



INCLUSION

Handbook

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READING SUGGESTIONS:

We recommend that you download the handbook and open it using a pdf reader. You can then click on the web links and consult the resources. Alternatively, you can also copy and paste with a right click the web links of the resources that interest you in your browser's URL field. As this guide is quite long, we advise you not to print it, especially since all resources are web-based.

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European Music Council
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TOOLS PRODUCED FOR SHIFT FULLY AVAILABLE ONLINE:

www.shift-culture.eu

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FULLY AVAILABLE ON THE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE BASE:

www.artsmetric.com/project-resources/shift

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THIS IS SHIFT

The 17 [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and are the 'to-do list' for the entire world until 2030. The aims of these SDGs 'are to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere'. Although culture and arts have not been integrated as an explicit goal, we believe that the cultural and creative sectors have a key role in shaping the transition to more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable societies without leaving anyone behind. Culture and arts are fundamental and transversal in their capacity to support behavioural changes and mobilise collective engagement. As we still demand culture and arts to be integrated in the international agenda post 2030, its role can already be integrated by promoting knowledge to citizens as well as being a tool of the successful implementation of all the 17 SDGs and its targets.

The project SHIFT - Shared Initiatives For Training, co-funded as 'Strategic Partnership' by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, was initiated by nine cultural networks:

- European Choral Association – Europa Cantat - ECA-EC
- ELIA - globally connected European network for higher arts education
- European Music Council - EMC
- European Union of Music Competitions for Youth - EMCY
- Fresh Arts Coalition Europe - FACE
- IETM - International network for contemporary performing arts
- International Music Council - IMC
- On The Move - OTM
- Trans Europe Halles - TEH

These networks recognised the need to join forces to work on the global agenda of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and its leaders wished to improve their capacity for giving guidance to their teams, organisations and members.

It was asked how to tackle the global challenges recognised in the SDGs such as climate change, gender equality and inclusion of minorities.

Although these challenges are not new and have been part of the work of the SHIFT partners for a long time, it was agreed by the participating organisations that these topics were not yet taken from a leadership point of view. Three SDGs have been selected as starting points to activate change and increase the cultural sectors' awareness on the sustainable goals:

- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 13: Climate Action

Even though the partners have decided to focus on three SDGs, there is a clear connection between these SDGs. Working on achieving one goal will have a positive impact on others such as good health and well-being (3), decent work and economic growth (8), sustainable cities and communities (11), life below water and on land (14 and 15)...

At the same time, the partners are aware that there might be conflicting recommendations to achieve the different goals. To give a very simple but vivid example: One graphic style might be particularly eco-friendly because it would use a very small amount of ink and be produced with less energy, but the same style might not be barrier-free and might be difficult to read for people with visual impairments. All the recommendations therefore have to be contextualised and used with high sensitivity.

The overarching work on cultural leadership has enabled the partners to develop and discover various ways of leading and supporting change to achieve these goals. It was crucial to give tools to leaders to be able to weigh out values and find a path making sense for their organisation, at the time of taking the decision while being aware of different other paths possible.

The partners are happy to share with you the researched and developed material on the four themes of SHIFT: cultural leadership, environmental sustainability, gender and power-relations, and inclusion. **Enjoy!**

This publication is part of the inclusion package.

Creating a more inclusive society lies in guaranteeing the right to access all aspects of society and the autonomy of decision-making for all - irrespective of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. It touches on all aspects of a diverse society: communication, accessibility, governance, leadership, and so on.

Diversity in leadership is key to bringing in different ways of working, thinking and being as a result of different experiences, characteristics, backgrounds, and ways of viewing the world. More diverse representation now can encourage a greater diversity of leaders in the future, breaking down conscious and unconscious assumptions about 'what a leader looks like'.

The SHIFT project addresses inclusion as defined in the targets of UN SDG 10 for reduced inequalities, notably:

10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status

This publication will follow on the categorisation as used in the SDG 10.2 with the addition of the characteristics of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'.

10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard

The partners aim to contribute to meeting these targets with the guidance put together and developed for SHIFT through an annotated bibliography and handbook.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK

The SHIFT Inclusion Handbook is designed to support cultural networks and organisations of all kinds in navigating and engaging with the topic of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. It is the companion resource to the SHIFT Annotated Bibliography on Inclusion, which comprises a selection of 101 resources, including toolkits, checklists, tests, articles, reports and guides.

The handbook is conceived as a reference book rather than something to be read from start to finish - although there is nothing to stop you doing this! Nevertheless, many of the concepts laid out in chapter 1 are built upon in other sections, so it is worth beginning there.

The handbook is divided into five sections. The first, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging - Key Concepts and Culture, aims to set the scene, addressing what it means to have an inclusive organisational culture and how to lead inclusively.

The second chapter focuses on inclusive governance and aims to support the reader in developing a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI&B) statement, strategy, or plan, as well as in carrying out evaluation and data collection. It centres on the need for considered, written policy in all areas, including communications strategies, boards, recruitment, internships and volunteering, employment and partner and supplier diversity. It furthermore offers guidance on inclusive meetings and inclusion training, as well as on the issue of inclusion and membership.

The third chapter tackles inclusive action, namely the external actions taken by cultural networks and organisations, including advocacy and projects.

The final two chapters, Making communications more Inclusive and Holding Inclusive Events, give a brief overview of concrete actions you can take in different aspects of your communications and events in order to improve their inclusivity and accessibility.

With many of the resources available not being directed specifically towards the needs of the cultural and creative sectors, of which over 95% employ fewer than 10 people, this handbook strives to draw together what is useful and adapt it to the needs of our sectors. Our intention is to provide a resource that is useful in terms of any marginalised group, although particular marginalised groups are mentioned where specificities are concerned (notably in terms of accessibility) or as examples where this makes an aspect clearer.

We encourage the reader to engage with this work with a flexible mind, identifying what is transferable to their own situation, even if their specific case is not explicitly mentioned. The reader should find within this handbook a framework that empowers them to know what it is they are looking for, to seek out further resources for themselves as needed and, most crucially, to reflect honestly on their own situation.

This publication has been created by the European Choral Association - Europa Cantat and the SHIFT partner networks as output for the inclusion strand of the SHIFT project (Shared Initiatives for Training), which focuses on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities. SHIFT looks at how cultural networks, organisations, and professionals can embed inclusion into practices and collaborations.



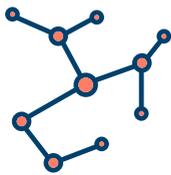
GUIDE TO TERMINOLOGY

KEY DEFINITIONS

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B)



In terms of the workplace, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B) refers to organisational strategies, policies and processes designed to create a culture where all employees feel empowered to bring their whole selves to work and to thrive in doing so.



Diversity

Diversity is the fact of the presence of differences. These differences may relate to characteristics or background, for example age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, ability, race¹, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other statuses. There are types of diversity we can see (relating to visible characteristics) and types that we cannot see (relating to invisible characteristics). Diversity can be achieved in the workplace, for example, through intentionally recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining employees with different backgrounds, identities or circumstances.

Some examples of ways in which the term 'diversity' is used, include:



Behavioural diversity

Behavioural diversity relates to differences in personal experiences that influence our behaviour.



Cognitive diversity

Cognitive diversity accounts for differences in our perspective and the way we process information.



Ethnic diversity

The term ethnic diversity refers to the presence of different ethnic backgrounds or identities.



Innate diversity

Innate diversity is the range of differences in people like sex, gender identity, age, race, physical ability and sexual orientation. It also includes differences in the way we think and process information.



Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is a relatively new term coined in 1998 by autistic, Australian sociologist Judy Singer in 1998. The neurodiversity definition began as a way to describe people on the Autistic spectrum. Neurodiversity has since broadened to include people with: Autism, Dyslexia, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Order), Dyscalculia, DSD (Dyspraxia), Dysgraphia, Tourette Syndrome, and other neurological differences.



Workforce Diversity

Workforce Diversity means having a group of employees with similarities and differences like age, cultural background, physical abilities and disabilities, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.



Equity

Equity is the choice to promote fairness in the processes and policies of your organisation. It is about recognising that people should not all be treated the same, but rather each according to their needs.



Equality

Equality is the choice to give equal rights and opportunities to everyone. Everyone is given the same resources, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance. This is problematic where the playing field was not level in the first place.



Inclusion

The term inclusion refers to the process of bringing people from marginalised groups into decision-making processes, activities, or positions of power. Inclusion is the result of welcoming, respecting, supporting, involving, valuing and empowering those around you regardless of their background or characteristics and according to their needs.



Workplace Inclusion

Workplace inclusion is an intentional effort to create an atmosphere of belonging where all parties can contribute and thrive regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.



Belonging

Belonging is the experience of the individual, when they feel accepted and included by those around them. Belonging means to have a sense of social connection and identification with others.

Representation



Representation goes beyond diversity and refers to the relationship between a person from a marginalised group occupying a position of power or having a presence (in person, in writing or otherwise) and other people from the same marginalised group who witness them. Representation validates the viewer and their role in society, as well as permitting them to see the possibilities open to them.

Tokenism



Tokenism is a practice of appointing a person or a small number of people from a marginalised group in order to be seen to be making DEI&B efforts, often without giving access to decision-making or making any efforts in terms of inclusion, equity or belonging in the environment.

FURTHER DEFINITIONS

Ableism



Ableism refers to discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities in favour of able-bodied people. It conceptualises the capacities of able-bodied people as superior and serves to stereotype people with disabilities, considering them in need of “fixing”.

Affinity Groups/Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)



These terms in the DEI&B context refer to groups of individuals with a shared background or characteristic usually within an organisation who come together to discuss experiences, challenges and changes needed as well as to support each other, with the aim of making the organisation a better place to work for people of their background or with similar characteristics.



Ageism

Ageism refers to prejudice against, stereotyping of or discrimination against someone by reason of their age. It can affect people of all ages depending on context. For example, younger people are often sidelined in decision-making processes and older people can find themselves being patronised due to perceptions of age.



Allyship

An ally is someone who takes up a cause, not because it directly benefits them, but because it is a cause that matters for the creation of a better society for everyone.

Performative allyship relates to an outward illustration of empathy as a reaction to a lack of prior acknowledgement of marginalised individuals or groups.

True allyship, in contrast, is often pre-emptive, involving learning about issues impacting marginalised communities before needing to address them. For example, an organisation may not currently employ anyone who is transgender, but its team may already learn about the use of pronouns and proper language.



Bias

Bias is a form of prejudice, wherein an individual unduly prefers or dislikes a person or group. Systems can also be biased, resulting in unfair treatment of persons or groups. Bias can be conscious (we are aware that we prefer one group over another group) or unconscious (we do not realise that we have this preference). Furthermore, there are cognitive biases, where errors are commonly made in assessment of a situation. For example, confirmation bias is the tendency to pay most attention to evidence that supports our beliefs, disregarding evidence that does not fit so well.



