

Equality Analysis Foreword

Arts Council England



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Arts Council England has a legal duty to consider equality in its policy making. We are committed to creating a more inclusive creative and cultural sector that promotes fairness and opportunity for everyone. Through our work we aim to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and prevent all forms of discrimination across the protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act. We also want the sector to be more representative of England in relation to socio-economic background.

Our Equality Objectives, set out in the Delivery Plan for our 10-year strategy Let's Create, include a commitment to achieving a more equitable distribution of our investment to support a sector that becomes more inclusive and representative of the communities it serves across the country. We would like to thank National and Area Council members on our Race and Disability Advisory Groups for their support as we have worked towards implementing our Equality Objectives.

Our Equality Analysis of the previous investment round conducted for 2018-2023, and the accompanying Action Plan we produced, highlighted a significant underinvestment in Black, Asian, and Ethnically Diverse and Disabled led organisations in comparison to our wider investment across the portfolio. We also identified under-representation of women in leadership roles in some parts of the sector.

The Action Plan set out a commitment to build on the success of our inaugural Elevate programme which used an initial investment of £5.3 million to support the development of 40 diverse led organisations not in receipt of regular funding. The Elevate programme helped them to strengthen their resilience and develop their staff, governing bodies and fundraising capacity. The second round of Elevate invested a further £4.3 million to support another 45 diverse led organisations. Of these, 33 are joining the 2023-2026 portfolio, building on the 20 Elevate joiners from 2018-2023.

Another issue emerging from the last Equality Analysis was the importance of improving the quality of the data we receive from the organisations we invest in. This included information on the make-up of their workforce, leadership, and governance and a commitment to address a gap in capturing data on socio-economic background.

For the 2023-2026 investment process, we were pleased to see an improvement in the quality of data submitted. This was marked by a reduction in the number of 'prefer not to say' and 'unknown' responses. And for the first time, as part of this investment process, we have been able to gather significant benchmark data on the socio-economic background of the leadership of applicants.

The 2023-2026 portfolio demonstrates good progress in responding to the issues identified in the previous Equality Analysis with an increase in women and Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse people in leadership roles across the portfolio. Whilst there has also been progress in relation to increased Disabled representation it has come from a lower starting point. We remain committed to building on the progress made during this round as we continue our journey through to 2030 to deliver Let's Create.

In early 2023, we will be publishing an Action Plan based on what the evidence from the Equality Analysis of the 2023-26 Investment Programme tells us. This plan will respond to some of the issues and challenges that have been identified through the investment programme process in relation to representation, discipline, and geography across the protected characteristics.

It will be likely to include detail on the actions we will take to develop and increase the number of applications received from Disability led organisations, as well as addressing the continued under-representation of disabled people, both at a senior management level and on the governing bodies of our funded organisations, over the course of the next three years. The Action Plan will enable us to consider data we have captured for the first time (e.g. on socio-economic background) and it will also respond to updated demographic data from the 2021 census when it is published.

Through delivering on our Equality Objectives, supporting the sector to respond to our Inclusivity and Relevance Investment Principle, and the publication of our Action Plan in 2023, we will continue our focus on achieving our ambition of making sure that everyone, everywhere, benefits from public investment in our creative and cultural sector and can be an integral part of it.

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Unit 4 Montpelier Central, Station Road, Bristol BS6 5EE
01179 44 00 44 info@a2i.co.uk www.a2i.co.uk

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