas, to improve their inclusive recruitment and retention. Our training sessions are informed by research and the lived experience of the communities that we work with.

In 2024, ODI strengthened its network, expanded partnerships, and deepened employer engagement.

A total of 11 new companies joined as partners, and our current partners were successfully re-engaged, reaffirming their commitment to ODI's mission of inclusion.

Employer and partner engagement saw over 26% increase compared to 2023, reflecting the growing interest in inclusive workplace practices. ODI's partner companies played a critical role in driving this progress, actively participating in diversity initiatives, providing opportunities for our participants, supporting training programmes, and contributing to key discussions on inclusive employment.



"The Open Doors Initiative has been a breath of fresh air for us. It has leveraged us so that we can reach into diverse communities, that we can offer opportunities and meet individuals who are looking for employment and have the talent and the skills that our business needs, but also the fantastic culture we've been able to develop by simply opening the doors and saying yes."

- Edel McSorley  
Mr. Price, Operations Director



Watch: Edel McSorley on inclusion, opportunity, and saying yes.

To showcase the commitment of partner companies, ODI launched a social media campaign featuring testimonials from leading organisations such as Accenture, EY, Irish Rail, Mr. Price, PRII, Fragomen and LinkedIn, highlighting their support for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The campaign had significant interaction across LinkedIn, amplifying the message of inclusivity.

Additionally, ODI delivered key training sessions on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) and Inclusive Recruitment, with strong participation from ESB and AIB employees, demonstrating the ongoing investment of partner companies in fostering equitable workplaces.

Partner companies' engagement with ODI has directly increased employment opportunities for marginalised groups. By implementing inclusive recruitment programmes, DEIB workshops, culture and disability awareness and collaborative initiatives, these companies have created accessible hiring practices, opening pathways for individuals facing employment barriers.

As we move forward, our partner companies will continue to be at the heart of our mission, driving change, sharing best practices, and co-creating inclusive employment solutions for a more equitable workforce in Ireland.

## ODI Research

ODI is committed to delivering innovative research that is informed by lived experience and carried out by experts in the field. As thought-leaders in the area of corporate social justice, ODI strives to provide its members and stakeholders with insight that will positively impact on business and those who are experiencing barriers to employability in Ireland.

## Employer's Toolkit for Inclusive Hiring of People with Convictions

Employment has been identified as one of the key tools in reducing recidivism rates, improving the lives of those with a criminal history and as a result creating safer communities. However, we know from our own work and research carried out by others that people with convictions face multiple barriers to employment.

In 2019 90% of employers, who answered a Solas poll, said they were willing to hiring a candidate with a criminal history if supported to do so. Acknowledging there is an appetite for information and guidance on

this, ODI produced a research-informed guidance for employers to best understand how they can remove barriers to employment.

Through the introduction of a comprehensive toolkit, ODI has provided employers with practical resources and guidance to facilitate the recruitment and retention of individuals with convictions. Research was carried out by Dr Joe Garrihy and Dr Ciara Bracken-Roche from Maynooth University School of Law and Criminology.

The toolkit offers a range of valuable resources, including:

- Best practices for creating inclusive hiring policies and procedures
- Guidance on conducting fair and non-discriminatory background checks
- Case studies highlighting successful inclusive hiring initiatives

The Employer's Toolkit for Inclusive Hiring of People with Convictions was launched on the 2nd of May and was kindly hosted by Ibec. We are grateful to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) through the 2023-24 Grant Scheme for funding this work.

This toolkit was informed by a scoping report commissioned by the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) and part-funded by ODI. "The Secondary Punishment": A Scoping Study on Employer Attitudes to Hiring People with Criminal Convictions presents the findings of interviews with employers and people with convictions, survey data, and a participatory symposium. The report makes 10 key recommendations for actions that would support employers in hiring and remove barriers for people with

convictions searching for work. An employers toolkit was a leading recommendation from this report.

During 2024 we have continued to develop our research hub and will be delivering a number key toolkits and reports in 2025, including an employer toolkit on inclusive recruitment and retention of LGBTQIA+ candidates and guidance on gathering disability data.



