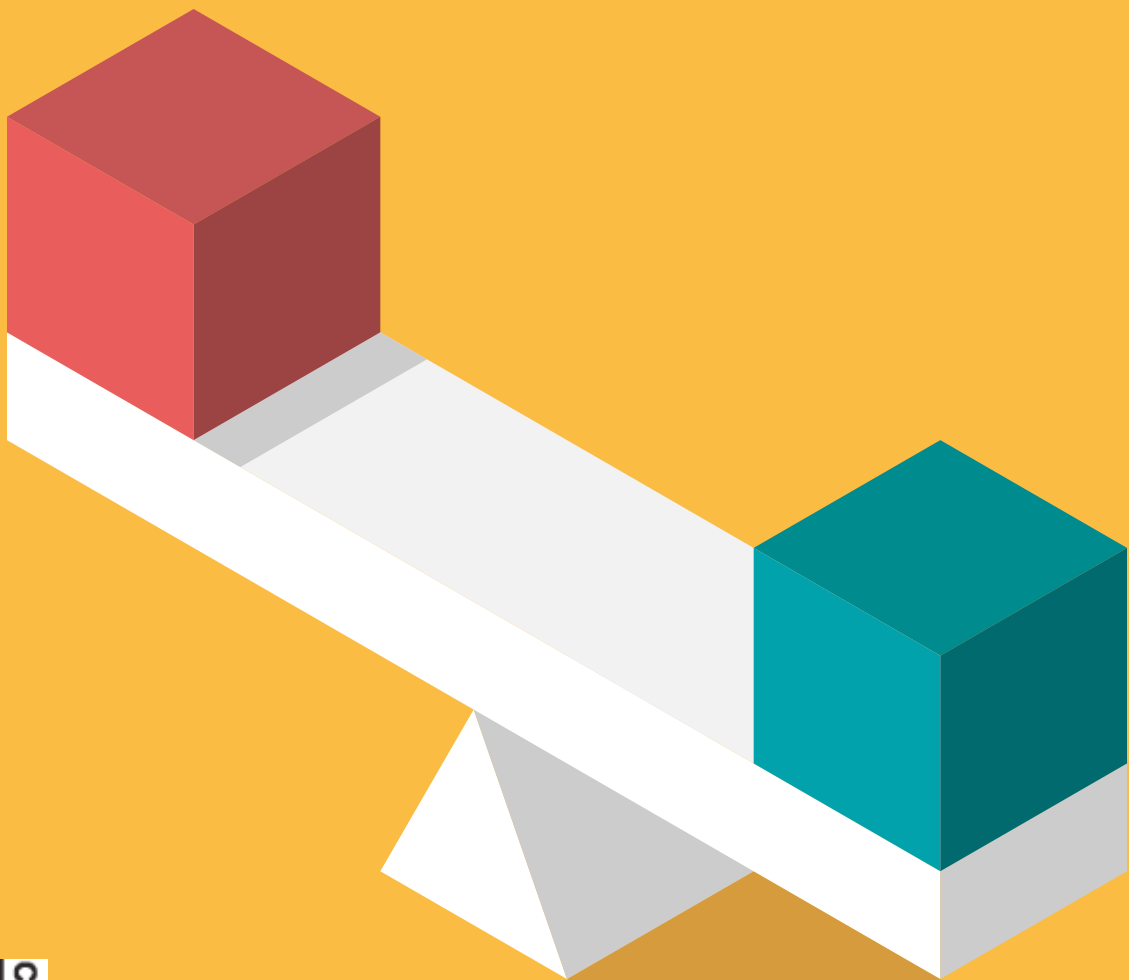




Guide to producing **Equality Action Objectives and Plans for NPOs**

Putting equality and diversity into action



In conjunction with Stephen Lawrence consulting

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1. WHAT IS AN EQUALITY ACTION PLAN?

Equality and diversity should be built into what we all do from the start. It's not an appendix to the business plan – it is the business plan.

Michelle Lally, 20-21 Visual Arts Centre

We want organisations to develop action plans that work for them, that are owned by the whole organisation, and that achieve measurable impact so organisations can feel proud of the tangible changes they have made.

That means that the content of your equality action plan should:

- be meaningful to your organisation and its local context:** There is no single, right way to create an equality action plan. A large museum in London will have very different challenges and resources from a small theatre group in Shropshire. Your equality action plan should reflect your organisation's individual challenges, as well as its scale, resources, purpose and local context.
- ensure the building blocks for good practice are in place:** Your equality action plan should have the policies and procedures in place that ensure you comply with equality and diversity legislation. These also underpin good practice. They include, but are not limited to, policies and procedures related to recruitment, employment, disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- be focused to maximise impact:** Your equality action plan is most likely to be effective if you focus on the areas
- be practical and manageable:** Be ambitious about what you want to achieve, but don't set yourself up to fail by writing objectives that you know you can never meet. Your equality action plan should use the evidence to set out realistic steps you can take using **SMART objectives** – objectives that are specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-based.
- be part of your organisation's wider work:** The action plan will give your equality and diversity work a specific focus, but it also needs to be embedded into the mainstream of how your organisation thinks and works. The Arts Council's specific requirements are that organisations in band 1 embed their actions on equality into their business plan, and National Portfolio Organisations in bands 2 and 3 have a separate equality action plan that is clearly linked to their business plan.

where you have evidence that people from diverse backgrounds are under represented and you can add significant value or address development gaps from the perspective of your programme, audiences, community engagement, workforce and board membership.

2. FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING YOUR EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

This framework sets out the requirements organisations need to cover as part of their funding agreements. While band 1 organisations don't need to produce a separate equality action plan, the framework supports organisations to develop a plan if they wish.

Organisations in bands 2 and 3 and Sector Support Organisations can use the framework to inform and shape a more comprehensive and detailed action plan.