Cultural Diversity

The [UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#) states that “Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.”

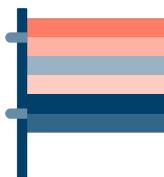
In Article 4, it goes on to state: “The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples.”

Homophobia / Sexual Orientation Discrimination



These terms refer to prejudice against, dislike of or discrimination against people on the basis of their real or perceived identification as someone who is LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex, asexual and others).

LGBTQIA+



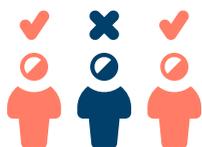
This term refers to the sexual orientation of an individual and stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex, asexual and others. Other terms are also commonly used, including LGBT(+), LGBTQ, LGBTI and so on. The use of “trans*” (with the asterisk) refers to all non-cisgender or gender-queer identities.

Marginalised Group

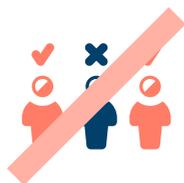


When a person or group is/are marginalised, they suffer social exclusion. This results in barriers to access to many aspects of societal systems, including healthcare, education, culture, fundamental rights, support, resources and opportunities. It is the preferred term of this handbook over such terms as “vulnerable groups”, as marginalisation is not the result of a characteristic of the individual, but rather the result of an action of society.

Racism



Racism is the wrong belief that humans can be grouped into different categories of physical appearance and that this is aligned with differences in character and behaviour, with some ‘races’ being superior to others. This is often based on a conception of biological differences between different groups. Racism also refers to the prejudice or discrimination carried out against an individual or group due to their race or ethnicity.



Anti-racism

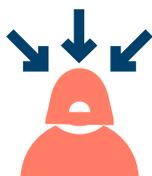
Anti-racism - beyond not committing racist acts - refers to taking action to counter racism on a personal, organisational, societal, systemic or other level. It consists of making a conscious effort to acknowledge privilege, counteracting personal biases and confronting racist acts and racist systems.

Sex and Gender



Sex refers to the biological aspects of an individual as determined by their anatomy, which is produced by chromosomes, hormones and their interactions, and generally is assigned at birth as male, female or intersex. **Gender** is based on the socially acquired idea of masculinity and femininity. Gender identity is the personal, internal perception of oneself in terms of the male/female binary - which may or may not match with the sex they were assigned with at birth - or the perception of oneself as non-binary.

Sexism



Sexism refers to prejudice against, stereotyping of or discrimination against someone, usually women, by reason of their sex. It is based on assumptions about the appropriate societal roles for women and men on the basis of fixed perceptions about the fundamental nature of the sexes.

1

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING – KEY CONCEPTS AND CULTURE

1.1 Models of Diversity

- ➔ Development of Models of Diversity Management
- ➔ Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B) in the Cultural Sector
- ➔ Embracing Complexity
- ➔ Models of Disability

1.2 Identifying and Mitigating Unconscious Bias

1.3 Sustainable Culture Transformation

- ➔ Values
- ➔ Psychological Safety and Vulnerability
- ➔ Community of Practice and Social Accountability
- ➔ Growth vs Fixed Mindset
- ➔ Managing Resistance

1.4 Inclusive Leadership

1.5 The Role of the Sector

In the first chapter of this handbook, we look into some of the background on the topic of DEI&B (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging). This includes:

- Different models of diversity management and models of disability that have been developed in the late part of the 20th century and into the 21st
- Key concepts in dealing with the complexity of diversity
- What unconscious bias is and how to deal with it
- The mindset and actions that are necessary to ensure any culture change in an organisation is sustainable
- What it means to lead in an inclusive way
- Where the cultural and creative sectors have an opportunity to work together to achieve inclusion beyond what an individual organisation can do on its own

As the foundation on which all other chapters in this handbook build, we highly recommend taking the time to read this chapter through before looking at your specific areas of interest elsewhere in the handbook.

1.1 MODELS OF DIVERSITY

Development of Models of Diversity Management

Diversity has been defined in different ways over time and continues to be used in different - and sometimes incautious - ways. The history of diversity management reflects this evolution in understanding. Indeed, models from all stages are still employed in different organisations across different countries.

Grasping the reasoning behind each of these models as well as their limitations offers us an opportunity to find structure in a field where definitions can be hard to pin down. This helps to define the values that are ingrained in our work as well as to orient us by making clear why we are making certain choices and not others.

The following gives a short resumé of the progression of diversity management models identified by Judith Y. Weisinger, Ramón Borges-Méndez and Carl Milofsky in their essay *Diversity in the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector*.² The authors review management research on diversity in not-for-profit organisations exclusively in the United States, but these viewpoints and practices are also found in Europe in one form or another.

One of the earliest models in this system grew out of the concept of **equal employment opportunity**, with a focus simply on compliance with antidiscrimination laws. This approach lacks any further sense of social obligation or potential gain from implementing diversity measures.

The practice of **affirmative action** (also known as **positive discrimination**) built on this, moving away from a law-based approach towards the recognition of a moral obligation. Affirmative action refers to the recruitment of individuals from marginalised groups in response to historical discrimination. This model served in many countries to increase the diversity of the workplace and it furthermore anticipates the continuation of the trend of individuals from marginalised groups joining the workforce. The model centres on the celebration of difference within an organisation as a value in itself. However, studies demonstrate that the status of those from marginalised groups was not greatly impacted within organisations following this approach.

More broadly, the **social justice case for diversity** is based on the understanding of diversity as a moral imperative that is essential to rebalance the distortions present in society as a result of the marginalisation of certain people and groups. With a focus on the failings of society, this approach can sometimes lack the personal dimension of self-development and expression of the authentic self.

The **business case for diversity** provides an economic argument for increasing diversity, relying on the idea that diverse teams perform better, that a more diverse workforce will allow organisations to expand an organisation's reach towards more diverse audiences and that diversity will improve competitiveness. This viewpoint has been criticised for its capacity to overlook questions of equity, including diluting the concept of diversity to such an extent that it "obscure issues of intergroup inequality", confusing cultural differences with differences in equality, and using staff members from marginalised groups exclusively to reach out and manage relationships with people from their own communities³.

It can be seen from these models that increasing diversity in an organisation does not necessarily achieve a more progressive or inclusive work environment. Diversity is simply a statement of demographic composition, and is not concerned with the quality of relationships between different individuals. Inclusion is essential to create an atmosphere within an organisation where all individuals are able to contribute and grow.

This relational dimension is qualitative, and thus harder to measure than the quantitative data of diversity. However, it is critical that inclusion is not disregarded due to this challenge. Focusing on diversity at the expense of inclusion runs the risk of failing to recognise individuals from marginalised groups in their full complexity and the range of experiences and talents they bring, instead categorising them based on one single characteristic. This demotivates people and stands in the way of creating an inclusive organisation that benefits from the diversity of its staff and whose staff benefit from being part of the organisation.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEI&B) in the Cultural Sector

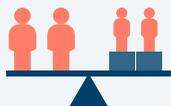
The term used throughout this document to refer to the strategies, policies and practices adopted with the aim of making a cultural organisation inclusive is DEI&B, namely, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Employing this extended term allows us to explore the full range of necessary factors to work towards a truly inclusive organisation. Here, beyond the definitions laid out in the [Guide to Terminology](#), we will establish the importance of each concept in relation to the situation of cultural networks and organisations.

Diversity



As mentioned above, diversity is a statement of demographic composition. It is not concerned with the quality of relationships between different individuals, but is essential in the inclusive organisation. If an organisation has a low level of diversity, the question must be asked: why are people from different backgrounds and with different characteristics not present? How are they being excluded (whether consciously or unconsciously)?

Equity



Equity (as opposed to equality) concerns treating people as individuals with individual needs. Whereas equality would see the same level and kind of support given to every member of a team, equity would ensure that each member of a team received the support that they needed. This is a necessary principle to work by if people are to feel that they belong in an organisation. It is also particularly important in the case of people from marginalised groups, who may not have had the opportunities that others take for granted, despite their considerable potential.

Inclusion



An organisation may have a more or less inclusive environment. An inclusive environment will foster psychological safety, feel supportive and respectful, be free from discrimination or harassment (and have procedures in place to deal with them should they occur), be honest and open to difficult conversations and be a safe space to make mistakes and learn. It should also promote professional development and give access to decision-making. Inclusion in the organisational context refers to the process of making an environment like this that welcomes people from all backgrounds and with all characteristics.

Belonging



Whereas inclusion relates to the nature of an organisation's environment, belonging refers to an individual's sense of being included. This can be broken down into two main components: feeling valued for uniqueness and the ability to be authentic. The combination of these allows a person to feel that they belong without having to conform to a particular norm⁴. Assessing perceptions of belonging among members of an organisation can therefore indicate how inclusive the environment of your organisation is.

Embracing Complexity

If diversity is to represent more than tokenism in your organisation, you have to fully embrace the complexity of people and their identities. Weisinger, Borges-Méndez and Milofsky propose three perspectives that confront this undervalued issue:⁵

Contextuality

Contextuality is the recognition of the historical, geographical and other situational facts of a person's experience and background. These will have an impact on the appropriate organisational approaches to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in any individual case. It is the foundation of understanding a person as a whole and is particularly relevant in an international context, in which stakeholders in cultural organisations naturally comprise a greater diversity of contexts.

Intersectionality

Complementing contextuality, intersectionality refers to the multiple identities that a single person may represent. It has its origins in the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw⁶, who drew attention to the marginalisation of the experiences of black women in cases of discrimination, who were obliged by the binary system of the US courts to claim discrimination either on the basis of race or on the basis of gender, but not both simultaneously. Recognising people's intersectional identities in terms of their age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status is an essential element of valuing people as a whole and avoiding tokenism and box-ticking.

Multiplexity

Multiplexity concerns the relational bonds and motivations of individuals across their different networks. In other words, people play different roles in different social settings and have different commitments. The traditional view in terms of employment is of a single relational bond, built on the status of 'employee' or 'employee from a marginalised group'. However, in the case of an organisation embracing multiplexity, the employee might bring several relational bonds into the workplace, including their intersectional identities, parental or carer obligations, community commitments etc. Making space for people's multiple networks, commitments and relational bonds is key to enhancing their sense of belonging in an organisation.

Models of Disability

As a human rights issue, the experiences of people with disabilities have much in common with the experiences of people from other marginalised groups. However, there has been a particular development of models of disability, which we wish to draw attention to here. The models tend to view the subject of disability from different positions - either the problem is with the person or the problem is with society; either the focus should be on the problem or the focus should be on solutions.

The **charity model** sees the individual with a disability as objects of pity, as recipients of help from others, and characterises them by their impairment. It assumes that the person with a disability is passive, and that it is the responsibility of society to care for their perceived needs.

The **medical model** sees disability as an impairment of the individual. It seeks to resolve the “problem” through medical intervention. The person with disability is thus a patient first and foremost. Disability is inherently negative, equated with disease, and is perceived as in need of a cure.