**"We started to work with the Open Doors Initiative to help us reach more diverse sectors of the community, so minority sectors within the community. The resources that Open Doors have are amazing, the toolkits that they have are amazing. When we were reviewing our recruitment policy, we found the toolkits invaluable."**

**- Adrienne Martin  
HR Manager  
The Arts Council of Ireland**



**Watch: Adrienne on inclusive hiring and practical support from Open Doors**

**“Being able to support someone who just moved to Ireland was my way to give back to all those who helped me when I first moved to Ireland more than 5 years ago. It was a great and enriching experience!”**

**- Claudia Zedda**

Business Consultant, EY and Open Doors Mentor



## Engagement & Advocacy

The Open Doors Initiative is committed to working with Government in order to deliver policy and strategy that is strengthened by lived experience and is inclusive of all communities. ODI believes in the power of transparent civic participation that builds an innovative and inclusive Ireland.

ODI has been invited to share expertise and advice with Oireachtas members in key areas over 2024, as well as actively participating in consultation processes and development of policy papers. These included:

- Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Responsible Business Forum
- Remote Work & Accessible Spaces Charter
- Disability Employment Supports
- National Disability Strategy for Government
- [Pre-Budget 2025 Submission](#)
- [Election Manifesto 2024: A Vision of an Inclusive Ireland](#)
- Programme for Government 2024
- [Creating an Integrated and Cohesive Society](#)

As well as these above points, ODI attended the launch of the Department of Justice's new Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025-2027 in November 2024. ODI are delighted that our employer toolkit, Inclusive Hiring of People with Convictions, and our employer supports are included as a key resource to support employers on this journey and a commitment to further support this work

### Creating an Integrated and Cohesive Society: Engagement

In Q3 and Q4 of 2025, ODI hosted a number of roundtable discussions, hosted by EY's wavespace,

with CEOs, DEIB leaders and ODI participants with lived experience. During these sessions, ODI brought together a community of business leaders, influencers and stakeholders to discuss the barriers and challenges that exist to building an integrated and cohesive society and the tangible solutions that can be proposed to remove these barriers.

We sought to understand how business can lead in resolving challenges facing the migrant and refugee communities in Ireland. We harnessed the skills and expertise of the leaders in our partner organisations so that we could collaborate on strategic solutions and practical change to further support an Inclusive Ireland.

From these roundtable sessions, ODI has produced a set of principles: How can Business Support Integration. These guidelines were developed in collaboration with our business partners and will inform how the business community can support a more inclusive Ireland through practical measures. Looking to 2025, these principles will inform the work of ODI and be used as a lens of analysis.

## External Relations

We spoke to companies and organisations across Ireland through a wide range of talks and training including the several Oireachtas Committees on varying issues; Pride and Transgender events; support for people living with HIV, International Women's Day events; Ibec, Chambers Ireland and other business events, on rights for various marginalised cohorts in a range of seminars and general diversity and inclusion topics.

For our own members, we supported and spoke at over 65 different inhouse events on various inclusion topics and gave over 100 hours of training in a range of areas to Leadership teams, HR and employees

### Memberships & Associations

- The Open Community – lead on the Cairde allies network
- Lord Mayor's Integration Taskforce member – engagement on making Dublin a city of inclusion
- Dublin Regional Enterprise Committee - supporting them in meeting their goals on inclusion in employment
- Dept of Business, Enterprise and Employment
- National CSR Hub members
- Dublin City PPN
- Dublin City Council Inclusivity Forum
- Diversity Charter Ireland
- INAR – Irish Network Against Racism
- Trans Equality Network
- Cork Chamber of Commerce
- Ukraine Civil Society Response Forum
- The Impact Hub Advisory Group
- We have signed the sixth UNHCR Refugee Pledge with our updated numbers from this year and work to date

## Employers for Change

Employers for Change, an employer disability information service, was launched on 11th March 2021 by the Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD, disability advocate and author Sinéad Burke and CEO Bank of Ireland Francesca McDonagh.

Employers for Change provides a central source of information and advice for employers that informs them on all aspects of working with people with disabilities and encourages them to actively recruit from this group.

We do this in a number of ways:

- Providing consultancy and advice through one-to-one engagement with employers via phone, email and in-person or online meetings;
- Hosting a central web-based information resource incorporating guidance, toolkits and FAQ's;
- Providing and participating in awareness raising and outreach activities, such as attending Diversity and Inclusion forums, speaking at employer focused event or delivering trainings;
- Maintaining links with employer stakeholders and disability stakeholders;
- Facilitating research focused on the topic of disability in the workplace;
- Promoting the positive business case for the employment of people with disabilities

Year on year we see an increasing demand from employers for our services and a result of that and the focused work, in 2024 Employers for Change has achieved all set targets:

We have engaged with 101 employers, providing

guidance on general disability inclusion topics as well as specific employee support needs. Many employers have adopted a more strategic approach to disability inclusion, seeking multiple training sessions and in-depth consultations. This included support for reviewing policy proposals, refining internal training materials, and embedding inclusion practices into their organisational strategies. This closer collaboration has allowed us to build stronger relationships with employers and make a real difference in how they approach disability inclusion.

