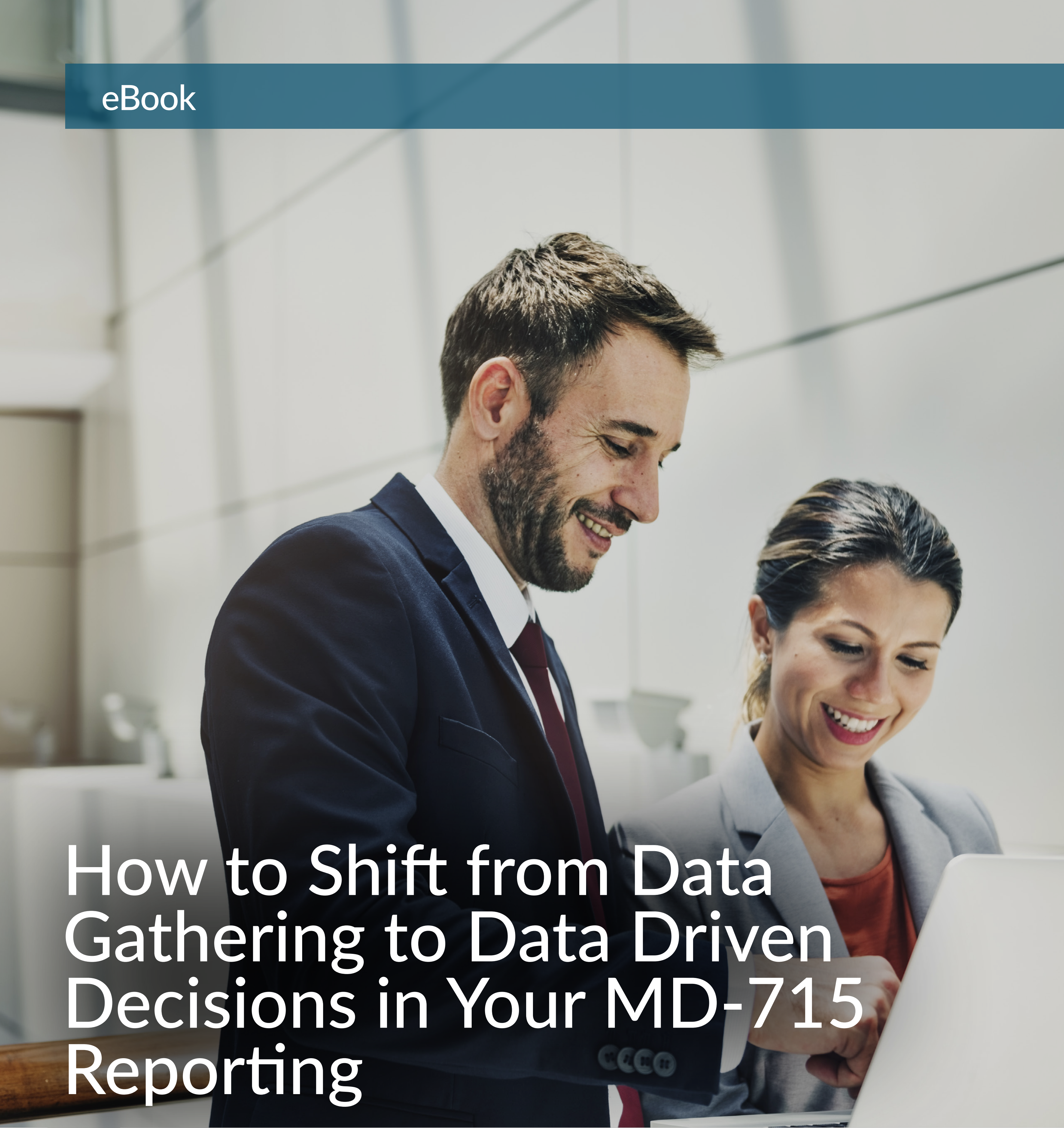

eBook

How to Shift from Data Gathering to Data Driven Decisions in Your MD-715 Reporting