The **social model** was developed in reaction to the above approaches, and perceives the problem to be situated in society rather than the individual. Social, cultural, institutional, economic, political and other barriers serve to exclude or disable people with disabilities, and therefore the model calls for such barriers to be removed.

The **rights-based model** builds on the social model, recognising people with disabilities as having agency over their own lives and the capacity to make decisions for themselves and upholding their status as citizens and rights-holders. Based on the fundamental principle that human rights are inalienable and apply to all, this approach focuses on ensuring that this is widely known, understood and implemented by duty bearers. The model prioritises the transformation of practices and the systems in which they operate⁷.

1.2 IDENTIFYING AND MITIGATING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

It is a common sentiment among leaders of cultural organisations that they are not actively excluding people from marginalised groups, but see that there is still an issue of diversity and inclusion within their organisation. On the one hand, this stems from being unsure of what actions to take, but on the other hand, unconscious bias is a frequent contributor to the problem.

You may not consciously exclude others, but the human brain is fond of making shortcuts to reduce energy expenditure and facilitate rapid decision-making, which can allow biases (some harmful, some trivial) to form without you being fully aware of it.

We all have a natural preference towards people who make us feel safe, and conversely, a natural inclination to distrust people who do not. In combination with our brains' shortcuts, this means that we are constantly being sent subliminal signals as to who we can or cannot trust.

If this is a natural process, and cannot be stopped, then are we all doomed to exclude people who are not like us?

Fortunately, this is not the case. We are capable of consciously overriding our unconscious biases - but to do so, we must be aware of them⁸.

One way to do this right now is to take one of [Harvard University's Implicit Association Tests](#).

Another way is to consult the [Seeds Model®](#) which groups bias into five categories: similarity, expedience, experience, distance and safety.

Still further possible biases can be found on page 13 of the JUMP handbook on [How To Build An Inclusive Workplace](#).

Once we are aware of biases that we hold, the work begins. We can get ready for situations in which they may be activated. This can be done case-by-case, but more effective is to identify ways to adapt systems in such a way that your bias cannot affect your decisions. When done in an organisational context, the impact is further increased if all relevant stakeholders are on board with such a process of self-reflection and system adaptation.⁹

1.3 SUSTAINABLE CULTURE TRANSFORMATION

Cultural transformation of an organisation has two interlinking facets. One of these is the implementation of policies, processes, strategies, mission statements etc. that create a solid infrastructure of inclusivity in an organisation's environment. This is the subject of chapter 2 of this handbook.

The other element, that we will look at in this section, is the environment of an organisation, as seen through its shared values, assumptions, and beliefs. The people that work in an organisation, their soft skills¹⁰ and their interpersonal relationships are key to this.

Values

Most if not all cultural organisations have identified the values that define their organisations in pursuit of their missions, but not necessarily those that define their internal cultures. Defining these is still only the first step. We then need to operationalise them, transforming those cultural values into principles and behaviours.

This may entail building people's skills in order to empower them to work in line with your shared values as well as giving them the competences required to keep each other accountable as you work towards living the values that create an inclusive culture. This sets clear expectations, provides encouragement and helps create a shared language that teams can use with each other.

The [Dare to Lead platform](#) of Brené Brown contains resources that can help you and your team develop the values and corresponding behaviours that will allow you to operationalise those values for an inclusive culture.

Examples of values from the Dare to Lead platform:

- Asking for Help
- Developing Emotional Literacy
- Working with others
- Resetting after set-backs, disappointments, and failures
- Building Trust

Examples of behaviours from the Dare to Lead platform:

- I ask for what I need versus blaming others or feeling resentful
- I talk about how I feel
- I practice gratitude with my team and colleagues
- I'm able to identify the key learnings in mistakes
- I choose to practice my values rather than simply professing them¹¹

Psychological Safety and Vulnerability

Psychological safety is present in an environment where people feel included and able to speak up without fear of judgement or repercussions. Situations like this may arise in cases where they might not know something or want to propose an alternative course of action, or alternatively when they need to admit a problem or a mistake.

A culture without psychological safety cannot be inclusive, as it makes people hold back from being their authentic selves or asking for help in fear of judgement. Part of creating a psychologically safe environment is understanding that people are individuals, with individual needs. In addition to the leader in an organisation understanding this, people need to be able to understand this about one another.

A psychologically safe environment makes it easier for people to be vulnerable with each other. Defined by Brown as “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure”, vulnerability is a necessary factor for inclusion and belonging as well as for “creativity, innovation, and more authentic connections with your team”¹².

One model to consult is the S.A.F.E.T.Y™ model, which bases psychological safety on six social drivers: Security, Autonomy, Fairness, Esteem, Trust and You (individual factors). Different people will associate themselves to higher or lesser degrees with each driver, which determines their own individual needs for psychological safety.¹³

Community of Practice and Social Accountability

Training courses on inclusion and diversity need to be taken on further if they are going to have any long-term effect. One way to do this is by encouraging a “community of practice”, in which all members of a team work together to hold each other accountable and not let bad practice go unchallenged.

Building on psychological safety, establishing a community of practice allows individuals to name what is painful or upsetting to them, in an environment where others listen to and support them. While not removing the feelings of discomfort and shame that may arise when sharing on difficult topics, it builds resilience on both an individual and team level. It is an opportunity to learn together in a group that is motivated to improve.

The policy and process side of culture transformation must be supported by social accountability to be impactful,

which means establishing methods of dialogue within a team to respectfully challenge us if we say something inappropriate or hurtful, even if it was unconscious. This feeds into behaviour change, which is at the root of culture change.¹⁴

Furthermore, it should be anticipated that we will make mistakes. Speaking about his experience as a member of a marginalised group, music director Ernest Harrison emphasises the need to create a culture in which we “normalise messing up and apologising” but also the importance of being sensitive with how and when we do it.

Admitting our mistakes and apologising for them should be done as soon as possible, whether other people are there or not. However, he suggests waiting for a private moment with the person you have hurt to follow up and find out how to do better in future, if that person is willing to give you advice¹⁵.

Growth vs Fixed Mindset

A further pillar of the inclusive culture is fostering a growth mindset, as opposed to fixed mindset. A growth mindset refers to the belief that skills and abilities can be improved over time, whereas a fixed mindset assumes that skills and abilities are innate, and therefore cannot be changed. Mistakes are more likely to be interpreted as learning experiences in the growth mindset, rather than as proof of lack of ability in the fixed mindset.

Managing Resistance

Resistance to DEI&B measures can arise for several reasons, but it generally is traceable to a feeling of being threatened and/or not being included in the development process. While it is not necessary for every stakeholder in an organisation to participate directly in the development of DEI&B policies (or indeed any other kind of policy development), offering the opportunity to participate can help manage resistance before it has started. It can also help to circulate a draft text of the policy for comment to give the opportunity for any concerns to be raised at the earliest stage possible. Keeping the development process transparent and providing progress updates may also be suitable in longer-term processes.

Training courses should also be managed sensitively. Research shows that compulsory diversity training can actually serve to increase bias within an organisation, as people feel that they are being told what to believe.¹⁷ One way to make training more impactful is to focus on interventions and actions that can be made, rather than, for example, on learning about unconscious bias theoretically. A further way is to make it flexible, allowing people to choose the topics that they wish to learn about and the way that they want to learn about them. Some people prefer workshops, others

The growth mindset can be applied to any process of skill development, and is particularly relevant to making our behaviour more inclusive. It is also a mindset that can be developed collectively over time, if an organisation's culture and leadership avoid being seen to ask for perfection and end results, instead promoting favourable habits, such as "continuous development, and progress, experimentation and learning from others"¹⁶.

online courses, and limiting the amount of "fixed" learning can greatly increase engagement.¹⁸

A calm conversation to understand the issues that are causing someone to be resistant to DEI&B measures is invaluable. In this context, it can be helpful to refer to David Rock's SCARF Model, for example, which covers five key areas that influence our behaviour and which can cause us to become uncommunicative in a conversation if we feel threatened, namely: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness.

Connection is essential for effective communication. Conversely, the lack of compassion and will to understand where the other person is coming from will impede connection and increase resistance. The Nonviolent Communication process of Marshall Rosenberg¹⁹ provides a means to find common ground with anyone, whether in our personal or professional lives, and has even been used in international conflict resolution and mediation. Based on four principles (observing, feeling, needs and requests), it leads us towards empathy rather than judgement and is a useful tool in change processes facing resistance.

1.4 INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

In an evolving world, the traditional core elements of leadership (strategising, giving instructions, monitoring performance and so on) are no longer enough. In the previous section, we looked at what makes a culture inclusive. This is only possible, however, if the leader in such a culture practises inclusive leadership themselves.

A study on inclusive leadership conducted by Human Capital consultants at Deloitte found that “when people feel that they are treated fairly, that their uniqueness is appreciated and they have a sense of belonging, and that they have a voice in decision making, then they will feel included.”²⁰ For a leader is to make this a reality, the researchers found that there were six traits that played a key role:

1. Commitment

The inclusive leader has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion because it aligns with the leader’s personal values.

2. Courage

The inclusive leader is honest about their own strengths and weaknesses and is willing to challenge the status quo.

3. Cognisance of Bias

The inclusive leader is aware of their own bias, the biases of others and the biases of the system. They take action to prevent bias affecting decisions.

4. Curiosity

The inclusive leader understands that they do not know everything, and is interested to hear the opinions of others. They have a high tolerance for uncertainty.

5. Cultural Intelligence

The inclusive leader is confident in managing cross-cultural communication and cooperation.

6. Collaboration

The inclusive leader fosters opportunities to bring together diverse groups and empowers others to make decisions.²¹

Inclusive leadership should not be limited to the director or secretary-general of a cultural organisation. Today’s leaders have the power to build up the next generation so that inclusive leadership becomes the norm in future.

You might:

- Highlight inclusive leadership as a fundamental value of your organisation and use it as part of your team’s agreed behaviours
- Ensure that the capability of inclusive leadership is included in recruitment posts and bring the six traits above into interview questions
- Bring inclusive leadership traits into performance review processes, including reviews of team member perceptions of current leadership
- As part of your community of practice, hold each other accountable for acting in accordance with the traits of inclusive leadership
- Give support and/or training that will empower team members to develop their inclusive leadership traits²²

On this basis, you can approach the questions addressed in chapter 2 of this handbook about what concrete steps you might take to provide a policy and process infrastructure for DEI&B in your organisation.

1.5 THE ROLE OF THE SECTOR

With 95% of the organisations in the European cultural sector made up of micro-organisations (employing under 10 people)²³, much of the information on diversity and inclusion in the workplace can seem difficult or impossible to implement. However, cultural organisations are facing the same DEI&B challenges, and therefore there is an opportunity for the cultural and creative sectors as a whole to unite and share actions that would be unviable on an organisational level.