Details on how you can address the [Creative Case for Diversity](#), [audience development](#), [building and sustaining a diverse workforce](#), and [your boards](#) are included in separate sections in the guide.

Planning

Your plan should:

- provide context – for example local demographics – that helps you to understand what diversity looks like in the communities you work with and are working to reach. The Audience Agency has developed [Audience Finder](#) and Audience Spectrum to help.
- analyse how well your organisation and its activities reflect the demographics of the communities you work with and are working to reach, and where there are gaps.
- set out what your organisation is currently doing and how it is working to address any gaps.
- identify a couple of protected characteristics where you will focus your equality and diversity work to maximise your impact, based on what your evidence tells you about the challenges

Actions

Your plan should:

- set 'SMART' objectives which cover the organisation's activities, policies and people (who might include employees, governance, volunteers, sub-contractors, audiences and communities)
- include actions related to the Creative Case for Diversity (for example, how does your artistic/cultural programme respond to the Creative Case for Diversity and how will you evidence delivery?)
- include actions related to audience development, workforce development, work around children and young people, fundraising initiatives and partnership working as and where appropriate
- ensure that resources, whether money, time or something else, are available to support actions where needed
- show clearly where external partners are involved in putting the plan into action and what is expected of them
- identify any peer networks or other ways of working with others that will support you to deliver the plan
- provide a clear link to any equalities work on corporate policies, processes or systems in your business plan, enabling you to see more easily all the relevant work and to evidence it
- align with Arts Council England goals and priorities as outlined in your funding agreement – this is not mandatory, but if it is possible it can make evidencing what you are doing and reporting on it easier

Accountability

Your plan should:

- clearly set out who is responsible for each objective
- assign lead responsibility for monitoring, reviewing and refreshing the equality plan to a member of your senior management team (although everyone in the organisation should have ownership of the plan)
- describe how the board will monitor progress against the plan, including a timetable for reviewing progress at board meetings, and agreeing any changes as needed
- set out how the plan will be shared with the wider staff team so they can understand and act in support of the commitments your organisation is making
- describe how you will capture and report on your actions and their outcomes in relation to the requirements outlined in your NPO funding agreement
- identify how you plan to share learning with others, for example through your annual reports, publications, website etc.

[See our example equality action plan template.](#)

In 2016 the Barbican's equality action plan focused on collecting and analysing data and information in relation to diversity to gain better insight and understanding of the challenges and how to tackle them.

[Read more.](#)

Tips for evidencing your equality and diversity work

The Arts Council will not only be looking at your commitment to equality and diversity as set out in your business plan and/or equality action plan, but also for evidence of the actions you have taken and how you have monitored and reviewed their impact.

When collecting evidence about your work on equality and diversity, you should also consider how you keep your board and Relationship Manager at Arts Council England updated. For example, Relationship Managers send out annual feedback letters to National Portfolio Organisations by September based on each organisation's performance in the preceding funding year running from 1 April to 31 March.

- Board papers, artistic reviews, peer and audience feedback are all key sources of evidence for Creative Case for Diversity ratings, as well as for your wider equality and diversity work.
- You don't need to discuss equality and diversity at every board meeting, but make sure to schedule meaningful discussion at regular intervals – for example you might include it to coincide with when you expect to hit milestones in your equality action plan. Make sure any achievements, outstanding actions and board discussion points are recorded in your minutes from the meeting.
- Don't forget to record your existing good practice, not just new work.
- If you are working in partnership, you can use written correspondence to show you are open to feedback.

- Look at any feedback you have collected on your activities and use it to evidence your impact.
- What networks are you part of and what events have you attended – how is learning shared?
- Use case studies.
- Sharing your skills and learning doesn't need to be resource intensive. You don't need to write a resource pack; you could host a meeting or write a blog.
- Think about the work you are doing on equality and diversity before you meet with your Relationship Manager so you are able to demonstrate what you are doing.

Read the [Evidence for rating contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity 2018-22](#).



3. RESPONDING TO THE CREATIVE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Our whole organisation is driven by social impact – working with people from deprived backgrounds and empowering them through the arts and creativity. I firmly believe that attending an art college is not the only route to becoming a great artist, and we should be giving more people the opportunity to explore and progress their artistic potential.

Julie Batten, Director, People Express

3.1 Why do it

Art and culture in England should reflect the diversity of contemporary society, recognising the value of both what we have in common and our differences which contribute to the creative and cultural aesthetics of arts and culture in England.

Artistic and cultural programmes that reflect the diversity, interests and passions of the communities they serve also provide a catalyst to attract new audiences and inspire people to want to become more involved in the arts. This can positively impact future recruitment to your workforce, boards and volunteer pools from communities that may have previously felt excluded or under-represented in the work presented by their local arts organisation, museum or library.

Building relationships and mentoring emerging artists is key, and shows real results over the long term.

Manick Govinda, Head of Artists' Advisory Services & Artists' Producer, Artsadmin

Art that is relevant and engages people can be life changing. It can be inspirational and change people's sense of their place in the world.

Louise Richards, Executive Director, Motionhouse

The Creative Case for Diversity helps organisations to create the conditions for arts and cultural programming to mirror the diversity of wider society. It encourages organisations to reflect on the voices, stories and artists that may be missing from the work presented and put in place measures to address any historic lack of access and inequity to create a dynamic and high quality arts and cultural offer that reflects contemporary England.

3.2 How it relates to the Arts Council's funding requirements

The Creative Case for Diversity is an integral part of the Arts Council's work around Goal 1, to ensure 'Excellence is thriving and celebrated across the arts, museums and libraries'.

All National Portfolio Organisations, apart from sector support organisations, are required to demonstrate how they plan to contribute to the Creative Case for Diversity over the course of their funding agreement either in their business plan or through their equality action plan, and receive an initial rating based on the plans submitted.

Organisations will subsequently receive an annual 'Creative Case' performance rating based on their actual delivery over the past 12 months. This will be based on their work across six themes.