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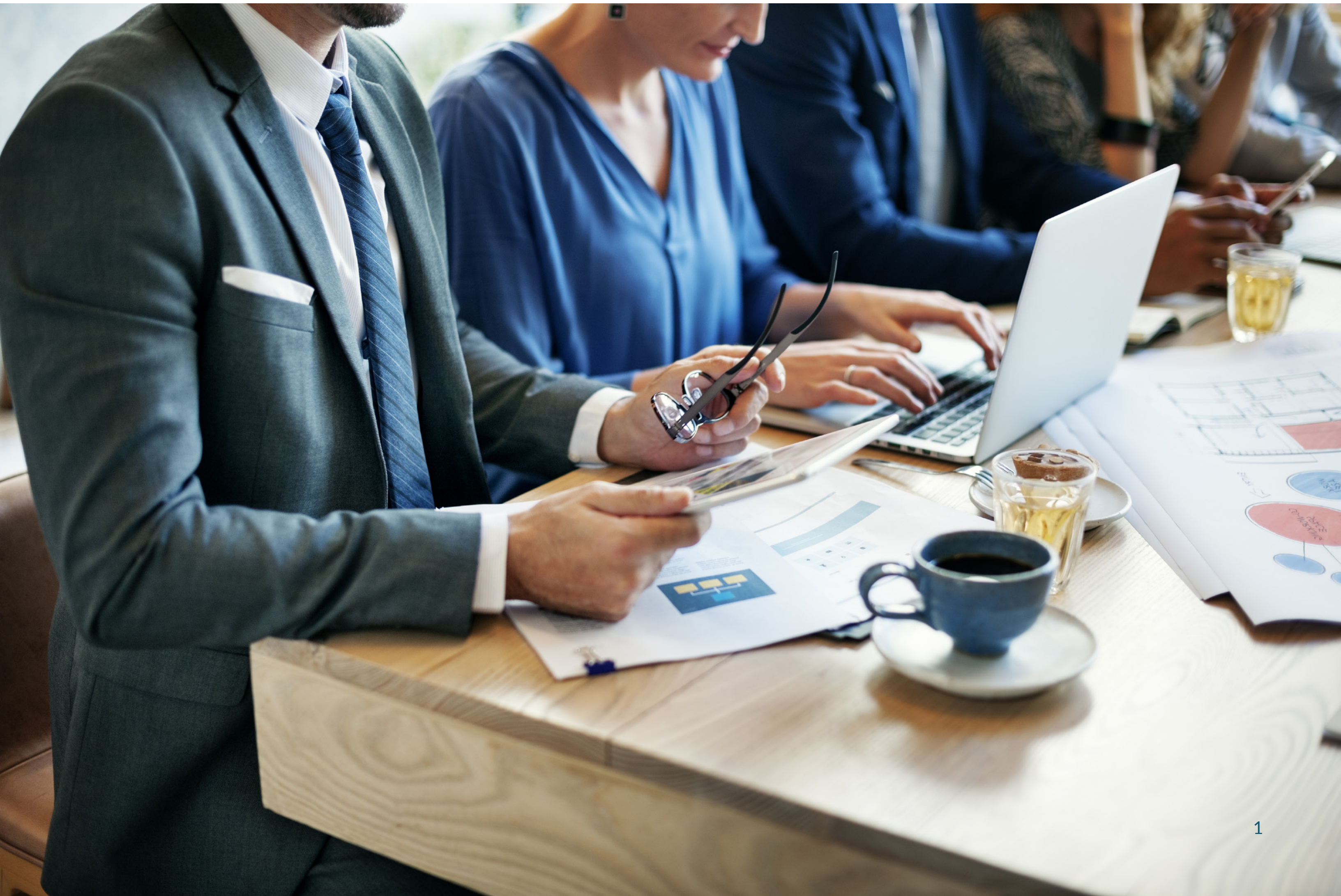
How to Shift from Data Gathering to Data Driven Decisions in Your MD-715 Reporting

Every agency in the Federal Government is currently required to produce reporting in MD-715 format each year. That reporting is integral to ongoing efforts to address potential gaps in representation in the workplace, but there are significant challenges in meeting these requirements for many agencies.

Not only is the volume of data significant enough to make the process extremely time consuming, but there are limited resources for in-depth analysis of the data once the reporting has been prepared. The result is a series of Excel spreadsheets with demographic information about the organization, segmented by gender and race, but limited barrier analysis to identify where problems might occur, and more importantly, how to address them.

To get more from MD-715 reporting, a shift is needed from data gathering to data-driven decision making. With the right combination of technology and analysis tactics, it is possible to do this at scale for agencies of all sizes.