Here is a brief selection of recommended DEI&B actions that would require a united approach in the cultural and creative sectors:

1. Career Paths and Mentoring

Creating clear career paths is recommended in large corporations as a way of increasing retention of employees from marginalised groups, but most individual cultural organisations are not in a position to offer this. That does not mean that there is no career-support that organisations can offer, especially if they work together.

Arts Council England suggests providing “mentoring, shadowing and peer observation and acting up opportunities particularly for under-represented groups in the workforce” and developing “networking opportunities for staff wishing to progress their careers or change their career path within the cultural workforce”²⁴.

Mentoring opportunities can be particularly beneficial and can be based on an in-person or online meeting once a month, for example. This could be provided at all levels across the cultural and creative sectors, with interested team members of organisations both benefiting from the mentorship of more experienced colleagues and being able to develop their own inclusive leadership skills through the mentoring of more junior colleagues.

2. Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups, also known as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), are workplace groups that bring together people who share a particular characteristic or background, and enable them to share their experiences and to support each others’ personal and professional development in a safe space. They are also enablers of culture change within an organisation.

With the significant improvement in digital communication technologies in the last years, location no longer need pose a barrier to creating cultural and creative sector

ERGs across Europe. The breakout-room feature in Zoom or the use of the Wonder.me platform allow for constructive small-group conversation even if larger numbers of people are present.

3. Train Together

Training is often conceptualised on an organisation-by-organisation basis, but if DEI&B training could be shared in a single location between several organisations, then it would have a number of benefits. It would be a good DEI&B networking opportunity, including for team members of different organisations who might not otherwise have the chance to meet and would increase the diversity of points of view in the room, potentially leading to a cross-pollination of ideas across the cultural and creative sectors.

Followed up with a community of practice approach (see section 1.3), this could lead to a more coherent and sustainable approach to DEI&B within the cultural and creative sectors.

4. Increase the Visibility of Careers in Culture

One of the major DEI&B issues in the cultural and creative sectors is sometimes called the “pipeline problem”, namely, there is inadequate access to culture, cultural education and entry-level cultural job opportunities for people from marginalised groups.

One element of this is a lack of information and networking opportunities. It could be addressed by, for example, a central online information point, gathering resources and the personal stories of those that have worked in different areas of the cultural and creative sectors, as well as offering online opportunities to connect through question and answer sessions.

Even at an organisational level, there are steps that could be taken, including adding a careers page on your website about cultural management in your individual sector.

2

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE: PEOPLE, POLICIES AND PROCESSES

[2.1 DEI&B Statements, Strategies and Plans](#)

[2.2 Communications Strategies](#)

[2.3 Diversifying the Board](#)

[2.4 Recruitment](#)

[2.5 Interns and Volunteers](#)

[2.6 Staff Support and Leadership Development](#)

[2.7 Inclusive Meetings](#)

[2.8 Inclusion Training](#)

[2.9 Inclusion and your Network](#)

[2.10 Partner and Supplier Diversity](#)

[2.11 Evaluation and Data Collection](#)

The second chapter of this handbook calls on us to look inwards at our organisation. Many organisations in the cultural and creative sectors have the desire to be more inclusive, but suffer from a lack of internal structure on making this a reality. Here we aim to give inspiration and guidance on a number of topics related to your organisation's governance that will help you make your good intentions into a methodical and coherent process.

While each sub-chapter can be consulted independently, we highly recommend that you read both 2.1 DEI&B Statements, Strategies and Plans and 2.11 Evaluation and Data Collection in any case.

2.1 DEI&B STATEMENTS, STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Equity Assessments

Implementing a DEI&B (diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging) process in your organisation requires understanding, planning and the creation of a framework. There are also different levels of intervention to consider:

1. Individual - for team members, board members, members of the organisation to feel included and that they belong, as well as to feel empowered to take action on DEI&B issues as they relate to the organisation
2. Systems - for the processes of the organisation to be designed in such a way as to counteract bias, rather than allow it
3. Leadership - for leaders in the organisation to understand their role in creating an inclusive environment, empowering others, and taking on the design of a DEI&B strategy in cooperation with others in the organisation
4. Citizenship - for the organisation to understand its role in broader society in terms of supporting diversity and inclusion²⁵

In all cases, the journey begins with an assessment of the current situation, often referred to as an equity assessment, diversity assessment or inclusion assessment. Assessment is covered in more detail in [2.11 Evaluation and Data Collection](#), as returning to assessment for evaluation purposes is essential to monitoring progress on DEI&B issues. Areas that you may wish to consider are found throughout the other sections of this chapter, as well as the following chapters of this handbook.

Doing your first equity assessment can be daunting and appear time-consuming, and therefore it is necessary to be realistic about how much can be addressed at any one time. It is better to address a select number of issues well in the first instance than overwhelm team and board members with a volume of DEI&B change that they cannot manage. Taking a stage-by-stage approach, with identifiable goals and thus a means to measure success is a way to gain support for future steps and counter resistance.

Determining which issues are the priority relies on your initial equity audit. In order to carry this out, you will want to bring information together from different sources, for example: developing a checklist to review your organisation's policies and processes, carrying out team/board/member surveys, conducting interviews or focus groups and analysing available data. Bringing this together into a report highlighting key points and areas for action can then inform the development process for your DEI&B strategy.²⁶

SHIFT Survey on Inclusion in Your Organisation

This survey developed by the European Choral Association for the SHIFT project aimed at analysing the status of the partners in their inclusive practices, processes and people. This survey was found to be a very useful tool in raising awareness within the organisation as well as to gather data on their actual status so as to be able to analyse their starting point and then the progress made.

It will be key to regularly evaluate the different steps and actions taken towards better inclusion of all people at risk and this tool can help to do this.

You can refer to the survey [here](#).²⁷

Developing Your Strategy

Sarah Cordivano, Associate Director of Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Springer Nature, recommends you develop a DEI&B strategy with a timeframe of at least 3-5 years if you want to achieve meaningful impact. A strong DEI&B strategy will transform your vision into actionable statements with defined steps to make them a reality.

Cordivano also recommends that you take a holistic approach to the development of a DEI&B strategy, including all marginalised groups. This is because a focus on one group runs the risk of sidelining the experiences of others and thus increasing resistance and losing goodwill.

Cordivano's approach, which is flexible enough to be adapted to the specific needs of any individual organisation, is based on eight steps²⁸:

1. Get the mandate

It goes without saying that the leadership of your organisation needs to be on board with starting the DEI&B process. While it is not vital for board members to be involved in every step of design, implementation and monitoring, it is important for them to be supportive - not just aware - of the process. A DEI&B strategy will also mean reflecting on the leadership of the organisation, so the issue must be understood to apply in all areas, not just to membership or the team. This may also flag a need for DEI&B training at board level.

2. Find your champion(s)

Someone (preferably a few people) must be accountable for the execution of your DEI&B strategy. Ideally, this will be someone who is already engaged and experienced in DEI&B issues and is not afraid to stand up for them, even with those more senior than them. If this person does not exist within your organisation, then it would be advisable to get training on the topic. In a small cultural organisation, you might consider a partnership between a board member and team member in order to bring together the needed authority, experience and knowledge. As champions are usually taking on the work on top of their official tasks, the emotional burden of this should not be underestimated. The leadership of the organisation and the council (see the next point) should be sensitive to this and supportive of the champion(s) in order to prevent harm. Ideally, the champion should be compensated well in time, money and emotional support.

3. Set up a council

Champions cannot move DEI&B processes forward on their own and risk being overwhelmed if expected to do so. Establishing a DEI&B council can bring ideas, energy and motivation to the process. Such a council should be diverse and representative of your organisation, with participants motivated to support and improve the organisation's DEI&B status. How you set it up depends on the governance structures of your organisation, but you might include further board members, team members as well as members of your organisation or non-members in your sector with relevant expertise. Remember to be clear up front about expectations and the amount of time required to participate.

4. Understand what your main challenges are as an organisation

This is your equity assessment, the precise design of which you might agree in your council. The council can work together to identify any systemic issues (e.g. unfairness, discrimination or lack of awareness/opportunity to report incidents), barriers to implementation of a DEI&B strategy and the resources needed in order to follow a DEI&B strategy through effectively.

5. Set up a workshop to create your strategy statements

Building on the results of step 4, Cordivano suggests a workshop of the council and any other relevant stakeholders to develop your DEI&B strategy. The suggested workshop plan involves imagining the future as you would like to see it, sorting the statements into ones that are internal or external to the organisation, developing initiatives to make those statements a reality and making a list of stakeholders that would be needed to implement the strategy.

6. Create the draft of the strategy document and align with stakeholders

Shortly after the workshop, bring the strategy statements together, with separate sections for internal and external actions. Narrowing the list down to ideally five or six statements, select the related initiatives that are clear and measurable. This task is most likely carried out by the champion(s) with input from the team leader. The council should then have the first opportunity to review the draft strategy and then stakeholders more broadly. Once the text is established, ensure it gets approval by the appropriate governance bodies.

7. Create a roadmap with accountable owners

With the strategy in place, transform the initiatives into a roadmap with indicators to track their progress and a person accountable for the implementation and monitoring. Again, this is most likely outlined by the champion(s) with input from the team leader. The team leader, with the approval of the board as necessary, should then allocate resources as possible and as needed, keeping a timeline for the first year that is not too ambitious.

8. Start doing the work and track your progress

Hold a kick-off meeting to ensure everyone is aware of what they are accountable for and the proposed timeline. Regular meetings (once a month or similar) are necessary in order for people to report on progress and raise any issues or roadblocks that they are facing in terms of implementation. Keeping a spreadsheet with the indicators and progress made that can be shared with the organisation on a regular basis helps keep the process transparent.

2.2 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

A proactive and thorough communication strategy can help to effectively shape the effort that the organisation puts in its wider DEI&B strategy.

“By adopting an inclusive approach to communications, every organisation has the opportunity to improve people’s lives and play their part in changing the communications landscape for the good of everyone.”²⁹

An inclusive communications strategy puts users at its heart (also called a user-centric strategy), understanding

them as a specific, diverse audience. This means that you will look at what you do from the perspective of your members, customers, employees and other stakeholders.

If communications strategies are made in an out-ward-facing way, without consideration of who the individuals in their audience are, then organisations run the risk of alienating their audience. They may push ahead with a strategy that is out-of-date, out-of-touch and not aligned with the intended audience.

Figure 1 ³⁰

A TYPICAL COMMS STRATEGY



The communications strategy should be based on the sharing of your organisation’s vision with others. This transparency - namely setting out what you are trying to achieve and why - is essential to achieving your DEI&B aims. Working on this basis is fundamental for when you move into the practical planning phase.

AN INCLUSIVE COMMS STRATEGY



In the building of a communications strategy it is necessary to understand the diverse audience that you are aiming to communicate with. An inclusive communications strategy seeks to ensure that everything produced is as accessible and available as possible to all members, customers, stakeholders and users – regardless of their circumstances, ability, language, age or location.