We delivered 70 hours of trainings to 2000+ employees across 38 employers - trainings included Disability Awareness, Disability Inclusive Recruitment and Inclusive Communications. This year we also collaborated with organisations such as Safe to Create and Local Enterprise Office to reach a mix of employers.

With the aim to reach as many employers, hiring managers, HR teams, and recruiters as possible, we have written 27 articles which appeared in blogs, LinkedIn and publications targeting employers, such as SFA Better Business Magazine, Chambers Ireland – InBusiness Magazine, Accounting and Business Magazine and Health and Safety Review.

We have also created practical guides such as: [Understanding Disability Terminologies: A Guide for Employers](#) and [Inclusive and Accessible Recruitment Guide](#).

Our social channels on LinkedIn and Instagram have more than 3,400 followers and our website has received 19,000 views. We have created a new blog section where we regularly share more articles.

## Training Feedback

The feedback based on 326 respondents:

- 97% are satisfied with the sessions
- 96% feels more confident regarding the covered topics
- 94% would recommend the training to someone else



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíocht agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

## Funding

The work of Employers for Change is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disabilities, Integration and Youth (€150,000)

## Other highlights

### Podcast series

To mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, EFC also launched a new series of four podcasts on December 3rd, 2024. Topics include Practical tips to foster a truly inclusive work culture; Debunking common misconceptions about disability; Exploring reasonable accommodations and Unlocking the power of assistive technology for businesses. [Find the podcasts on our website.](#)

### Collaboration with Stakeholders

Employers for Change continued working with AHEAD on the WIDE (Widening Inclusion of Disability in Employment) collaborative national framework. This will be a good practice framework for employers which will address barriers to employment for people with disabilities and will be housed on the [Employers for Change website](#).

We have collaborated with the Department of Social Protection to promote the newly launched Work and Access Scheme by hosting a webinar to employers, which had a very high interest rate.

## What People Say About Employers for Change Training

**“Tipperary County Council engaged the services of Employers for Change to deliver a series of Disability Awareness training sessions to all our indoor staff. Our goal was to foster greater understanding among employees, challenge prejudice and discrimination, and support the creation of a knowledgeable, compassionate, and inclusive workplace for all. Employers for Change delivered the training online to over 400 employees, ensuring each session was engaging, informative, and concise. The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the training’s effectiveness and impact.”**

**- Ciara Byron  
Human Resources  
Tipperary County Council**

**“We were delighted to have Employers for Change deliver training here at NUI. The training was informative and engaging and particularly covered acquired and non-apparent/invisible disabilities well. We are looking forward to learning more and enhancing our competency in this area on an ongoing basis.”**

**- National University of Ireland**

**“Excellent presentation on a topic that affects all people and all organisations in some way. We will continue to build our awareness to ensure that we can support existing employees and welcome new talent to our business.”**

**- Medite Smartply**

**“Open Doors truly lives up to its name, guiding migrants toward the right path with its incredible courses and programs. Thanks to their support, I received a bursary in Public Relations and took the opportunity to excel in areas like AI, Business English, and other impactful projects. I wholeheartedly recommend Open Doors to anyone looking to achieve their goals and build a brighter future.”**

**- ODI Participant**

**“Thank you for the amazing opportunity to learn so much about Irish employment market. My new role is Mental Health project manager at Irish Red Cross. I really appreciate the knowledge I’ve gotten with your programme, it helped me to prepare for the interview and get this position.”**

**- ODI Participant**

**“I am grateful for having a chance to register for the Open Doors Programme. I have gained more self-confidence in my job-seeking journey. The Open Doors Team is considerate and thoughtful, they have supported me actively and answered any questions I had. I hope many people will register for this programme in the future.”**

**- ODI Participant**

**“I started feeling very unsure of myself and my abilities. My coach helped to find me upskilling tutorials and worked through interview prep with me for 5 interviews and I was successful in one! I have accepted a temp roll in the mental health commission dealing with decision making. I am delighted and feel I wouldn’t have been successful without the help of my coach!”**

**- ODI Participant**



# Connecting Participants and Employers

Open Doors act as a connector between participants and employers, ensuring mutual benefits for both and that they are connected, and work to grow the employers understanding and awareness of the barriers they face with regards to employment and wider societal issues.