There are still people who think that if something is labelled as 'diverse' it equates to low quality, but there is extraordinary artwork being created across all artforms and by artists from every background that is absolutely on par with the work being created by others.

Jo Verrent, Senior producer, Unlimited

The power of the arts to influence social change is inestimable. Through them we learn to see life differently, we learn empathy with others, we learn how to connect, appreciate and give. The arts are our context to promote social change, to highlight inequality and move us to appreciate our place in the world.

DaDaFest Manifesto

Themes that organisations will need to work on for their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity³

All National Portfolio Organisations will be expected to contribute across the following six themes:

- **Artistic programme:** Is diversity embedded and reflected across the programme of work presented over the last 12 months, and is it a key driver for information and shaping the artistic programme?
- **Development of artistic talent:** Do artistic talent development initiatives ensure there is support for emerging, mid-career and established artists from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups, and do they provide platforms for showcasing work from diverse artists and companies?

³ Evidence for rating contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity 2018-22

• Addressing the barriers to involvement:

Are barriers to involvement for members of under-represented groups identified and overcome to support people from diverse backgrounds to realise their artistic and creative talents?

- **Resourcing and monitoring:** Are resources allocated so your organisation can undertake actions to support its contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity? And are monitoring procedures in place?

- **Self-evaluation:** Does the board actively monitor delivery, evaluate its effectiveness, and adjust plans and actions where necessary? Is this information used to share best practice and continued learning around diversity?

- **Sector leadership:** Does your organisation network and participate in sector-led or wider initiatives promoting equality and diversity in the arts and culture sector? Does it demonstrate local, national or international leadership in promoting and advancing the Creative Case for Diversity?

How the rating system works⁴

National Portfolio Organisations' contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity will be rated annually at one of four levels based on the evidence and strength of their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity over the last 12 months.

Over the course of the funding agreement all band 1 National Portfolio Organisations are expected to achieve a minimum of a 'met' rating and band 2 and 3 National Portfolio Organisations will be required to achieve a minimum of a 'strong' rating by October 2021. As set out in our 2018-22 relationship framework, if your organisation breaks these terms, or any of the terms of the funding agreement, in addition to feedback and discussion (which is always a first stage measure) the Arts Council may take further action. This might include measures such as increased monitoring and reporting and extra conditions being placed on grant payments.

⁴ Evidence for rating contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity 2018-22

Without any evidence of robust and active board engagement, an organisation cannot be rated strong.

- **Outstanding:** Organisations will be making an exceptional contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity and be recognised as leaders in the sector that have provided robust evidence against the 'outstanding' criteria in the Creative Case for Diversity rating framework.
- **Strong:** This is the benchmark rating expected of all band 2 and 3 organisations by October 2021. Organisations will demonstrate evidence of delivering against the relevant Creative Case for Diversity prompts including active board engagement and a strong artistic and cultural programme spanning all themes.
- **Met:** These organisations will have evidence of work in every theme from at least one category. There will be opportunities for them to improve their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity across other themes.
- **Not met:** These organisations will demonstrate minimal activity in response to the Creative Case for Diversity and will be required as a matter of priority to address how they will improve their contribution.

How National Portfolio Organisations should evidence their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity⁵

National Portfolio Organisations will be required to evidence on an annual basis how they have contributed to the Creative Case for Diversity over the previous 12 months. Performance ratings will be based on evidence of what organisations are delivering to support the Creative Case for Diversity against the planned activity identified in their business and equality action plans.



⁵ [Evidence for rating contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity 2018-22](#)

To determine a Creative Case for Diversity rating, Relationship Managers will look at the following types of evidence to support the rating they give National Portfolio Organisations:

- **Experience of the organisation's funded activity:** This will include activities such as artistic and quality assessments, Arts Council England staff experience, published programmes and artistic talent development opportunities for diverse artists.
- **Ongoing monitoring through the relationship framework:** This will primarily take the form of evidence recorded in board papers, discussions and ongoing contact with your Relationship Manager, and artist led evidence such as blogs and written statements supporting your organisation's actions.
- **The annual survey:** This will primarily be through the narrative you provide in your response to the annual survey.

To support National Portfolio Organisations evidence their contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity, Arts Council England has published a helpful framework outlining the [rating prompts used by Relationship Managers and the evidence they use](#) to determine a Creative Case for Diversity rating for National Portfolio Organisations.

Your equality action plan can help you to develop a framework to ensure you are capturing, recording and monitoring the contribution your organisation is making to the Creative Case for Diversity. This can be shared and discussed with your Relationship Manager.

3.3 How to do it

We have set out below some actions your organisation might take to respond to the Creative Case for Diversity. While the Creative Case for Diversity is primarily concerned with your creative and cultural programme or collections, work you undertake on the programme can also help you identify the needs and interests of groups who are under-represented in your audiences. It is therefore likely that some of the work you undertake on the Creative Case for Diversity will also contribute to helping you reach more diverse audiences, and similarly, work to reach more diverse audiences will impact on your programme or collections.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums worked with partner organisations from arts and disability backgrounds to find new and creative ways to represent disability.

[Read more](#)

Manchester-based Contact trains and supports four young people to work with the charity on their programming every year.