How to Start

Building on your equity assessment (see [2.1 DEI&B Statements, Strategies and Plans](#) and [2.11 Evaluation](#)) use your understanding of the demographics and culture of your stakeholders to craft a better inclusive communications strategy.

“When you are able and willing to hear more voices, your decision making will benefit. Homogenous groups are great at agreeing with each other, but may all agree on the same, incorrect decision because they have not considered different viewpoints. Diverse views lead to a broader range of ideas being heard and a better understanding of your customers or service users, both of which have a directly beneficial effect on the quality of your products and services.”³¹

If you have relevant audience data, look into it in more detail and start segmenting your users so that you can research specific needs and barriers. Take time for target testing with a varied sample of users. Once you are at this point, you can audit how well your existing communications materials serve your audiences and test which channels and outputs are most effective for your users. This should be an ongoing process, so be prepared to carry out ongoing user research and testing.

Communication Vehicles

The most effective channels for an inclusive strategy vary from organisation to organisation. To discover yours you must:

1. Update your presence on the platforms that your organisation already uses (website, Facebook, newsletter...)
2. Consider potential new platforms (social media that fits the mission and vision of your organisation better)
3. Identify internal communications capability and capacity
4. Establish key messages (you can create memorable messages that are easy to remember and share)
5. Develop communication toolkits (for your colleagues; it is important that everybody knows the chosen approach to each communication tool, so everybody can share and communicate in an agreed manner)
6. Set out standards for inclusive language in all communications (use language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular people or groups.)
7. Ensure DEI&B is embedded in recruitment and onboarding communications
8. Check non-verbal communications
9. Consider how communications can be relatable and authentic while still getting your message across
10. Engage with external events and groups (it is important to show your audience that you are really involved in their community)

The proposed list³² is just the first step to a more inclusive communication strategy that will need to be updated and refreshed as time goes on. For more details on inclusive and accessible communications, refer to [Chapter 4 Making communications more Inclusive](#).

2.3 DIVERSIFYING THE BOARD

What is Board Diversity?

A board is diverse when it includes “a range of ethnic, religious, economic, educational, gender, age, and professional perspectives.”³³ Not every board will have enough positions on it to reflect every single aspect of diversity at once, but over progressive boards, if one or several marginalised groups are never represented, you might ask why.

Why Diversify Your Board?

Diversifying your board is good for your organisation, your community or sector and for the development of the team of your organisation. Benefits include the following:

- The risk of disconnection between a board and its community or sector is reduced when it is more diverse, whereas its accountability and the confidence in its decision-making and capacity to represent its community or sector increases
- A diverse board is more capable of reacting effectively and flexibly to challenges and demonstrating more creative leadership due to its combination of different skills, knowledge and experience³⁵

A healthy, diverse board should reflect:

- the diversity of the organisation it serves
- the diversity of people in society
- a diversity of knowledge and experience in order to bring in an understanding of different areas and fields and ensure that the needs of different elements of a community or sector are being heard³⁴

- Better financial performance is associated with a more diverse board, as well as improved governance through the discussion of different perspectives, so long as it is supported by constructive dialogue
- Diverse boards tend to display better understanding of their beneficiaries, and having more diverse networks are able to bring in diverse talent as well as generally being more open to change³⁶

The risk of ‘groupthink’

A challenge in the decision making process, within the boardroom, is ‘groupthink’ – the psychological behaviour of minimising conflicts and reaching a consensus decision.

Including the contributions of people with different skills, backgrounds and experiences creates solutions to problems from a greater range of perspectives. This also provides a more comprehensive oversight to the operations of the organisation and enhancement of the organisation’s sensitivity to a wider range of possible risks such as reputation and compliance risks.

Ref: © [Arts Council England 2017: How to create diverse boards - Culture Change Guide](#)

Tips and Tools for Leaders

[In the UK] It would be unlawful for a company to instruct an executive search firm to find a female non-executive director to improve the gender balance on the board, or to provide an all-women shortlist, as this would require potentially discriminating against better qualified men.

'Take particular care with criteria related to subjective, unspecified concepts such as "chemistry" or "fit", which may result in a board recruiting in its own image.'

A great set of questions to guide a board discussion on [Diversity by The National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(England\)](#)

© [2016 Equality and Human Rights Commission: 'How to improve Board diversity'](#)

Why Does Board Diversity Sometimes Fail?

Increasing the diversity of your board is not without its challenges. As already noted in the previous section, there are benefits of board diversity that cannot be realised without certain prerequisites. The following outlines some of the main reasons that board diversity can fail.

- **Failing to value or benefit from differences**

It is a mistake to prioritise agreeing and "getting along" above diversity of background, characteristics and experience. This can lead to reducing diversity and/or the value of inclusion.

- **Prioritising diversity above relevant skills and experience**

Arbitrarily filling diversity slots does not give positive results. It does not in fact increase the

representativeness of a board and can damage relationships with members of a community or sector from marginalised groups. While the skills needed to be on a board can be supported and developed, there should be a transparent process in place to do this from the start, rather than employing this kind of tokenism (see later in this chapter How to Create a Diverse Board)

- **Looking for recognition**

The right reasons should be in place for developing the diversity of your board and they should be evident. People will notice if diversity is being pursued for recognition purposes rather than in order to benefit from the contributions of people from different backgrounds and with different characteristics.³⁷

"Pet to threat"

A phenomena that happens when an organisation takes on-board a person who belongs to a marginalised group because it looks good for diversity, then, after this person gains confidence on the job, the board (or organisation) starts not liking what the new board member is saying or doing, and they prevent their voice from being heard or rejecting their input.

[Achieving and Retaining a Diverse Board \(Clare Leadership Workshop 2021\)](#)

- **Putting the board member from a marginalised group in charge of DEI&B exclusively**

This places an unacceptable pressure on the person in question to speak for the entirety of a perceived group without regard to the individual's own background and experience on the one hand, or to the diverse backgrounds and experiences that exist within a group on the other. Being expected to carry this weight is not empowering, but rather becomes emotionally

exhausting and leads to feelings of failure. This must be understood by all board members, and whoever takes the lead on such issues should be given the support they need, whether emotional, financial or in terms of time. Furthermore, while one board member may take the lead on DEI&B issues, decisions need to be made as a board. All board members must be engaged and accountable on these issues.³⁸

Cultural Leaders, observe!

Board's credibility is questionable when acting for a marginalised group without having members of that marginalised group on the board.

Achieving and Retaining a diverse board is a long-term process and an investment in cultural infrastructure. The board should plan and implement actions that ensure the availability of candidates (belonging to marginalised groups) for leadership positions.

[Raj Tulsiani \(for Arts Council England\)](#)

How to Create a Diverse Board

When taking steps towards diversifying your board, you may wish to consider the following suggestions:

- **Refresh your selection criteria to bring in diverse perspectives**

Make sure that the selection criteria you apply are relevant but not exclusive. The traditional experiences of board members, while valuable, are not the only valuable experiences.

- **Expand your search**

Try several different methods of reaching possible applicants, going beyond word of mouth with those closest in your network wherever possible. Try to reach out directly to individuals in communities that have not historically been represented on the board.³⁹

- **Develop a process for first-time board appointments**

Consider creating a support process for those who have not been on a board before, if they might bring in other knowledge and/or experiences that would contribute to your organisation's future. How might you support someone in this position? Is there the possibility of shadowing current board members or creating the chance for potential candidates to observe board meetings?⁴⁰

What is the Board's Responsibility towards DEI&B?

As the board is responsible for the strategic direction of an organisation, it is the responsibility of the board to ensure that DEI&B is embedded in that organisation's strategy. However it is also essential for the board to reflect on its own current situation, identifying and removing barriers both in terms of application to be a board member and also participation in the board on appointment. This means valuing different perspectives, experiences and skills.

In this vein, the UK's Charity Governance Code recommends that a board should look at:

- **The organisation's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion:**
 - » Ensuring that the board members' backgrounds and perspectives are diverse and represent the diversity of society
 - » Ensuring that the board recruitment process is inclusive
 - » Ensuring that all voices are equally heard in the boardroom.
 - » Ensuring the engagement of staff, volunteers, members, and other stakeholders in the decision making process.
- **Context-specific and realistic plans and targets:**
 - » Ensuring the development of the capacity of the board members in the topics of equality, diversity and inclusion through continuous training
 - » Ensuring that the board's culture, practices and behaviours are inclusive
 - » Observing and taking corrective actions on any power imbalances between board members
 - » Removing obstacles to people becoming board members
 - » Promoting inclusive behaviours and cultures to the organisation.
- **Performance monitoring and reporting**
 - » Regularly monitoring the organisation's equality, diversity and inclusion plans and targets.
 - » Publishing information on organisation's progress towards achieving its equality, diversity and inclusion plans and targets, and having plans in place to tackle any organisational or board inequalities and gaps that might be identified.⁴¹

2.4 RECRUITMENT

What is Diversity Hiring?

Diversity hiring is the concept of recruitment based on merit with systematic attention paid to the reduction of biases related to a person's characteristics or background (for example, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation,

ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status) as these are not relevant to performance.

Diversity hiring should not be understood to aim for diversity for the sake of diversity.⁴²

Why Adopt a Diversity Hiring Process?

The benefits of a diverse workforce speak for themselves. They include everything from improving an organisation's culture to its financial performance.⁴³

As a process, it reduces biases that may arise in finding candidates, analysing applications and shortlisting

candidates. It aims to counteract overlooking or accidentally discriminating against qualified persons from marginalised groups as well as dissuading such candidates from applying through recruitment advertisements or the application process.⁴⁴

What Can you Do to Recruit Diverse Talent?

Adopting a structured, strategic approach to recruitment will improve your organisation's capacity to attract and retain diverse talent.

This might include:

- Evaluating your current success at reaching, shortlisting and hiring diverse talent.
- Looking at how and where you advertise your posts.
- Instituting a process of DEI&B monitoring and evaluation at each stage of the application and recruitment process.
- Providing DEI&B monitoring forms for both candidates and those responsible for implementing the recruitment process. At least for candidates, keep the process anonymous. Candidates can provide valuable feedback, for instance, on barriers you might not have identified, while those implementing the process might see improvements to make or be in the position to see which advertisement avenues best reach those from marginalised groups.
- Using the information you gather to adapt your recruitment policies to remove bias from the shortlisting and selection process. Do this on an ongoing basis, monitor effects and be transparent about your progress (for

example through an annual report).

- Advertising posts, including freelance roles, using different communicating opportunities and methods, for example, through partnering with relevant educational institutions or local communities.
- Asking members of marginalised groups to read your job advertisement before publishing, to draw your attention to anything that might prevent people from applying or conversely, encourage them to do so.
- Highlighting opportunities to access training and development in your recruitment advertisements.
- Being transparent about your DEI&B efforts in your recruitment advertisements through a brief statement outlining your approach and aims.⁴⁵
- Looking for "cultural add" rather than "cultural fit", so that new starters develop the culture of the organisation rather than keeping it comfortable.