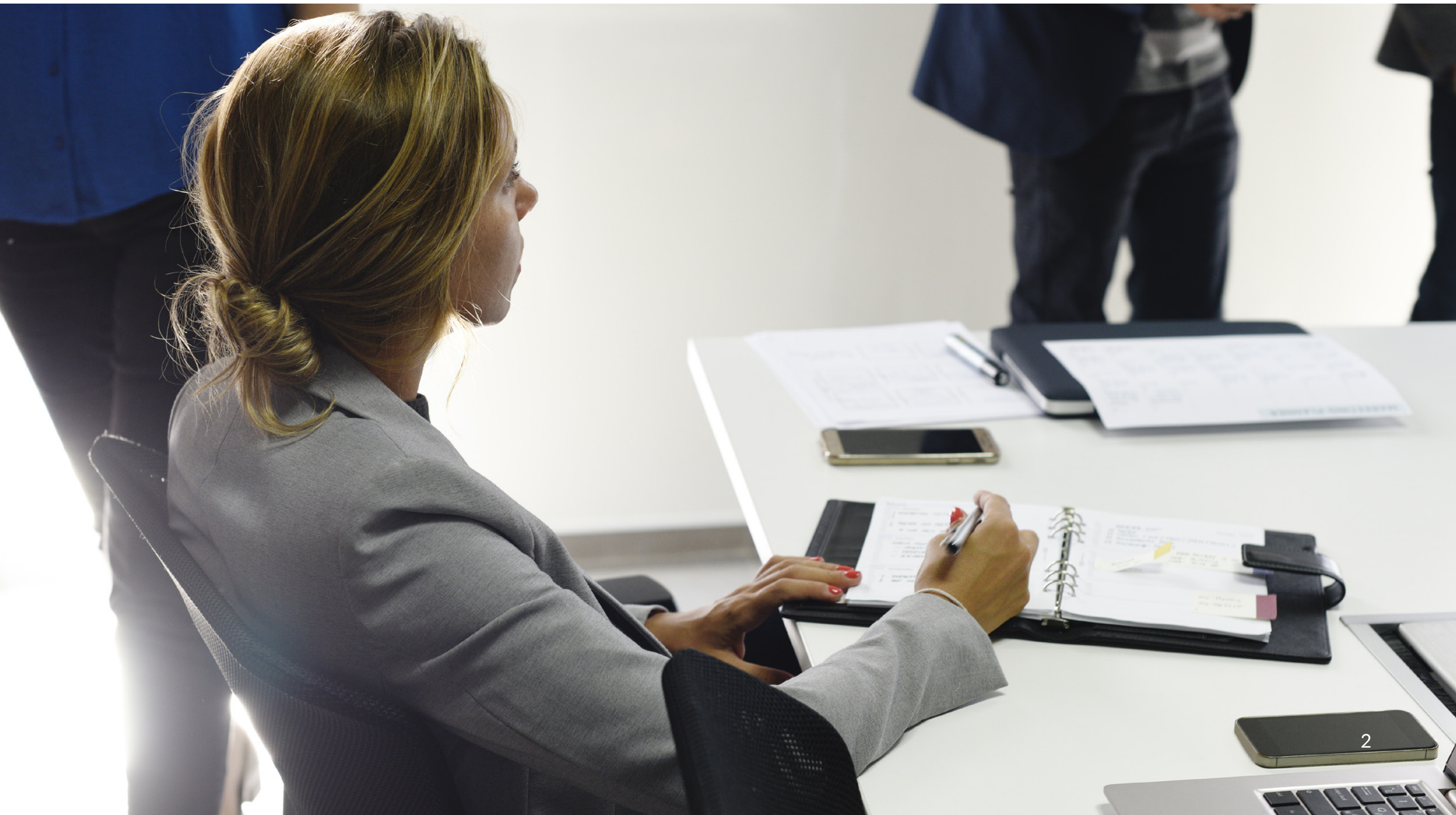
The Shortfalls in Current MD-715 Reporting Processes

While every agency is required to complete the same reports, that does not mean each of them has the time or resources needed to fully analyze that data and make better decisions that would influence the outcomes of future reports. Most agencies are focused on the data collection and meeting those strict reporting requirements. The barrier analysis that would enable improvements over the results to these reports is often missing.

That lack of analysis means several things for many government agencies. Currently, many scramble just to meet the basic MD-715 reporting requirements. They produce the required tables but perform minimal investigation after the data collection and organization is completed. Depending on the size and distribution of an organization, reports may be produced at 2nd, 3rd, or 4th level components, which may need to coordinate with the agency.