## Placement Programme

In 2024, several Open Doors partners created placement opportunities for participants, including Fragomen, HRM Recruitment, Harris PR, the Arts Council, and SIRO.

Open Doors offers a range of services to partners on this journey, from creating and promoting the role, to onboarding the new employee and training managers and the HR team.

Work placements represent tangible opportunities for people facing additional barriers to employment. They offer the opportunity to gain relevant experience and train (or re-train) in key areas that are necessary to successfully find employment. Without these, many job seekers from marginalised backgrounds struggle to find employment.

## FRAGOMEN

“Fragomen is proud to have a robust internship programme that provides valuable opportunities for individuals to gain hands-on experience and develop their skills in the field of immigration. As part of our commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion, we have dedicated one internship placement each year to an individual from the Open Doors Initiative. This collaboration allows us to support individuals from marginalized backgrounds by offering them meaningful work experience and mentorship within our organization, further reinforcing our commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive workplace. One of the ODI interns went on to get an offer of employment post internship.”

- Fatima Aydin, Senior Immigration Manager, Fragomen



“Last year we ran an internship programme with Open Doors, we currently have an intern working with us and he’s doing brilliantly. To see him grow in confidence, it’s just amazing, and it will become a regular part of our yearly workforce planning.”

- Adrienne Martin, HR Manager, The Arts Council



The Open Doors Mentorship Programme continues to deliver long-term, personalised support to participants, with 161 mentees receiving guidance from experienced professionals in 2024—a 63% increase from the previous year.

Through the programme, mentees receive individual support in goal setting, job searching, career progression, and professional development. The one-on-one guidance provided by mentors helps participants build confidence, develop key skills, and unlock new career opportunities.

In 2024, the programme was strengthened by mentors from 23 Open Doors partners, including EY, Hays, Accenture, Northern Trust, Fragomen, Pobal, Certa, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Mr.PRICE, and more. Their expertise and commitment have been instrumental in empowering mentees to take the next steps in their careers.

**“Pobal’s vision is for an equal and inclusive society and working in partnership with the government and communities, so for us it was working with an organisation that is experienced and passionate about working with communities and they champion people. I would recommend it wholeheartedly, I think it’s great for employees to get involved, it’s great to actually give back, it’s great to be able to understand some of the challenges that other people face. They’ve helped us in any way what we required, which for one organisation to be able to do that is quite remarkable.”**

**- Toff Andersen**  
Corporate Lead Project  
Manager, Pobal



**“This year I got involved in the mentorship programme, which was hugely rewarding. I was supported by Open Doors by giving training, there were various drop-in sessions throughout the mentorship programme, so at every stage I felt that I was given the guidance and advice I needed, so I would recommend anyone to get involved in that.”**

**- Jennifer Dillon**  
Director, Lead of DEI Council  
Hays



**Watch: Jennifer on the value of structured, supported mentoring.**

*"I was involved in a mentoring programme at the Open Doors Initiative, where I was assigned a mentor, an amazing professional lady working in senior management at a big organisation. She has been very encouraging, supportive, understanding and helpful, not just in career development but also in the way she interacts with people, it's been inspiring to me and she has been a role model." - Ziqi Zhen, Mentee*

*"Participating in this programme has been an eye-opening and transformative experience. My mentor, Jackie, has provided incredible guidance and support, helping me see things from a new perspective and work on areas I needed to improve, something I couldn't have achieved without her help. I'm deeply grateful to my mentor for her encouragement and expertise, which have empowered me to navigate the challenges of reintegrating into the workforce as a migrant. I'm confident that, with her support, I'll continue developing the tools I need to secure meaningful employment." - Mentee*

*"I joined the mentorship programme and I enjoyed collaborating with my mentor. She has broad experience in HR, with strong soft skills. I could ask any silly questions about rules of business communication in Ireland. She helped me with integration in Ireland too. I became a Human Capital Intern at Deloitte and I am now being considered for a permanent contract as an Analyst." - Mentee*

*"Thank you for the amazing opportunity to learn so much about Irish employment market. My new role is Mental Health project manager at Irish Red Cross. I really appreciate the knowledge I've gotten with your programme, it helped me to prepare for the interview and get this position." - Mentee*