Your process for diversity hiring may look something like this⁴⁶:

1. Auditing your current hiring process in terms of diversity, identifying any barriers or discrepancies
2. Improving your outreach to potential candidates from marginalised groups. Consider:
 - » Language in your recruitment advertisements: Are you attracting candidates from marginalised groups to apply or are you dissuading them? For example, “masculine-type” words (such as “ambitious”, “dominate” or “challenging”) can discourage women from applying. Ask for insights from individuals from marginalised groups if you can.
 - » Representation of existing diversity: 67% of job seekers regard diversity as an important factor in their job search. What pictures or videos are you displaying on your website or social media?
 - » Flexibility: Options to work from home or of flexible work hours are more likely to attract candidates from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characteristics (see multiplexity in [Chapter 1.1 Models of Diversity](#)).
 - » Reach out to diverse contacts in your network: Personal contact and encouragement to apply can be an effective way of increasing the diversity of your organisation. It does not have to be directly from you either. Ask your existing network to encourage their contacts from different backgrounds and with different characteristics to apply.
3. Improving your initial selection process in terms of diversity: Criteria such as prior workplaces, educational institutions or personal connection can serve to decrease the diversity of candidates that make it to the second stage in the application process. If you have a problem at this stage, you can try the following:
 - » Pre-hire assessment: Are you looking for particular characteristics in the person who will take up the post you are advertising? Consider asking a short number of open-ended questions, for example, how they have dealt with tight timeframes for delivery, how they see their strengths/weaknesses in working in a team and so on.
 - » Anonymous hiring: This is an option that removes personal information from the process, which might lead to bias. Implemented in symphony orchestras from the 1970’s, auditions in which the jury was separated from the candidate by a screen were found to increase the probability of a woman passing the preliminary round by 50%.⁴⁷
4. Increasing diversity in the shortlisting process: Studies have shown that when the shortlist for a position contains only one candidate from a marginalised group, he or she will usually not be hired. Where at least two candidates on a shortlist are from a marginalised group, then it is much more likely for one among them to be hired (odds of 79 times greater for a female candidate and 194 times greater for a candidate from a minority).⁴⁸ Where capability is equal, be aware of biases like this and take the opportunity to increase diversity rather than remaining with the status quo.
5. Ongoing evaluation of diversity hiring: Not every strategy will work in every case. If you have not met your diversity hiring goals, take the time to evaluate what worked (or not) and to what extent. Adapt your process on the basis of the data you collect before and after any recruitment process.

Onboarding

Having developed your diversity hiring process, take the next step and ensure that the onboarding process has a focus on inclusion and belonging. Have a consistent process in place for the onboarding of new team members and take the opportunity to make clear your DEI&B strategy, policies and processes. Underscore the importance that you place on psychological safety (see [Chapter 1.3 Sustainable Culture Transformation](#)) and ensure that new team members are aware of how they can raise their voice, contribute to decision-making, bring problematic issues to the attention of the appropriate people and so on.

Consider starting a “buddy system” that pairs an existing team member with the new team member to help them adapt to their new environment and settle in. Supporting a peer relationship of this kind can have several benefits, including providing a safe first point of contact for the new team member for any issues that may arise whether small or large.⁴⁹

2.5 INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

Give First Chances - Hire Interns

“Internships are an essential part of the career ladder in many professions. They are part and parcel of a modern, flexible economy and are useful both for interns and for employers...where once they were an informal means of gaining practical insight into a particular career, today they are a rung on the ladder to success.”⁵⁰

Organisations nowadays need to first of all truly understand these words and then encourage internships by considering them as critical pathways for careers. The employers have to be more youth-friendly in their recruitment and try to hire interns and invest the needed time and energy as much as they can, as it is indisputably a win-win experience:

1. Organisation’s stakeholders can test future potential employees, improve the organisation’s productivity by engaging motivated individuals who bring fresh thinking, innovative ideas and new perspectives;
2. Interns can test their career opportunities (they ask themselves: ‘Do I like the internship or not?’, even if it’s a negative response, it’s still a benefit - in these kinds of questions lies in fact the beauty of internships because interns also learn who they are and they go forward to understand who they want to be), they augment their work experience, hone important work skills, and establish useful connections and contacts.

Tips for Employers Offering Internship

- Make sure you have concrete tasks for interns to perform and the time to mentor them.
- Be flexible. Each person’s needs and existing commitments will have an impact on how they will be able to contribute. Support everyone in contributing to the best of their ability.
- Consider making internships optionally online if this is authorised in your country - this will take some of the barriers out of the way for those who do not have enough savings/support to move or who have commitments in a particular location (e.g. if they are a carer for someone) that restricts their ability to move. This is especially important at an international scale. If they require technical equipment, purchase or rent it for them. Reducing barriers should not be understood as a replacement for financial remuneration, but rather a general reduction in barriers to access to internship experiences.
- Offer mentorship - ongoing. Stay in touch after the internship is over.

Focus on Intern Diversity

It's likewise important that organisations put in action inclusion efforts and hire diverse interns-workforce. The diverse representation of society has to be present also in internship offers because it:

- Brings better work environments, fresh ideas, and new ways of looking at old problems.
- Helps productivity and creativity.
- Builds an inclusive organisation culture.
- Attracts a wider number of future candidates.

Moreover, promoting diversity in internships means thinking strategically about the issues facing the organisation's sector and how to address them. One of the keys to diversity hiring is to make it a prominent part of your overall organisational identity.

'Race, ethnicity, and sex are common factors in diversity initiatives, but it is also important to consider sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and disability when striving towards inclusion because they are often overlooked. As employers strive towards full inclusion in the workplace, they

should incorporate a comprehensive definition of diversity that applies to all hiring practices, including internship programs.⁵¹

Here are some steps to take into account in order to take inclusion seriously:

- Focus your messaging on diversity: use the website and social media networks to tell the story of diversity at your organisation.
- Develop a more diverse internship offer, make sure no one is left behind (it's important that this experience is not just discussed, but also lived).
- Establish an organisation culture where differences are acknowledged and valued.

Building all these values will contribute to your organisation's image and your interns can be powerful influencers when it comes to the perceptions others have about your organisation: If your interns are happy with your organisation's commitment to cultural diversity, they will let others know (their role as an 'ambassador').

Virtual Internships: Pros & Cons

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic many internships switched to virtual ones and interns were obliged to work from their homes. These kinds of internship experiences brought both positive and negative aspects.

Pros:

- There are less constraints and barriers: Interns don't need to move (no travel nor housing expenses) and have the possibility of carrying out the internship from whatever their home country is - this entails a major availability and convenience to young people.
- Virtual internships can be more inclusive and make the environment less "cliquey", whereby fixed, exclusive groups are formed that are not welcoming to all. Instead, there is more interaction between students interning in different cities for the same organisation.
- Offering a virtual platform allows employers to offer more spaces in terms of diversity.
- The possibility of blended internships is going forward in the future: a combination of face-to-face and on-distance on-the-job learning opportunities.

Cons:

- The physical human connection is not entirely replaceable: the experience of a face-to-face relationship cannot be fully replicated online.
- Interns don't see directly how the organisation really functions, how it is structured and how the office itself looks (for many interns, it can be the first "work" experience, so they do not get to experience a daily routine of going to office).
- If the organisation is based in a country different from the intern's residence, they do not get the full experience of going abroad, exploring the new culture, and being inserted in a new society in which they are obliged to speak mostly the language of that country. In this case, interns also do not get out of their comfort zone and do not have to try to adapt to a new environment which would be a good practice for their personal development.
- There is a lower potential for networking and making new contacts.

Involving Volunteers in your Organisation

Involving volunteers can add great value to what your organisation does and support you to achieve your mission and strategic objectives.

Engaging volunteers can bring several more benefits like:

- Involve a more diverse range of skills, experience, and knowledge.
- Reach more of your beneficiaries.
- Raise awareness about your organisation, its profile, and what you do.
- Build relationships within the community in which you work and contribute to supporting others in your community.
- By providing volunteering opportunities you provide opportunities for social inclusion, skills development, and potential routes to employment (there is also evidence that volunteering can help to improve people's health and wellbeing).
- Deliver your service or projects in a more effective and efficient way which can help to save money and resources.

You might consider advertising positions with the [European Solidarity Corps](#), managed by the European Commission, which supports international volunteering and traineeships.

The UK's National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has collected a number of [useful resources](#)⁵² bringing together research and evidence that demonstrates the impact volunteers can have for organisations and the community.

What are Volunteering Internships?

Some organisations describe some volunteer roles as internships as they have found it valuable to offer volunteering opportunities with a stronger skill-development focus (the description of a position as an 'internship' also turns out to be more attractive for volunteers). Below you can find some key principles you may want to bear in mind when offering volunteering internships:

- Be clear what the role is and its purpose before recruiting.
- Ensure that a volunteer internship is a genuine volunteering opportunity.
- Make sure volunteering opportunities are genuinely inclusive and accessible.
- Support volunteer interns in accordance with good practice standards in volunteer management.
- Ensure that volunteer intern positions do not undermine fair recruitment procedures.
- Provide opportunities for evaluation and regular feedback.
- Recognise the contribution of volunteer interns.

Why is it Important to Pay Interns?

'Paying interns is not only the right thing to do, but it also helps to widen access to internships more generally and increase the pool of talent that employers can draw from.'⁵³

When interns are paid, their loyalty increases as well as their motivation. Different countries have different legal statuses concerning the payment of internships. Here are some examples:

France: The payment of interns is obligatory when they are hosted by the organisation for more than 2 months: the equivalent of 44 days at 7 hours per day, or from the 309th hour, during the same school or university year, even if their presence is not continuous. Below this duration, the payment is optional. In order to calculate how much you need to pay your intern, have a look at it [here](#).

Germany: Internships in Germany may be offered on an unpaid basis if they are no longer than three months in length. Unpaid internships may run longer than three months only if they are a compulsory part of a program of study. Internships running for longer than three months and not part of a study program must be paid at the national minimum wage for their entire length. For more information, check [here](#).

Italy: In Italian law, there is a difference between a curricular and extracurricular internship. The first one is not paid, as it aims at integrating the studies with work experience, while the second one grants a compensation (usually not lower than 300 euros/month, but it could be even higher, depending on different regions of the country). For more information, check the single websites (section job/internships) of the Italian regions (for example the one of the region of Veneto is the following [here](#)).