What Barrier Analysis Should Do

After data has been collected and organized, the next stage is to analyze the data and determine if there are barriers for specific subsets of the population. If an organization has 100 employees, of which only 32 are female, barrier analysis will determine what the likelihood is that only 32 out of 100 employees are female, based on gender distribution, geography, and the roles in that organization. In this case, assuming a 50% split for gender, a trigger may be identified, and further analysis can be done to determine why it exists and how to address it.



This second stage of barrier analysis is often missing for several reasons, including the scope of the workforce in many agencies and their departments.

The measures by which an organization determines there are barriers are moving targets. They will vary depending on geography, size of the organization, and other factors that need to be accounted for in the data. A field office in Alaska has different barriers than the central agency in Washington. The breakdown of available experts in certain fields may influence where barriers are perceived as well. Analysis may be different for the VA looking at nurses in facilities throughout the southwest compared to DHS evaluating cyber security roles in the Mid-Atlantic.

The Challenge of Manually Identifying Triggers

To identify and analyze a barrier in the workforce, triggers need to be identified. This can be difficult to do manually with so many variables and such a large data set. Anything can be a trigger, and triggers can happen at one of multiple different levels – from recruiting to the application process to the people who are ultimately hired. Some triggers will be immediately evident (e.g. 95% of a department is white men), but most will be less obvious and require nuanced analysis of large sets of data – something a lot of organizations do not have time or resources to do.

Using Technology to Improve Trigger Identification

Technology can greatly improve the trigger identification process, using powerful algorithms to sift through large tables quickly and identify any number of possible discrepancies.

MD-715 reporting consists of several tables specifically designed to help people see the most likely triggers that need to be investigated. There are several different levels that can be identified and drilled down into to find process gaps or activities that might prohibit equal opportunity in an agency.

With the right technology tools, these tables become useful tools in going even deeper and looking at thousands of potential triggers that might influence representation in the workforce.

Augmenting Organization of Data at a Large Scale

The first step is to ensure all data is organized properly and in a timely manner. Technology such as EconSys Diversity Analysis tools tap into already existing data sources in the National Financial Center to populate MD-715 tables quickly. Because this information is already in place and can be pulled through the tool, something already available for anyone who uses FedHR Navigator, the collection and organization process can be streamlined substantially, while ensuring accuracy in these reports.

Analyzing Thousands of Potential Triggers

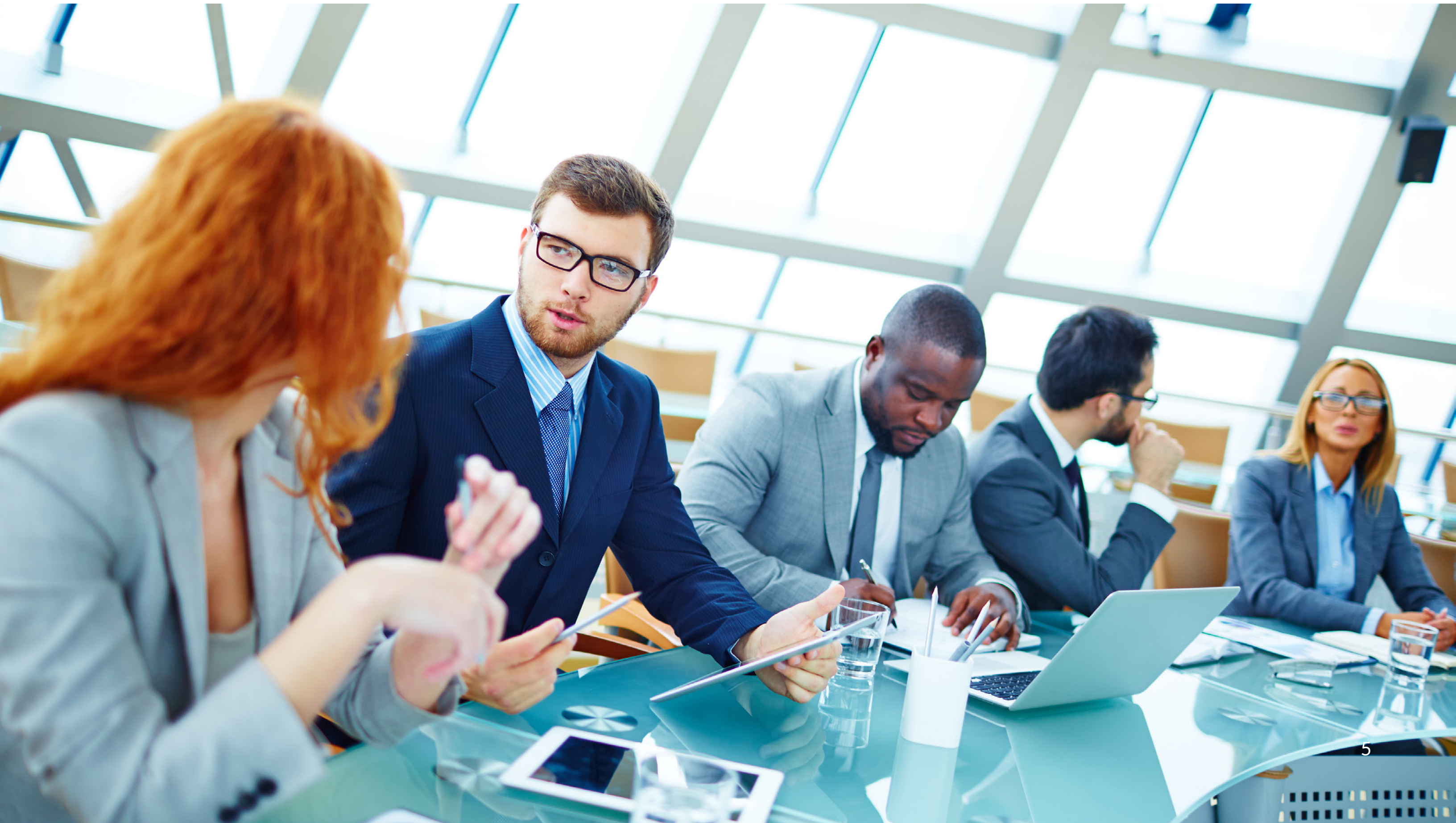
The next step is analyzing that data for potential triggers. EconSys Diversity Analysis tools can analyze thousands of potential triggers and provide an interactive analysis based on its evaluation. It does not just build tables but goes much deeper. Where human analysis is limited by the number of triggers they can see at a high level and the time available to perform that analysis, software can evaluate thousands of triggers, many of them far more nuanced than would otherwise be detectable, all in a matter of hours.