*"I am so happy and grateful to be one of the participants of ODI Mentorship Programme, I appreciate and value the 'new me' after the enlightened interactive sessions with my mentor. Honestly, I don't know how she was able to cope with our sessions for she had to type 90% of what she said on the screen for me to read despite the fact that I was seated beside her, and all these she did besides her regular job. Kudos to you all, I earnestly look forward to the day I can give back to ODI by inspiring someone through mentorship too!" - Mentee*

*"I made the right decision to take part in this program. Other courses and trainings did not bring as much benefit as communication with a mentor from your field. Thank you very much!" - Mentee*

*"I feel this is a great programme to help people get into work and help prepare them for what they need to do. It also challenges their thinking of what they think they need to do or not do i.e. trying to do everything at once. My Mentee learned to break down tasks by priority of when they needed to be completed and then moved on to the next task. This helped compartmentalise tasks and thoughts and built their confidence." - Julie Higgins, EY*

*"Enlightening experience that has supported not only the development of the mentee, but also us as mentors. It has been of huge benefit to the organisation in realising our corporate values and 'walking the walk' supporting the communities we work with." - Mentee*

*"The entire experience was truly wonderful. I was very lucky to be paired with my mentee. He consistently demonstrated an exceptional level of commitment and enthusiasm. Always punctual and prepared for our sessions, he approached every meeting with a willingness to learn and a positive attitude. Our sessions covered a range of recruitment preparation activities, from resume building to interview practice. My mentee's*

*proactive nature and dedication to self-improvement made it clear that he was not just passively receiving advice but actively engaging with the process and striving to excel. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to my mentee's growth and development, and I am confident that he will achieve great success in his career endeavours." - Oliwia Falowska, Certa Ireland*



**"I really appreciate ODI. I was given a mentor, and through the programme, I learned a lot about work culture in Ireland. I needed to know how to write a CV, how to write an application. Of course, anyone can write a letter, but in a different environment, there are things you need to follow. I was enlightened on that. ODI is the place to be - for their compassion, job opportunities, CVs, cover letters, interviews, decisions, goal-setting. It disciplines you. You know where you stand in the workplace, what to do, and how to do it right."**

**- Abimbola Awodeyi  
ODI Participant**



**Watch: From CVs to confidence - Abimbola's journey with Open Doors.**



## Employment Expert Programme

In 2024, The Open Doors Initiative significantly expanded the Employment Expert programme, nearly tripling the number of one-on-one support sessions offered - from 64 in 2023 to over 200 in 2024. This growth reflects both the increasing demand for tailored career support and the commitment of our network of partners.

Through these individual sessions, job seekers received CV reviews, mock interviews, LinkedIn guidance, and career advice, equipping them with the tools and confidence to navigate the job market successfully.

The programme's success was made possible by the dedication of over 30 experts from 15 companies, including LinkedIn, Nestlé, Accenture, Northern Trust, Hays, and TTM Healthcare. These professionals volunteered their time and expertise to provide personalised guidance, helping participants refine their job applications, strengthen interview skills, and expand their professional networks.



**“I’ve been out of work for quite a while, trying to rebuild my confidence, learn the ropes, learn the tools, meet people. Open Doors introduced me to somebody at LinkedIn to review my profile, this is not a service you normally get directly.”**

**- Charles J. Fowler, ODI Participant**

**“It’s been a great experience. I’ve been a programme manager working with Open Doors for about three years now. For me, personally, it’s been awesome to give back to the community and use the skills LinkedIn teaches us to help people find jobs and create economic opportunity in the global workforce. A few of the candidates I’ve worked with have actually found roles after working with us. That’s been, personally, really impactful. We get so caught up in our day-to-day, and working with a non-profit like Open Doors reminds you there’s more going on than just your job. It also gives you that sense of gratitude for being able to give back.”**

**- Raissa Masket, LinkedIn**



*"[The Employment Expert and I] had three calls, including interview preparation and two rounds of CV review: the first with general recommendations and the second with small additional corrections. Before that review, I had been applying for the same roles for three months without any positive replies. I was so lucky to have his support and all his effort. After all the interviews, I received two offers and now I work as a SCRUM Master." - ODI Participant*

*"This program has many practical things like CV, LinkedIn, and Job Seeker Toolkits but the most useful for me were meetings with experts and the Q&A sessions where you can find answers to your questions. The Open Doors helped me better understand and navigate the labour market in Ireland and added confidence. Thank you all for your work and support!" - ODI Participant*

