

Report on Inclusive Recruitment for Arts Council England

EW Group – January 2018

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Executive Summary

Following a diagnostic assessment of the recruitment practice at the Arts Council England (ACE), EW Group found many examples of best practice: a friendly and engaging tone with candidates throughout the whole process, interviewers who were entirely professional and open to diversity and absolutely no overt discrimination.

We did however find some areas where ACE could improve, and the strongest recommendation is for recruiting managers and panels to do more of the analytical work ahead of the interview. We recommend that recruiters spend time working out what exactly are the skills and experience they are looking for and how this fits with the behavioural framework. This should then make the interviewing itself easier and make unconscious bias less likely, as the interview will be based on gathering evidence against very clear criteria.

The report sets out our analysis against five areas

- Analysis of the current data relating to diversity and recruitment
- Policy
- Procedures and paperwork
- Interviews and selection
- Supporting applicants

There are a number of strengths to build upon:

- Clear, well-written policies and procedures
- Imaginative approach to promoting recruitment opportunities
- A human, welcoming, organised and professional approach to candidates
- Well-conducted interviews by panels who are conscious of their own processes
- A clear organisational commitment to diversity

Challenges to further diversification of the Arts Council's workforce include:

- A lack of apparent clarity about what is being looked for in a particular role may lead to recruiters asking questions and then making decisions not directly related to the job description
- The importance of tacit and sectoral or insider knowledge may hinder some candidates

Our recommendations are:

Area	Recommendation	Timescale for action
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Policy	1. Work towards advertising all permanent opportunities externally	Medium-term
	2. Introduce the practice of no name on application forms at shortlisting	Medium-term
Procedures and paperwork	3. Look for more ways to encourage candidates to share their diversity data, as the statistics show that only 64% of applicants do this	Quick win
	4. Ask candidates to highlight qualifications relevant to the post rather than listing all education/qualifications in detail	Medium term
	5. Make sure you are clear on the skills and experience you are looking for, that these are clear to everyone, and that you give people the opportunity in application and interview to demonstrate them	Long-term
	6. Use the behavioural framework to frame the application forms and make it much clearer in the paperwork that candidates are judged against different aspects of it. So, on the application form, ask candidates to give an example of how they have demonstrated the relevant competency. Make it explicit in the paperwork for both first and second interviews that candidates are being judged against the framework.	Medium term
	7. Keep placing jobs imaginatively – notices of jobs can be sent to a variety of organisations and societies as well as being placed in traditional sites and this will encourage more diverse applicants	Quick win
Interviews and Selection	8. Take out the Criminal Records box where possible	Quick win
	9. HR and recruiting managers should agree questions at all interviews to assess candidates' relevant skills and experience as the focus of the interview rather than 'insider' knowledge of the cultural sector and current strategic concerns	Quick win

	10. Change the notes on the first interview record form to make it plain that the recruiting panel should ask questions that are about candidates' skills and experience. Make it more explicit how the personality test should be used, that it is useful background information	Quick win
	11. Ensure consistent use of psychometric tests, and that both the panel and the candidates know how the feedback process works. Arts Council should if possible also monitor result patterns by protected characteristics	Quick win
	12. Ask the panel to first score and then discuss and make it clear what they are scoring	Quick win
	13. Roll out recruitment training on: chairing interviews and being part of a panel, how to use competency/behavioural framework, and how to assess candidates at shortlisting stage	Medium term
Supporting applicants	14. Review and develop the guidance given on filling out the application using the behavioural/competency framework, and on interview technique, using new media such as vlogs, YouTube videos etc.	Quick win
	15. Developing more material that explains the roles and what it's like to work for Arts Council England	Medium-term
	16. Make the policy on travel expenses explicit to the panel and to the candidate	Short-term