The goal in doing this is to get to the root of why these gaps occur. For example, if there is a low participation rate among a specific group, the reporting organization needs to try and determine what factors might cause this. Is it recruitment efforts that create a pool of applicants not diverse enough to meet the goals set? If not the recruitment pool, is it a gap between the recruitment pool and the candidates ultimately selected for particular roles? It may be an internal issue related to performance management and how individuals are promoted into new positions.

Taking Action with Better Reporting Capabilities

For those who really care about taking down barriers within an agency, barrier analysis with technology support can be transformative. The rapid trigger identification process can dig deep into MD-715 tables quickly, and that data can then be visualized to show key data points and highlight the most problematic triggers affecting an agency.

Management is then able to visualize, summarize, and highlight pain points, and drill down to the specific data backing up those assessments as needed in the evaluation process. Not only can you go beyond high-level reporting to get to the opportunities for improvement underneath, you can go even further than that. Gap identification can development of action plans to address these discoveries is supported in a more accessible, actionable way.



Enabling More Time for Internal Review

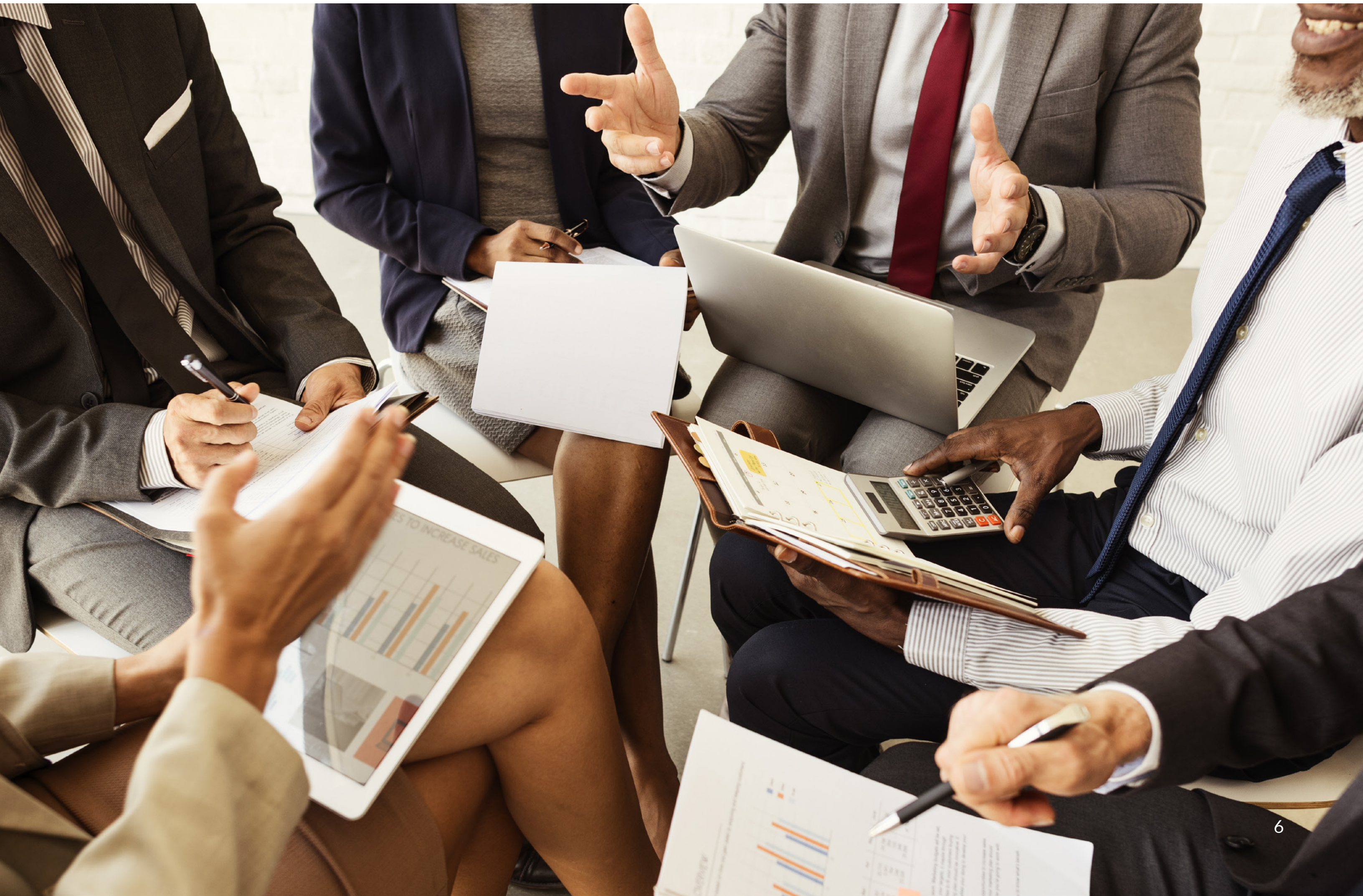
With the right combination of data organization and analysis tools, much of the pain in finding barriers is alleviated. Agencies and their dedicated MD-715 compliance team can focus on how these barriers are developed, what they consist of, how they relate to each other, and what to do next. Data can be visualized, summarized, and drilled down into, supporting data-driven decisions at the agency level.