*"As a Learning and Development consultant, I guide and assist employees in my organization with their career development. I signed up to be an Employment Expert with Open Doors Initiative because I want to support marginalised members of our society to navigate their career journeys. In this programme, I work with people from various backgrounds and in different capacities, including improving their CVs and cover letters, suggesting ways to search for jobs, and completing mock interviews. The biggest success that I see when I meet with clients is the increase to their confidence knowing that they can prosper, be successful and unlock new career opportunities. Being part of an organization dedicated to empowering people and fostering inclusive work environments is deeply fulfilling." - Patty Hill, Northern Trust (Expert)*



In 2024, Open Doors launched the Career Paths initiative, an event series to provide participants with direct access to leading companies, allowing them to explore potential career opportunities, understand recruitment processes, and gain valuable insights into workplace culture and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives.

Over the year, we hosted six Career Paths events, in collaboration with Workday, Otonomee, Mr.PRICE, Irish Rail, Microsoft, and HubSpot. These sessions attracted over 1,500 registrants, reflecting a strong demand for direct engagement with inclusive employers. Each event included details about the company's industry, available roles, and application processes, as well as tips for CV writing, using LinkedIn, and preparing for job interviews. Participants had the opportunity to connect with recruiters and hiring managers in smaller breakout rooms, where speakers shared their career journeys and advice.

**"Attending the event 'Career Paths with Mr. Price' in Dublin was a game-changer. I can't express how much it means to me that you took the time to guide and encourage me. This opportunity feels like a dream come true, and I owe so much of it to your kindness and wisdom. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support!"**

**- ODI Participant**

**"In 2021 when I first came to Ireland, I started my first English language course through Open Doors and by finishing that course, I started my first internship. In 2022, I started my first Diploma with TU Dublin, and it was through Open Doors again. In 2024, I started another job with HRM Search Partners and I still work there as a Marketing Support Administrator. Through the Open Doors programmes and trainings, I developed my communication and networking. Because of the programmes, I met new people and I have learned about the Irish culture and different people's cultures."**

**- Esmat Ibrahim, ODI Participant**



# Government Engagement and Research

In the past year, the Open Doors Initiative (ODI) continued to strengthen its role as a trusted partner to Government and a leading voice in evidence-based advocacy for inclusion. Through sustained collaboration and impactful research, we worked to influence national policy, inform practice, and support greater access to employment, education, and training for marginalised communities.

## Working with Government

ODI maintained active engagement with several Government departments, including:

- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Department of Justice

Our contributions ranged from formal submissions and advisory roles to participation in cross-sectoral working groups

and national consultations. We provided input into policy frameworks such as the Programme for Government, the National Strategy on Disabilities, the Migrant Integration Strategy, and emerging inclusion initiatives. ODI's lived-experience insights and employer networks ensured that our contributions reflected both practical realities and strategic solutions.

## Research

Research continues to underpin our approach, guiding both our internal programming and broader advocacy. Key research outputs in 2024 included:

- Barriers to Employment Report: A national study highlighting the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups, with targeted recommendations for employers and policymakers.
- Inclusive Hiring in Ireland: This benchmarking report analysed current recruitment practices across sectors and identified gaps in accessibility and representation.
- Impact Measurement and Programme Evaluation: Ongoing data collection

and outcome tracking enabled ODI to report on participant progress, employer engagement, and the wider societal impact of our work.

These insights were shared directly with Government stakeholders and used to inform policy decisions, budget submissions, and the refinement of national strategies.

## Influencing Policy Through Evidence

ODI's research and policy contributions were presented at Oireachtas Committee briefings, ministerial roundtables, and interdepartmental meetings. Our work helped shape inclusive labour market policies and drove forward a deeper understanding of structural barriers faced by our participant groups.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to using research and Government engagement as twin pillars of our mission - working together to build a more inclusive Ireland for all.



# Design and Communications

As the Open Doors team and programmes continue to grow, so does our brand awareness within the business community in Ireland, as well as with the wider public. All promotion of our events, projects and opportunities happens in online spaces, so we strive to keep our digital messaging strong, vibrant and consistent. We also seek to lead by example to ensure all communications adhere to the best practices for accessibility and inclusion.

During our successful [Leaders' Summit in February 2024](#), we championed the concept of Corporate Social Justice, bringing it to an influential audience of business leaders and innovators. Introducing this broader approach to change provides a new avenue for ODI to share our mission with the world, beyond our day-to-day offerings of programmes and opportunities for our participants. High quality filming and editing of the event by FUEL was also very beneficial, allowing us to share video footage widely afterwards, reaching 93,576 impressions on LinkedIn.