Lithuania: "Study or voluntary practice" is part of a study process in which students work in an organisation according to their specialty. According to Lithuanian law, the term of the contract may not exceed 2 months per year, and a person may enter into a voluntary practice contract no more than 3 times. A person can do no more than one voluntary placement contract at the same time. Outside of these conditions, the intern should be paid. The minimum wage in Lithuania is approximately €290. (more information [here](#))

Romania: Under Romanian law, internships may not exceed 720 hours within six consecutive months. This may not exceed 40 hours/week (30 hours/week and six hours/day for interns under the age of 18). The intern has the right to remuneration of at least 50% of the legal minimum gross salary, pro rata to the number of hours worked. Details on the 2018 law can be found [here](#).

United Kingdom: An organisation should pay an individual undertaking an internship placement the National Minimum Wage (there are currently three age-based NMW rates - 21 years and over, 18-20 inclusive, and under 18 - which are updated every year and are available at www.gov.uk). Furthermore, any travel costs incurred while attending external meetings/events should be paid for by the organisation providing the internship.

Available funding is often tight for cultural organisations, but you might want to consider what opportunities you have as an organisation to find resources and funds for paying internships (when applying, for example, for network funding, projects, and so on.) so you can allocate the budget for it in advance. Moreover, there are some possibilities of obtaining a grant for internships such as the well-known Erasmus+ internship system that supports students in carrying out a traineeship abroad.

In certain parts of the cultural and creative sectors, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs scheme may also represent an opportunity to support the progress of emerging talent within the field.⁵⁴

To conclude, it's critical to dedicate time, energy and patience when introducing internships into your organisation and not to forget that interns and volunteers are 'today's young people, but tomorrow's workforce'⁵⁵ who will be the leaders in the sector in future.

2.6 STAFF SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Practising inclusive employment is the foundation of a good relationship with your team members. The elements that make up inclusive employment in any one case may vary from person to person, but a working definition is as follows:

“Inclusive employment refers to all activities which enable an individual to gain access to decent remunerated work.”⁵⁶

The world of work has been changing - and continues to change more and more rapidly. This demands versatility of employees and employers alike, and especially continued skills development. Developing skills and getting

Mentorship

Mentorships have the capacity to help team members acquire new skills, network and advance their careers through gaining knowledge from a more experienced person in their field. For small organisations, this does not necessarily mean someone within the organisation. It could be a more senior member of another organisation in the same/a similar field. Equally, a mentor could be found in the board of an organisation or in the leadership of member organisations of an association.

Mentoring also has a role in DEI&B issues, by demonstrating the organisation's support for and belief in the potential of team members from marginalised groups, particularly if they have not had access to certain opportunities or support in the past.

Successful mentoring relies on a strong mentor-mentee relationship. The stronger the connection between the mentor and mentee, the more each will get from the experience. Some ways to build a good mentor-mentee relationship are listed below.⁵⁸

new experiences opens up new career possibilities and helps to build self-confidence and independence, as well as supporting career progression. Ongoing support for employees therefore lies not only in facilitating the transition into employment but also in identifying opportunities for personal career development.⁵⁷

There are various means to support your team members and to make your organisation more inclusive. A number of methods to consider are outlined below. It is also worth consulting [Chapter 1.3 Sustainable Culture Transformation](#) and [Chapter 2.8 Inclusion Training](#).

1. The mentor and the mentee should establish goals for the mentorship together. A priority is respect for each other's work and time, but there should also be a clearly defined plan setting out the aims and intentions of the internship. One model for this is the SMART model. Setting goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-sensitive (SMART) will help both parties gain the most possible from the process.
2. The mentee should understand and have an interest in the mentor's work. The mentorship is an opportunity to ask questions, to be actively involved in their current work and to communicate on a regular basis. This should involve a regular check-in (whether by Zoom or similar platforms, email, messages, phone or in person). A consistent schedule is beneficial to both parties. This also helps set boundaries, which help create an atmosphere of mutual respect.
3. Be appreciative. The mentee has much to gain from a mentorship and it is important to communicate what is valuable to them about it. This goes both ways, however, and where a mentee can give back to their mentor by helping them learn something new, this should be encouraged. A mentorship relationship ought to be a two-way street. Ensuring it meets this objective lays the foundation for an ongoing mutually beneficial relationship.

Case Study: Sync Leadership

Sync Leadership is a programme that had its inception in 2008. It was set out to develop deaf and disabled leadership in arts and culture. Co-founders Jo Verrent and Sarah Pickthall created it as a programme to “break the glass ceiling”. With funding from the Cultural Leadership programme, Sync began exploring the intersection between coaching and developing leadership from a deaf and disabled perspective. Supported by Arts Councils and British Council offices in different countries to deliver face-to-face programmes, they worked with dozens of deaf and disabled leaders at varying points in their careers. The programmes support participants to forge ahead, considering and shaping their ideas, and confronting the complexity of barriers they face in bespoke Sync collaborative learning environments.⁵⁹

Remote Work

The possibility to engage in work remotely opens up opportunities to those who are unable to move for a job or commute.

This may be due to commitments such as caring for a relative or children, the expenses of changing location, physical ability or other reasons. A remote role empowers them to participate in relevant work while the organisation gains access to a talent pool that is inclusive of more groups who are generally underrepresented in the workforce. Remote working does not however guarantee a more diverse team and while not insurmountable, steps would need to be taken to ensure that inclusion and belonging are effectively managed in this working style.⁶⁰

2.7 INCLUSIVE MEETINGS

Ensuring your organisation is conducting inclusive meetings is not as easy as it seems, but has a significant impact on creating an inclusive culture. This culture may be ongoing (as would be the case for team meetings) or temporary (where participants from different organisations come together for a one-off meeting or series of meetings). In both cases, attention should be paid to the three phases: before, during and after.

Before the Meeting

Enhancing the inclusivity of your meetings starts before the meeting has begun and forms a key part of developing an inclusive culture (see [Chapter 1.3](#)). Define clearly what inclusion looks like in meetings and follow through on implementation, holding yourself and others accountable for doing so.

Structural behaviours, like a pre-meeting email from the chair inviting people to attend “ready to share and ready to listen” and sharing the agenda ahead of time, send a positive signal before participants have even reached the room. Psychological safety cannot be developed overnight, but in time this will empower participants to contribute and to disagree without fearing recriminations.

An important part of DEI&B rests on bringing in diverse opinions and sharing decision-making. Does your list of participants achieve this?⁶¹

The practice of inclusive meetings can take extra time in planning and in the meeting itself, but it also comes with considerable benefits, most notably creating a psychologically safe environment where marginalised voices can be raised and respected.

Ensure that you are aware of the accessibility needs or dietary needs of participants by offering people the opportunity to provide this information. This may include a need for accessible documents (see [Chapter 4](#)) or accessible room requirements (see [Chapter 5](#)). For example, for those with reduced mobility, ensure that their passage into the building to the meeting room is clear, as well as sufficient space in the meeting room itself, and be aware of the location of accessible toilets.

If the meeting is long, ensure that appropriate breaks have been scheduled on the agenda, as well as sufficient time for questions and discussion.⁶²

During the Meeting

Welcome each individual to the meeting as they come in by name. Inclusive meeting principles should be made clear up front, so that everyone is aware of how to behave in this environment. These might include:

- Everyone has a right to ask for whatever they need in order to contribute to the meeting — to fully express themselves and to add to the discussion
- Devote your full attention to each person who speaks and do not interrupt
- Everyone can speak openly without fear of retribution
- You can disagree! But do it politely (try: acknowledging the validity of the other person's point before you make your own)
- Pay attention to what you say and also how you say it
- Everyone is treated with respect⁶³

You can also empower people to defend themselves by outlining the following:

If you feel uncomfortable with the way someone else has behaved:

- You can ask their permission to politely suggest a different way of behaving (e.g. May I ask you something? May I tell you something?)
- You can draw it to the attention of the chair during or after the meeting (or, if online: write a note to the chair in the chat)
- Nominate another meeting participant to take any comments about the behaviour of the chair⁶⁴

If appropriate, you may wish to start with a brief ice-breaker activity that allows everyone in the meeting to speak and get to know each other.

The chair is in the position to manage anyone who interrupts or dominates the conversation. In these cases, you can interject politely and pass the dialogue back to the individual who was speaking or to the group. Ask the person who was interrupted to finish their thought or state your desire to hear more of what they were saying.⁶⁵

If you have one or more participants with a visual impairment, be prepared to describe yourself and any visual materials that you are using (for example, slideshow presentations). If you have one or more participants with a hearing impairment who will be relying on lip-reading, ensure that you are facing them as you speak and that the lighting is adequate. Ensure that participants are following the presentation and conversation and be ready to repeat as necessary.⁶⁶

After the Meeting

After the meeting it is important to follow up by thanking participants for their attendance. You may also want to ask for their feedback, especially for one-off meetings.⁶⁷

Provide materials presented in the meeting for participants to refer to, ensuring that they are in an accessible format (see [Chapter 4](#)).

Online Meetings

Preparing meetings in advance is important not only when participants meet in person, but also when the meetings are online. The corona pandemic revealed the barriers that exist when it is impossible to meet in person, but also opportunities to include more people.

To aid you in the development of inclusive online meetings, we refer to the recommendations of RespectAbility, a US-based, diverse, disability-led nonprofit that works to create systemic change in how society views and values people with disabilities.⁶⁸ Some of these may also be relevant to or serve as inspiration for meetings being held in person.

1. Send an invitation to all the participants (while email invitations may have multiple graphical elements, ensure that images and logos have alt text – image descriptions – for people who are blind and use screen readers. It is best practice to have an option for someone to click through to a plain text version of the invite for individuals with a variety of disabilities)
2. Ensure accessible documents (when you use any documents or a presentation for your online event, distribute it to your attendees in advance. That way, attendees who are blind or have low vision can use a screen reader software to familiarise themselves with the materials being presented)
3. Ensuring everyone can participate including those who are blind, have cognitive disabilities and/or are nonverbal (during events where multiple people are speaking), the best practice is for each person to say their name every time they begin speaking. This helps people with a variety of disabilities, including people who are blind or have low vision, as well as individuals with cognitive disabilities
4. Use Live Captioning or ASL Interpreters (the gold standard of captioning is communication access realtime translation or CART, where a live transcriber types what is spoken in real time. Live captioning may work well for forward-facing events, for meetings and events where participants are actively engaged in interactive discussions, some Deaf/Hard of Hearing individuals would prefer having an ASL interpreter over live captioning in order to ensure their active participation)
5. After the event it will be important to ensure accessible videos for websites and social media. If you record your event and plan on sharing the video, it is crucial that you have accurate caption

Language

Another important point to take in consideration is the language that we use. Language is a cultural tool and as such has varied uses and meanings in different contexts and by different peoples. When your aim is to organise an inclusive meeting, it is necessary to use language in such a way as to ensure that the audience feel included and never judged. For more on this issue, see [Chapter 4.1 Inclusive Language](#).

In meetings with participants from different countries language may be an extra barrier. Make sure everyone is able to understand and express themselves in the language used. Native speakers should be especially aware of these language barriers and adjust their manner of speaking accordingly. This would entail speaking slower, avoiding complex wording and checking if they are being understood.