[Read more](#)

Visual arts organisation DASH has established Cultivate, a three-year mentoring programme for emerging disabled visual artists based in the West Midlands. [Read more](#)

Following a major piece of research and analysis, Derby Theatre has changed its programming and is now reaching out to local Black and minority ethnic communities, d/Deaf people and children and young people in care. [Read more](#)

Effervescent in Plymouth used Lottery funding for a project working in partnership with Barnardos to train five teenagers who had lived experience of child sexual exploitation to be curators and artists. [Read more](#)

Your equality action plan should:

- Set out the actions you currently take to promote equality and diversity in your programme or collections.
- Consider how you can include in the planning process the voices of people from diverse backgrounds, particularly those your data and evidence tells you are under-represented in your work. This might include:
 - o providing professional development for the programming team that includes:
 - comprehensive, up-to-date knowledge of diversity issues within the communities you work with and are working to reach

- knowledge and skills to implement different approaches to consulting with people from under-represented groups
- o identifying opportunities for your programming team to see new work and engage with artists from under-represented groups
- o consulting with people who are under-represented, for example by working with local organisations or groups who work with under-represented groups
- o recruiting a small number of people from communities you want to engage and training and supporting them to be involved in your programming process
- Set out how you will ensure that diversity is embedded in your programme or collections. This might include:
 - o exploring new approaches to commissioning, curation and casting to ensure greater diversity
 - o promoting access and making **reasonable adjustments**
 - o developing exhibitions that specifically respond to diversity issues such as age, disability and socio-economic status
 - o collecting objects that reflect the diversity of the communities you work with and are working to reach
 - o presenting and interpreting existing work in new ways through working with diverse individuals and roles – e.g. artists, curators, librarians – to make your collections more relevant to all communities. For example, this might include consulting with a group to understand how different objects mean different things to different people and to capture and present those multiple perspectives

- Outline how you will work in partnership with diverse led arts and cultural organisations and artists to help diversify the work you present.
- Ensure that any artistic talent development initiatives are accessible to and accessed by people from diverse backgrounds. This might include:
 - o building your knowledge of the mechanisms by which you can reach people from diverse backgrounds to ensure that your selection processes are as inclusive as possible
 - o ensuring that call outs for funding and other application processes reach people from diverse backgrounds. This might include both revising your general approach, processes and procedures, and considering whether there are specific actions you need to take to ensure you reach those your data and evidence tells you are under-represented in the work you produce, present, curate and distribute
 - o reviewing how you currently provide any development support to creative and cultural professionals (e.g. curators, artists, producers, writers, musicians, dancers and artists) and whether there might be a case to positively discriminate in favour of those from diverse backgrounds. This might, for example, include making additional funding available for work with disabled artists
- Consider how you might develop a pathway that supports people from diverse backgrounds to move to higher levels of production.
- Set out how you will promote and share best practice and take a leadership role on the Creative Case for Diversity at a local, national or international level or across your artform. This might include:
 - o making materials you have developed, such as guidelines, available to others (for example on your website)
 - o speaking at conferences, festivals and other industry events
 - o supporting and working in partnership with other organisations to promote and advance the Creative Case for Diversity
 - o publishing blogs, articles or other materials about your work supporting the Creative Case for Diversity
- Detail how your board will hold the organisation to account for delivering the actions you have set on the Creative Case for Diversity. This might include:
 - o identifying a named equality and diversity lead on the board
 - o reviewing the artistic and cultural programme presented and how it contributed to the Creative Case for Diversity
 - o considering how future planned programming activity will contribute to the Creative Case for Diversity, ensuring board minutes reflect discussion of progress and any changes that are made in response to reviewing the contribution made to the Creative Case for Diversity

Find out more about responding to the Creative Case for Diversity in our [Useful links and resources section](#).

4. REACHING DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Audience development is not a one-off activity. It's easy to get a diverse audience for a single project, but real change only happens when you cultivate relationships with local communities over the long term.

David Bryan, Xtend

If you have a building, don't limit yourself to it. Your building might be your hub, but you need to find ways to reach beyond it using a range of opportunities and ways for people to engage.

Louise Richards, Executive Director, Motionhouse

4.1 Why do it

Everyone should be able to experience and be inspired by great art, museums and libraries. Not only because we believe it is right and fair, but because audiences that reflect the diversity of our country will ensure that art and culture are relevant and sustainable in the future.

Attracting people from diverse backgrounds doesn't just grow the audience; they bring different voices and perspectives to our artistic and cultural life. Furthermore, sharing cultural experiences brings communities together and can build pride in where people live, work and play, contributing to work on shared agendas.

4.2 How it relates to Arts Council funding requirements

The Arts Council's goal is that 'Everyone has the opportunity to experience, and be inspired by, the arts, museums and libraries' (Goal 2). To support this, all National Portfolio Organisations must include an audience plan as part of their overall business plan, and the audience plan needs to consider how organisations will reach audiences from diverse backgrounds.

Organisations at band 2 and 3, and all organisations working with young people, also need to set out how their organisation will support the Arts Council's ambition that 'Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries' (Goal 5).

Artist Jessica Voorsanger led a flash mob singing and dancing to the theme of Men in Black down the high street and into 20-21 Visual Arts Centre in Scunthorpe to attract people who wouldn't normally visit the gallery. [Read more](#)

As part of its aim to increase and diversify the audience for contemporary craft, the Crafts Council's regular Craft Club newsletter has different editors, including editors from diverse backgrounds, and uses imagery that promotes the involvement of people from diverse backgrounds in crafting. [Read more](#)

Touring dance company Motionhouse worked with local authorities, festivals and touring agencies to reach audiences who often don't engage in cultural activities because of lack of availability and price.

[Read more](#)

The Audience Agency has created Audience Finder, a suite of tools that is available for free to arts and culture organisations. The tools include [Audience Spectrum](#) profiles, the [mapping tool](#) which shows you the make-up of your local population, and the [Audience Development Planner](#), an online wizard which guides you through the steps of analysing your current audience and planning to develop it. The Audience Agency can also provide an [Area Profile Report](#) which helps you find out about the demographics and cultural engagement of your local population.

The Insight pages on The Audience Agency website include a wealth of searchable resources from case studies to guides.

[Read more](#)

We want organisations to work towards developing and engaging audiences that are representative of the population in the geographic area their audience is drawn from. This is not about setting crude targets, but about finding ways to engage people in your work who are currently under-represented in your audience.

The work you do should be integrated with your wider audience development plan which the [Audience Agency's Guide to Audience Development Planning](#) (external link) can help you develop.