We were the grateful recipients of two LinkedIn Ad Grants through their non-profit programme, providing us with \$150,000 worth of ad credits, to spend between March-

July, and September-December 2024. This funding allowed us to target our campaigns to reach certain sectors, companies, job titles or experience levels of LinkedIn users. The impact of the ad grant led us to more than double our followers to 5,645 at the end of 2024. Our campaigns varied between still graphics and video clips, leading viewers to either visit the Open Doors website, one of our three programme websites, or registration pages for specific events using Microsoft Teams. For the range of ads shared in 2024 there were over 48,000 visits between these various websites, leading to a significant increase in our impact.

Seven episodes of the [Open Mic podcast](#) were launched in 2024, using some of our LinkedIn ad credits to give them an additional boost of exposure. We had over 1000 downloads by May 2024, and very positive feedback on the episodes. Topics covered included racism encountered in the workplace, employment opportunities for Travellers, entrepreneurship, challenges for those with a prior criminal conviction and innovative ways to overcome barriers to success.

Throughout the year we create and share





content across our social media channels to spread awareness of our work, our upcoming events or other opportunities. In 2024, we created over 250 graphics, in both still and video format, to engage with our audiences, across Open Doors and our three programme areas. Our ODI Instagram account has grown organically, without any paid promotion, to reach 1,402 followers, and the three programmes have 1,382 combined followers.

ODI has two distinct audiences for our content, so we attempt to balance our promotional output between our participants who are facing employment barriers, and professionals either from our partner companies or the wider business community. We ensure that we offer useful informative resources to employers, while also encouraging new companies to join as partners so that we can collaborate more fully on initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion within their organisations. We also work with a supporting community network to reach a broader range of people who could benefit from our programmes, who might not yet have encountered us on social media or websites.

## Awards

ODI's impact was also recognised through prestigious award nominations. ODI was a finalist in key categories such as the Diversity in Tech Awards, ESG Awards, Zero Project Awards, and L&DI Awards. Additionally, Edel McSorley, Operations Director from Mr. Price won the award for the ESG Leader of the Year award, a testament to the transformative impact of ODI's partnerships. These accolades reinforce ODI's role as a driving force in creating inclusive workplaces and breaking down barriers for marginalised communities.

## Media

[The Examiner - 'Inclusive recruitment – a lot done, more to do'](#)

[Refugees facing barriers to work on Drivetime, featuring a participant](#)

[Time for businesses to lead by example in new era for Corporate Social Justice – RTÉ](#)

[Time for tech businesses to lead by example in new era for Corporate Social Justice – Dublin Live](#)

[Open Doors Initiative wants business to deliver social justice – Business Plus](#)

[Time for tech businesses to lead by example in new era for Corporate Social Justice – Irish Tech News](#)

[HR Room Insight podcast – on Corporate Social Justice with Edel McSorley from Mr Price](#)

[Sunday Independent interview on World Bipolar Day for Aware](#)

[Diageo's Learning For Life Programme celebrates tenth anniversary in Ireland – Hospitality Ireland](#)

['Contacts are so important in the beginning' – The Irish Times](#)

[EFC featured in the Accounting and Business online magazine: Is your practice accessible for all?](#)

[Encouraging diversity in PR – Women Mean Business PRII/ODI scholarship](#)

Irish Times piece on hiring people with cultural and ethnic diversity (upcoming)

CEO Podcast with the Lived Experience Project (upcoming)

Shannonside Radio on Programme for Government and Disabilities

[Ask the Expert piece in The Journal – 3 Oct 2024](#)

## ODI Participant Finn Lyons in the Guinness Storehouse



***Press Play to Watch Video***



# Governance

The Open Doors Initiative has a robust Governance structure and is supported by CEOs and Directors from a number of the member companies. We were delighted to welcome more new directors, under the stewardship of Paddy Hayes, our Chair, to increase our governance and oversight standards and provide support to the team and work of Open Doors.