Whether an agency is actively engaging in efforts to take down barriers, or they have struggled to meet the basic requirements of MD-715 reporting in the past, this approach saves substantial amounts of manual work in Excel and reduces the risk of human error. It takes away grunt work so the people whose job it is to find these gaps can focus on it with more of their time.

MD-715 Compliance Now and in the Future

EconSys' Diversity Analysis tool is designed to ensure MD-715 compliance, drawing data from the same central source and organizing it in MD-715 tables. Using the tool will ensure consistent compliance with these requirements while greatly reducing manual time spent doing so. At the same time, it allows these agencies to go much further, not just to the letter of the regulations, but the spirit behind it.

The goal of these annual exercises is to identify, analyze, and address barriers to equal opportunity in the Federal Government. While all agencies attempt to do so, many fall short because of the time-consuming nature of the process. With the right technology, that is no longer the case.



Conclusion

With EconSys' Diversity Analysis tools, your team can spend less time gathering data and more time investigating potential barriers to equal opportunity in the agency. It is a resource to more quickly and reliably analyze your workforce, hiring practices, and performance data to find the triggers that may be issues currently or in the future.

The tool does this by actively analyzing thousands of potential triggers, across every level of the organization, comparing your agency to relevant industries based on census data, federal benchmarks, and geographic distribution. From there, you are provided with interactive tools that help investigate the data on your own terms, producing reports that can be evaluated at every level of the agency.

Whether struggling to address the current processes being used for production of MD-715 compliant tables or looking to take barrier analysis to the next level, contact us today to learn more about how Diversity Analysis tools from EconSys can help you realize these goals.

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