Your equality action plan should:

- Set out your potential audience based on the population profile in the geographic area your audience is drawn from. The Audience Agency has developed [Audience Finder](#) and Audience Spectrum to help. Other sources of information might include primary research (research you carry out yourself), and secondary research (research already carried out by others), and possibly [Mosaic](#) where this may be made available to you through your local authority.
- Compare what you know about your actual audience to the profile of the population in the geographic area your audience is drawn from and identify where there are gaps. You can join the free [Audience Finder](#) to help you carry out analysis of your box office, survey and postcode data, and to provide comparative benchmarks. The Audience Agency can advise you on how, and on joining the programme if you have not already done so. You can contact audiencefinder@theaudienceagency.org or the support desk on 020 7620 2505 for support. You can also use
 - o your own box office data analysis
 - o data from surveys you have undertaken
 - o qualitative research – this might include work by others (such as the local authority) or work your organisation has undertaken, such as focus groups
- Identify the audiences that you will target to increase engagement.
- Set SMART objectives for any work you need to undertake in order to better understand how you can reach and engage with your target audiences. You will want to understand what factors affect whether, or how often, they come to your activities, and what the barriers are. Activities might include:
 - o collecting any existing evidence about this audiences' shared similarities, interests or needs
 - o creating opportunities for consultation and feedback from people in your target audiences. This might include attending meetings of local groups or even holding your own focus groups, where you have the skills and feel comfortable doing so. [Read more on how to run a focus group](#)
 - o exploring what media – in its broadest sense – people from the groups you want to target use, and which might provide a good route to engaging with them
- Consider how you might adapt and develop your programme to increase engagement. In addition to working with your local community, [Section 3 on Responding to the Creative Case for Diversity](#) includes suggestions for how you can embed diversity into your planning process and programme.

- Ensure that your marketing reaches diverse audiences. This might include:
 - o using information such as data from [Audience Spectrum](#) to enable you to target specific groups with information
 - o ensuring the language you use in all your materials is inclusive. For example, change from talking about people's disabilities to talking about what you offer – e.g. captioned performances, BSL interpreter, induction loop, etc
 - o ensuring that all your materials, from your website to your leaflets, reflect best practice in accessibility and are available in large print and alternative formats
 - o creating marketing materials in different formats to reach audiences who might not see or access more traditional materials, for example video trailers of your programme
 - o marketing across a range of formats, including social media, emails and tweets, texts, physical mail, printed posters and flyers
 - o if you know that there is a price barrier, using variable pricing to attract your target audience – for example targeting a particular road or area with leaflets that include a discount
 - o going to spaces where your target groups live, work and socialise
 - o establishing relationships with non-arts organisations in your target communities, such as housing associations and mental health organisations and promoting your work through them
- Identify how you can make your activities more accessible. [Audience Spectrum](#) includes a range of advice, strategies and tactics for engaging different groups. Approaches might include:
 - o making collections, stories or performances available online, or in different formats, that reflect the needs and preferences of the audience you are working to reach
 - o telling people how they can get involved, for example as volunteers
 - o holding activities in venues that your target audience already uses, such as a local community centre
 - o holding activities outdoors, as evidence shows that outdoor events attract a wide-ranging and diverse audience more representative of the population as a whole
 - o inviting schools to come and see dress rehearsals
 - o ensuring that tickets are accessible to economically disadvantaged groups and individuals

Tips for collecting monitoring information

Monitoring audience demographics, as well as their response to your work, is essential to understanding who you are reaching, whether your plans are working, and how you might need to adjust them. However, it can be challenging to do this in a meaningful, practical and robust way.

The Audience Finder survey is available to help all National Portfolio Organisations do this, and band 3 organisations are expected to submit monitoring information using Audience Finder or the Audience Finder format.

The only robust and ethical way to measure diversity is to survey a relevant sample of your audience and ask them to self-identify. Some tips for doing this are:

- Explain to your staff why it is important and how people's data will be used, so they can encourage people and answer any questions.
- Clearly set out why you need the information and how you will use it.
- Do all that you can to get a sample of the right size that is as representative as possible of your audience. The Audience Agency has a [Good Practice Guide for Sampling](#). Approaches you might use include:
 - ensuring your survey is in an accessible format
 - using interviewers or targeted communications

- Follow good practice in the recruitment and training of your interviewers – see the [Audience Agency's Guide](#).
- Consider offering an incentive, for example a prize draw (this requires you to collect people's contact information). Be sure that anything you offer will be equally attractive to all.
- Reassure people that their information will be treated confidentially.
- Analyse identity data alongside customer satisfaction or other information that might help continuous improvement.
- Publicise on your website and in other materials what you have improved as a result of your survey.

[Read more tips for improving survey response rates.](#)

[See the Audience Agency's example questionnaire.](#)

The Engagement Mix

The Engagement Mix brings together the traditional 'P's of marketing practice with the 'C's of community engagement, to involve people in decision-making, creative participation, exploration and dialogue engagement. You should consider all elements of the mix in your work to reach audiences from diverse backgrounds.

Programme/product – critically, be clear about what aspects of your programme are aimed at different target audiences.

Place – where activities take place, at what times, how people access them, booking facilities, etc, and social space. Touring companies have a powerful advantage in being able to select the right place for the right audiences.

Price – the right price and pricing approach, or free, for your target audience (including premium/discounts/offers). Data analysis/market testing will be more effective than straight research in helping you understand how different audiences respond.

Promotion – online and offline channels and methods to communicate opportunities to engage.

Community involvement – forums for decision-making, volunteering etc.

Content – creative or exploratory content: live, online etc.

[This is an extract from the Audience Agency's *Creating an Effective Audience Development Plan*.](#)

Find out more about reaching diverse audiences in our [Useful links and resources section](#).

Equality and diversity needs leadership from the top of the organisation. Our Executive Director doesn't just take an interest, he challenges us all the time to do better. As a result, equality and diversity have become something we automatically think about.