## Leadership Advisory Board

- Kara McGann, Director, Ibec, 17th April 2024
- Denis Doolan, Director, AIB, 17th April 2024
- Noeline Blackwell, Director, Consultant, 17th April 2024
- Thomas Stone, Director, TUD, 17th April 2024
- Marian Cronin, Director, Sodexo, 17th April 2024
- Ursula Murphy, Director, Bank of America, 8th January 2024
- Hillary O'Meara, Director, Accenture, 14th June 2023
- Paddy Hayes, Chair, ESB, 1st March 2023
- Sharon Vize, Director, CPL, 6th November 2022
- Veronica Rodriguez Cabezas, Director, Consultant, 15th October 2022
- Barry O'Sullivan, Director, Diageo, 1st February 2022
- David Stanton, Director, Consultant, 31st August 2021
- Sharon Murphy, Director, WHPR, 12th July 2021
- Patrick Doyle, Director, eFrontiers, 4th February 2020
- Gerard Kiernan, Secretary, Icon, 4th February 2020

## Date of Meetings

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| • January 2024   | • June 2024     |
| • March 2024 AGM | • October 2024  |
| • April 2024     | • December 2024 |

## Employees

- Jeanne McDonagh, CEO
- Claire Hayes, Head of Policy, Research and Government
- Talita Holzer, Head of Programmes
- Lidia Oborina, Programme manager, Pathways to Progress
- Wayne Howe, Programme Manager, Towards Work
- Abdul Bari Ahmadzai, Business Development and Stakeholder Manager
- Anna Boda, Programme Manager, Employers for Change
- Mohamad Camera, Programme Executive
- Jessica Reid, Design and Admin Executive

## Company Number 665789

**Auditors** Donal Ryan and Co, Auditors

# Financial Statements

for the financial year ended 31 December 2024\*

## Income and Expenditure Account

for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	2024 €	2023 €
<b>Income</b>	<b>765,599</b>	680,595
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>(781,178)</b>	(609,228)
<b>(Deficit)/surplus before interest</b>	<b>(15,579)</b>	71,367
Interest receivable and similar income	-	150
<b>(Deficit)/surplus for the financial year</b>	<b>(15,579)</b>	<u>71,517</u>

## Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2024

	2024 €	2023 €
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible Assets	<u>1,905</u>	<u>2,873</u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	<b>375</b>	49,850
Cash and cash equivalents	<b>973,129</b>	825,609
	<u><b>973,504</b></u>	<u>875,459</u>
<b>Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	<b>(502,398)</b>	(389,742)
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<u><b>471,106</b></u>	<u>485,717</u>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<u><b>473,011</b></u>	<u>488,590</u>
<b>Reserves</b>		
Income and expenditure account	<u><b>473,011</b></u>	<u>488,590</u>
<b>Equity attributable to owners of the company</b>	<u><b>473,011</b></u>	<u>488,590</u>

\*Full audited financial accounts are available at [www.opendoorsinitiative.ie](http://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie)

### Detailed income and expenditure account

for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
	€	€
<b>Income</b>		
Donations (Membership Fees)	172,433	240,953
Direct Funding Income	-	951
Pobal Income	-	10,000
DCEDIY - Dept. of Children	237,599	205,481
Bank of America	49,049	68,190
International Protection Integration Fund	40,346	14,980
The Community Foundation for Ireland	45,000	25,000
ESF Funding	128,183	101,905
ESB Funding	10,000	-
IHREC Funding	12,683	-
ODI Funding	34,806	7,319
Other income	35,500	5,816
	<b>765,599</b>	<b>680,595</b>



## Detailed income and expenditure account (continued)

for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	2024 €	2023 €
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Materials	40,658	10,349
Purchases	33,322	22,871
Direct costs	49,843	18,832
Motor expenses	2,860	2,449
Travelling and Subsistence	5,640	8,111
Entertaining	-	4,995
Wages and salaries	493,833	401,080
Social welfare costs	54,704	44,237
Employee Pension Contributions	18,000	18,000
Insurance	1,333	1,370
Printing, postage and stationery	239	2,811
Courier and delivery charges	111	128
Telephone	1,794	960
Computer costs	11,229	2,465
Website Maintenance	12,499	-
Travelling and Subsistence	3,131	6,035
Consultancy fees	15,267	26,405
Consulting & Accounting	13,800	6,488
Bank charges	283	460
General expenses	17,100	26,072
Gifts	814	2,457
Auditor's remuneration	3,750	2,134
Depreciation	968	519
	<b>781,178</b>	<b>609,228</b>





# Funding

A sincere thank you to all our funders and supporters for various initiatives, without whom we could not carry out our work:



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lámhálaitríochta agus Oige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth



Supporters of events and projects:







# Our Partners



# Our Supporting Community





 [www.opendoorsinitiative.ie](http://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie)  
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