Claire Hawk, HR Director, English National Ballet

Unless people know there is genuine support at the top of the organisation, whenever they are making decisions where they feel there might be a risk, people default to the 'norm' and make 'safe' decisions that reinforce existing practices and disadvantages.

Zoe Dennington, Learning and Participation manager, The Craft

We shouldn't always go for 'the usual suspects'. There are people who would make excellent board members, but don't yet have the relevant skills or experience. As a sector and as individual organisations, we need to be helping them to develop the skills, and supporting them to participate by adapting how we work.

Mike Layward, Artistic Director, Dash

There's a high turnover of staff in the arts and culture sector. If you want to have a diverse senior management team, you have to invest in the people you recruit and support their development, so you are developing them for senior roles.

Manick Govinda, Head of Artist Development, Artsadmin

5. BUILDING BOARDS THAT LEAD ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 Why do it

Boards and individual board members have increasing expectations placed on them in terms of their role and expertise. Rarely can one board member, or even several members with the same background and skill set, fulfil all of the necessary functions. Boards therefore need a range of skills, experience, aptitudes and perspectives to be most effective.

Boards that recruit in a mirror image of themselves run the risk of limiting their perspective and skills. There is growing evidence of the correlation between genuine diversity at board level and better decision making, and between genuine diversity and greater financial sustainability. The most effective boards are diverse in skills, outlook and experience.

As the culture of an organisation is driven and modelled by senior leaders, a diverse board sends a powerful message and sets a clear example for the rest of the organisation.

The board also has a critical role in providing leadership for the agenda so that it permeates the organisation at every level and across your activities, including artistic and cultural programme, audiences and workforce. The board is also responsible for holding people to account to ensure equality and diversity actions, such as the Arts Council's requirement to diversify your workforce, are being met.

5.2 How it relates to Arts Council investment requirements

Organisations in band 1 need to include in their business plan SMART objectives showing how they will ensure their board reflects the diversity of the audiences and communities they are working with and working to reach.

Organisations in bands 2 and 3 and Sector Support Organisations must:

- ensure their board has the necessary skills and experience to meet their aims around diversity
- make sure that, by December 2021, their board reflects the diversity of the audiences and communities they are working with and working to reach, including membership from protected characteristic groups

In terms of Creative Case for Diversity ratings, without sufficient evidence of effective board engagement an organisation cannot be rated strong.

The board signs the funding agreement with the Arts Council and is accountable for their organisation's delivery against the agreement, including delivery of the equality action plan and/or objectives.



FTSE 350 companies have increased the gender diversity of boards through a combination of strategies, including setting aspirational targets, using positive action to improve the diversity of the candidate pool and offering training, development and leadership programmes. [Read more](#)

Opera North has an equality, diversity and inclusion committee that champions diversity throughout the organisation, with a focus on improving representation and inclusion within audiences, communications, programme and workforce. [Read more](#)

The Arts Council's Culture Change Guide includes information on how to improve your recruitment and retention practice, from designing a person specification to carrying out performance appraisals. [Read more](#)

Phoenix Dance Theatre, arts organisation Contact, and Liverpool Arts Regeneration Consortium have each developed their own approaches to ensuring they have diverse boards. [Read more](#)

Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust's equality and diversity policy clearly sets out the responsibilities of the board and senior individuals in the organisation in relation to equality and diversity. [Read more.](#)

Best practices to improve gender diversity on boards

Change your mind-set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a visible commitment to diversity with sustained action throughout the organization Set new principles for decision making (eg, include women on every candidate slate)
Expand your criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look beyond current CEOs and other members of the C-suite Consider candidates with the right expertise, not just those with prior board experience
Maintain an active pipeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand your network to include more women and explicitly ask search firms for female candidates Cultivate long-term relationships with prospective candidates

McKinsey&Company

5.1 Why do it

Your equality action plan should:

- Set out how diverse your board currently is.
- Ensure your recruitment process enables you to attract and appoint more diverse candidates to the board. This might include:
 - o refreshing the job description and person specification for board members to ensure it doesn't exclude those from unconventional career trajectories, with different journeys, ways of thinking and personal styles, and ensuring that the language it uses is inclusive
 - o ensuring that the recruitment process reaches a wide range of potential candidates through broad and targeted advertising rather than creating a closed approach – for example because of an over-reliance on personal networks
 - o providing training in good recruitment practice and avoiding unconscious bias for those involved in the recruitment process
 - o including team members at different levels to participate in the interview process
 - o designing your appointment process to test people's thinking, judgement and approach, not just their CV, networks or profile
- Ensure that new and existing board members are clear about your organisation's commitment to and ambitions for equality, diversity and inclusivity, and that the board as a whole has the necessary skills and experience to meet those ambitions. This might include:
 - o using a board assessment tool to identify the mix of skills and experience you need and where there are gaps
 - o ensuring that job descriptions and recruitment processes don't focus on a narrow set of skills and experience – e.g. finance – but leave out other necessary skills on the board such as community engagement
 - o being explicit in job descriptions about the expectations of all board members in relation to equality and diversity
 - o discussing inclusiveness, as well as board member expectations, when interviewing new board prospects
 - o including a section in the orientation pack for new board members on equality and diversity
- Review how the board currently works and how its processes can be made more flexible and inclusive. This might include:
 - o changing the time or location of board meetings, or holding meetings by Skype, to make it easier for people with different commitments to attend
 - o providing access support and other support people might need to participate, for example travel and childcare costs

- o putting in extra support that enables people to fully participate, such as providing a briefing with the head of finance about the finance papers in advance, or providing information in different formats
- o changing the format of meetings – board meetings often have a format that puts young people off
- o introducing shorter terms of office that might work better for younger members
- Set SMART objectives for increasing diversity on your board. This should include thinking about which protected characteristics are most relevant to you, your audiences and your community. For example, this may mean trying to ensure that your board is reflective of the community your audience is drawn from. It may also mean that if you are working to develop your audience in terms of, for example, age, gender or disability, you initially focus on those characteristics.
- Ensure leadership for the equality and diversity agenda within your organisation. This might include:
 - o identifying a named equality and diversity lead on the board
 - o ensuring that actions relating to equality and diversity are appropriately resourced
 - o communicating your equality and diversity objectives and work to staff at all levels within your organisation
- Set a clear timeframe for reviewing progress against equality and diversity objectives at board meetings. This might include:
 - o including equality and diversity on the agenda at every board meeting
 - o ensuring it is included on the agenda when you expect to hit milestones in your equality action plan, so you can report on progress against these
 - o including discussion of the contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity as part of any review or discussion of recent work

Tips for increasing board diversity

- **Think beyond ‘representation’** which can lead to tokenism. No one wants to be there to fill a quota, or to represent people from a particular background – nor is anyone able to represent an entire subsection of the population. Simply recruiting people based on their diversity can distort the importance of recruiting individuals with the skills and experience that best meets your organisation’s needs and can also lead to a tick box mindset that is not really open to the skills and experiences board members from diverse backgrounds can bring.
 - **Expand your ‘pipeline’.** Many organisations are already continuously developing and nurturing relationships with potential board members. This might include establishing relationships with partner organisations such as the NHS and local charities.
 - **Create pathways to the board for your volunteers.** These are people who are already committed to and engaged in your work.
 - **Put development support in place for potential board members to develop the skills and experience needed.**
- **Support people to contribute widely.** People from diverse backgrounds are there as full board members, so encourage their voices across all issues, not just those related to equality and diversity.

Tips for small organisations

Organisations with a small staff team and low turnover can still plan to ensure their management team remains or becomes diverse in the future. This could include:

- identifying the protected characteristics that are most relevant to you, your audience, and community, and which you therefore need to reflect on your board or management team
- setting succession planning objectives which aim to increase the diversity of the management team
- identifying ways to increase diversity of the management team now, for example through setting up advisory panels made up of diverse representatives
- developing inclusive and/or targeted recruitment strategies which would be put in place should a member of staff resign
- setting objectives for diversifying the pool of volunteers, if appropriate

Find out more about building boards that lead on equality and diversity in our [Useful links and resources section](#).

Diversity is more than numerical representation – if BAME people are not treated fairly and not made to feel welcome, then they are not likely to apply for posts within the sector.

Melody Walker, Development Co-ordinator, Phoenix Dance Theatre

We need to move beyond thinking that a diverse workforce is just about recruitment, to thinking about how we create a working environment where people from different backgrounds can flourish.

Hannah Mason, Change maker Associate, The Art House

6. RECRUITING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

6.1 Why do it?

Although arts and cultural organisations are making progress, we know that the workforce still doesn’t fully reflect the wider diversity of England. Disabled people in particular continue to be significantly under-represented at all levels across the sector, while women and people from Black and minority ethnic groups continue to be under-represented at more senior levels⁶.

We want the leadership and workforce of the arts and cultural sector to reflect the diversity of the country and to ensure that there are fair routes to entry and career progression.

A diverse workforce brings many benefits. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce can help your organisation to improve its performance and become more sustainable. By recruiting from a diverse pool of talent, you can attract the most able people. And by having staff from diverse backgrounds at every level and in every function of your organisation, your organisation will become more agile in how it works, as each individual brings in their way of thinking, operating, solving problems and decision making. A more diverse staff team will also feed into the culture and thinking of the organisation, meaning you are better positioned to understand and engage with artists and audiences in a more compelling and authentic way.

6.2 How it relates to Arts Council funding requirements

In their business plan, all National Portfolio Organisations must set out how they will support the Arts Council’s ambition that ‘The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled’ (Goal 4).

National Portfolio Organisations in band 1 must include SMART objectives in their business plan showing how they plan to diversify their workforce. All other National Portfolio Organisations (band 2 and 3 organisations, Bridge Organisations and Museum Development Providers) must provide an equality action plan that includes SMART objectives setting out how they will diversify their workforce.

One of the Arts Council’s markers for success is that ‘the leadership and workforce of the arts and cultural sector – and especially the organisations that we invest in – reflect the diversity of the country, indicating that there are fair routes to entry and progression’.

⁶ Findings of the annual survey reported in Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case 2015-2016, Arts Council England, 2017

6.3 How to do it

Using methods that could be applied to other protected characteristic groups, Royal Mail has increased the number of women applicants and women appointed to frontline roles without changing its policy that all candidates are treated on merit. [Read more](#)

Charity and housing association St Mungo's has won an award for its work to address over-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees in lower paid roles and under-representation at senior levels. [Read more](#)

Unconscious bias is when people favour others who look like them and/or share their values. For example, a person may be drawn to someone with a similar educational background, from the same area, or who is the same colour or ethnicity as them. It can influence decisions in recruitment, promotion and performance management and could be discriminatory when the unconscious bias relates to a protected characteristic. [Read more](#)

Recruiting volunteers from diverse backgrounds not only increases the pool of volunteers available to support your work, but creates a pathway for people from those backgrounds to become your employees. [Read more](#)

Organisations need a culture of good employment practice that not only addresses recruitment but supports you to retain and develop staff. This will help you create an inclusive culture in which staff from all backgrounds can flourish and contribute their best to your organisation.

To do this you will need to take action on:

- o monitoring
- o recruitment
- o retention
- o progression

Your equality action plan should:

- Set out the demographics of the geographic area your staff is drawn from – this might include information from:
 - o Mosaic
 - o [national census information](#)
 - o secondary research
 - o primary research
- Use findings from the staff survey to analyse how well the staff you employ reflect the demographics of the geographic area your staff are drawn from. You might analyse this information in terms of:
 - o monitoring – are there challenges in collecting the data and how does this affect what you know about your staff?
 - o recruitment – how diverse are applicants to your organisation and how many of them are successful in being appointed?

- o retention – is there any difference between how long staff from diverse backgrounds stay in your organisation compared to others?
- o progression – is there only diversity in pockets within the organisation, e.g. staff from diverse backgrounds at lower levels, but few staff from those backgrounds in more senior roles?
- Identify actions you will take to increase the number of staff completing the staff survey and reduce the number of those identifying as 'prefer not to say'. This might include:
 - o consulting with staff to understand the reasons for low return rates and how these could be addressed
 - o including a clear statement of why the information is needed and how it will be used
 - o including a helpline number people can call, or other forms of support such as online, that people can access for more information
 - o revising the process to ensure staff are confident that their information will remain confidential. For example, keeping the monitoring form separate from someone's personnel file – just indicate on the person's file that you have it. Processes that protect people's anonymity are likely to be particularly important in smaller organisations
 - o reporting back on findings and what the organisation is doing as a result
- Identify actions you will take to attract and appoint diverse applicants. This might include:
 - o ensuring that job descriptions and person specifications use language and criteria that do not unnecessarily exclude people from diverse backgrounds whose qualifications, experience and career may be structured differently – e.g. by requiring applicants to have a degree where this is not necessary to the performance of the role
 - o making it clear that equality and diversity monitoring forms are not seen by the interview panel and have no impact on the recruitment process
 - o ensuring that job opportunities are advertised in a broad range of places, for example, through local community centres and partner organisations
 - o explicitly stating in advertising and recruitment materials that your organisation welcomes applicants from diverse backgrounds
 - o if you are using a recruitment firm, setting a requirement around diversity of candidates that they submit to you
 - o making sure everyone involved in the recruitment process is trained on equality and diversity, [unconscious bias](#), inclusion, and other relevant employment and legal issues
 - o considering whether you might be able to use apprenticeships, changemakers or other roles which can help to make it a more level playing field for entry into the workforce

- Identify actions you will take to promote an inclusive culture within your organisation. This might include:
 - o identifying any approaches used by organisations in your network or others that are working well and that you might adopt within your own organisation
 - o ensuring that all policies and procedures reflect legislation and best practice in relation to equality and diversity, and that staff have confidence in them and in HR procedures
 - o providing equality and diversity training to all staff and your board
 - o ensuring that there is equitable access to training and development and to career development for all employees
 - o observing diverse traditions, celebrations and holidays from other cultures
 - o finding ways to give profile to people from diverse backgrounds as role models, particularly those in senior management positions, to evidence progression in your organisation, and giving those who are open to sharing their journeys an open platform for doing so

Find out more about building and sustaining a diverse staff team in our [Useful links and resources section](#).

EQUALITY ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST

(this list is not exhaustive)

General

Have you:

- Provided a context which sets out your current position on equality and diversity
- Identified the protected characteristics you will focus on and why
- Set SMART objectives for your plan which include:
 - o The actions you will take, who is responsible, and the timeframe
 - o How you will monitor and review your impact
 - o How you will evidence your work and share your learning

Responding to the Creative Case for Diversity

Have you:

- Made clear how you will consult with diverse and under-represented groups to understand barriers in relation to your programme, people and work to develop artistic talent
- Set out how you will diversify your programme, collections or exhibitions
- Identified actions to ensure you work with creative and cultural professionals from diverse backgrounds
- Set out how you will ensure any artistic talent development initiatives reach people from diverse backgrounds

- Detailed how your board will ensure delivery of your plans and monitor their impact
- Shown how you will promote and share best practice on the Creative Case for Diversity
- Clearly set out how you will evidence all of the above

Reaching diverse audiences

Have you:

- Given detail on the population profile of the area your audience is drawn from
- Set up monitoring processes and any other approaches you might take to understand your actual audience and how it compares to the population profile
- Specified action to address any gaps in audience reach
- Outlined how you will consult with under-represented groups to identify and address barriers to their participation
- Included action on your marketing reach to more diverse audiences
- Identified how you will make your activities more accessible

Building boards that lead on equality and diversity

Have you:

- Set out action on how you will recruit a more diverse board/management team

- Developed ways of making sure new and existing board/management members are clear on equality and diversity commitments
- Looked at how you will develop board/management team processes to ensure that they are flexible and inclusive
- Specified ways to show how the board will lead on the equality and diversity agenda

Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce

Have you:

- Included information on the demographics of the geographic area your staff is drawn from
- Shown how you have analysed your staff survey to see how your current staff at all levels of your organisation reflect the demographics of the geographic area
- Identified any gaps and then specified action to attract/retain people from diverse backgrounds at all levels of your organisation
- Developed action to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to volunteer in your organisation
- Set out how you will address any equality and diversity monitoring challenges, such as high numbers of 'prefer not to say' or low response rates in some areas
- Outlined your plans for equality and diversity training, career development and inclusive work practices

People who have helped us to develop the guidance

We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who gave their time and shared materials to help us develop this guidance:

- Britannia Morton, Sadler's Wells
- Catherine Bourke, Opera North
- Clare Hawk, English National Ballet
- Clare Purcell, Contemporary Arts in Unusual Places
- David Bryan, Xtend
- Hannah Mason, The Art House
- Hilary Foster, Third Angel
- Jane Bailey, Motion House
- Jennifer Pattison, Philharmonia Orchestra
- Jo Verrent, Unlimited
- Julie Batten, People Express
- Louise Richards, Motionhouse
- Lynetter Shanbury, Spare tyre
- Manick Govinda, Artsadmin
- Michelle Lally, 2021 visual arts centre
- Mike Layward, DASH, Disability Arts Shropshire
- Richard Nutter, DaDaFest
- Suzie Henderson, Contact
- Melody Walker, Phoenix Dance Theatre
- Rachel Clare, Crying Out Loud
- Zoe Dennington, Crafts Council