International meetings may also raise other issues of language. Terms used for marginalised groups in one country may sound, for example, racist or ableist in others. Starting with an inventory round asking participants how they would like to be addressed and which terms are current in their own language can take away a lot of frustration. It also serves to avoid confrontation, which can damage the group feeling of psychological safety and cause participants to hold back from speaking up.

2.8 INCLUSION TRAINING

More diverse and inclusive governance needs to be accompanied with training to assist employers, employees, board members, association members and especially new people in these roles in taking this journey. Training is particularly relevant in onboarding of new individuals as a form of introduction to the organisation, its culture and people.

We need to understand that each person has many identities, some immediately visible and others not; that each person may have a form of privilege that others do not and indeed may have privilege in some areas of their lives but not in others; and that each person will have biases, even if they are not conscious of them, with potential negative impacts.

Working together in awareness of this backdrop is key to creating communal agreements that allow each individual in a group to have a common understanding on things such as respect, confidentiality and listening. These agreements will enable a common ground for discussion between the group members and to understand their various realities.

Below you will find a few training examples that you could offer to your team and board members, and perhaps adapt for use with your association members, if you have them. These exercises will help you raise awareness on inclusion topics, as well as providing tips on how to react when facing situations of exclusion, discrimination or harassment.

For more training tools and exercises, you can turn to the companion chapter of the [Annotated Bibliography on Inclusion](#).⁶⁹

Understanding Identity

One form of training relates to the need to be conscious of people's many overlapping identities, providing an insight into the different forms of oppression.

Get Closer to Somebody's Personal Experience

This activity consists in having people sharing insights on their names and revealing some information on their background. This activity can be used for participants not knowing each other very much yet.

"Write out your fullest name and tell your story. On the back of the piece of paper write the top three identities you feel closest to. The facilitator encourages participants to go around the circle to share any meanings, significance, culture, significant ancestors and the top three identities they hold dearest. Everyone will have a chance to share and be heard by the group."

Other activities from this Toolkit can be used to dive deeper into understanding the realities of specific identities often receiving a form of repression such as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity etc.

Ref: © [Introduction Activity from the Diversity Toolkit from MSW@USC](#)

Confronting Systems of Power

There are established norms that exist to allow a particular group of people to decide which identities, characteristics or skills are superior to others, thereby creating an asymmetric system of power. In this context, some people will hold power over others and judge what actions are permitted or not, when and in what way.

It is therefore important to confront the systems of power and the privileges associated with them in order to avoid this imbalance of power being internalised and replicated in your organisation.

Assess Situations in your Daily Life, at Work and/or in your Social Life

One activity that can be done to understand and underline these unequal powers between people will be to assess situations in your daily life, at work and/or in your social life, where privilege and power lies and are not acknowledged as such. Indeed, somebody in a leading position might have a certain amount of responsibilities over other people but this should have nothing to do with its race, gender, etc. By looking at all your routine through new lenses, you might feel that privilege is being unrightly accorded to some and not others and by confronting this issue, it could be a starting point to deconstruct privilege and power.

Further reading and exercise can be found in the White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack from Peggy McIntosh.

Ref: [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack for The National SEED Project](#)

Decoding Emotions and Strengthening Emotional Awareness

Creating a safe environment of respect and listening can be achieved through better emotional awareness. Understanding how you and those around you express

their emotions will enable you to better listen to verbal and non-verbal cues, to be more aware of your environment and to develop deeper empathy.

Identifying False Beliefs

One exercise can be used to create a better perception of emotions and how important they are in human relationships. This activity aims to give knowledge on problematic emotional states and on the core beliefs and consequences related to each emotion.

“For the purpose of this exercise, choose one particular difficult emotion to work with. Perhaps choose an emotional state you are struggling with at the moment; for instance, you might be feeling anxious about an upcoming event, or regretful about a recent transgression. Write down the emotion you have chosen to work with in the center of the person outlined in the Core Beliefs About Emotions worksheet (Appendix A). [...] Read through the below list of common false beliefs about emotions and see which resonate most with you. [...] Now let’s look at what happens as a consequence of holding these beliefs about emotions.”

Acquiring knowledge on your own and others’ emotions, how they are perceived and how you can better be in control of them will be key to create a safe space, where all people feel listened to, can receive feedback and criticism positively. Other exercises to train on this can be found on the Positive Psychology website and handbook.

Ref: © [Emotions from the Emotional Intelligence Exercises of the Positive Psychology](#)

Responding to Harassment

Disrespect and a hostile environment at work can also lead to harassment, whether verbally or physically. Harassment is often used in a position of seen superiority and subordination and can target people because of their age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. For more on the topic of sexual harassment, you can refer to the [SHIFT Gender and Power-Relations Publication](#).

Most people do not intuitively know how to deal with situations of harassment, whether they are the target of harassment, a bystander or the person who has shown disrespect. The Hollaback! website⁷⁰ offers many good practice examples and training tips on how to react in uncomfortable situations, a few of which we present here.

- **As the person who was disrespected:**
an important step will be to “take back your power” by talking to the person who harassed you. In order to prepare for this difficult and distressing conversation, it is advised to create a supporting team on a personal and work level, who will be ready to listen, help you to practice what you will say, check in with you, attend the conversation if needed and be willing to go further if required. Then talking to the person who was disrespectful with you is another key point, by describing what happened to you, how it made you feel and what you would like the next steps to be. A follow-up conversation can also be needed to give accountability to the person who harassed you. This will help you to create healing and closure.
- **As a bystander to harassment:**
Hollaback! has developed a 5 D strategy to take when witnessing a situation of harassment and violence: Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay and Direct. You can choose to try to de-escalate the situation by interrupting it, or by trying to get help from somebody else. It can also be of use to film or make pictures of the event, as well as by staying with the person after the attack in order to check with them. Finally if you feel safe, you can also decide to speak about the harassment, name the situation and confront the harasser.

- **As a person who was disrespectful:**
You might find yourself in a situation, where you have been disrespectful to somebody else. A few steps might help you to avoid this from happening again and give the opportunity to the victim to move on. It will be important to recognise how you feel. Emotions such as anger or shame might emerge and a feeling that your person as a whole is being questioned. Recognising the hurtful actions will give you the opportunity to show that you are a work-in-progress and that you care for others. Another key point will be to put yourself in the person’s shoes and to listen to what this person has to say, being curious to understand how they were hurt will help you to prevent doing it again. In order to create healing, apologising and commitment to change will also be crucial.

Building a more diverse and inclusive organisation will take time and in order to avoid overwhelming people and thereby ensure that they are committed to the process, it is best to first take on one aspect to focus on. The most important step is to embark on the journey.

Once you and your team see the benefits that come with having an organisation where DEI&B is at the core of daily work, you will only want to explore further training options to improve yourselves further.

The Gamified Workshop Toolkit: Values of Solidarity

The toolkit has been created for teams, who have just started their collaboration. It applies especially in the cultural and creative sectors but can also be relevant for other fields. It can be used to promote collaborative communication and to develop new mindsets regarding solidarity. Participants will be encouraged to express what values matter for them in their collaboration as well as to understand what is important for their colleagues. Through its different sets of cards, participants will be able to express their feelings but also learn how they and their colleagues deal with conflicting situations.

Ref: [Reshape Network Website](#)

2.9 INCLUSION AND YOUR NETWORK

A network's strength lies in connecting worlds, and the network radiates when this happens.⁷¹

This chapter will look at a set of considerations related to inclusion and diversity in non-profit organisations, with a special focus on cultural networks.

Our networks are often a reflection of the European/international cultural sector, where marginalised individuals are still underrepresented, have restricted cultural participation and can be the subject of discrimination.

How can your network serve the ideal of an inclusive environment that welcomes and thrives on difference? How can you make the membership of your organisation a safe space to celebrate a diversity of identities, activities and ideas?

At the outset, it is clear that diversity and inclusion are unlikely to happen without proactive attention. Let us also face another truth: there is no one right way or one-size-fits-all method for DE&I. DEI&B initiatives may have different effects across various marginalised groups thus, broad initiatives oriented to target every marginalised group may be ineffective.

The most effective practices are those that establish organisational responsibility, for example, affirmative action plans (explained in the next section), diversity task forces, and diversity training and mentoring.

As a membership association, a network is made up of either individual or organisational members or a mix of both. However, a network's constituency goes way beyond its direct membership and often extends to the entire ecosystem of a given field.

The success of DEI&B is very complex, depending on a variety of factors like the structure of the network and whether or not the network leaders are willing to give the time to allow the initiatives to succeed. Furthermore, cultural diversity does not look the same in every country. Still, a sustainable inclusion process starts from within, and we must be prepared to examine critically who holds the power within our networks and to identify pathways to reform.

Constituencies that Define your DEI&B Direction

- The **population** from which your membership is drawn can account for the presence or absence of different kinds of diversity, as well as the presence or absence of actions and initiatives to enhance diversity. Some fields are easier to get into than others. Some networks will be naturally geographically diverse due to their international nature, but may not be socioeconomically diverse.
- **Members of your network** can be at the root of a lack of emphasis on DEI&B, as they may not consider it relevant to them or a priority. Some older members may resist suggestions from new recruits because of a “this is the way it has always been” mindset. If newer members only learn from older members, inertia may set in. Finally, longstanding members may value your network as a resource that they control, that gives them a competitive edge in their work and leads them to try to keep the network’s doors closed to “outsiders”. Moreover, if you are a professional association that draws members from a pool populated by other organisations (for example, schools that train professionals), your diversity will depend directly on the diversity of these organisations.
- **Leadership.** The network’s elected and volunteer leaders influence the effort put into DEI&B. Perhaps they are satisfied with the current level of effort, perhaps they think that effort should only be expended for issues directly impacting the entire membership, or perhaps they see a strong need for increased diversity in the network.
- **Staff**, including the executive director can influence the level of DEI&B effort. An executive director can have a strong agenda-promoting role, either slowing down or pushing forward DEI&B initiatives.
- **Affinity groups** (inside and outside the network), namely groups that are established for individuals sharing a particular characteristic or background. Your network may build relationships with existing groups to inform its DEI&B process or alternatively help establish them in your sector. It is critical that the power lies with the individuals from the marginalised group. Be cautious of overstepping through excessive direction or advice, as being seen to dominate the affinity group or its creation will lose goodwill, participation and trust. Moreover, if members of an affinity group feel that they are becoming over-extended and burnt out, this can have a negative impact on your network’s capacity to advance DEI&B issues. Sensitivity and support are vital. (See also [Chapter 1.5 The Role of the Sector](#))
- **DEI&B Committees** can be standing committees or ad hoc task forces that show the network’s intention to address DEI&B issues. They may make far-reaching decisions to challenge the organisation in a positive way and have the authority to implement these. To avoid stagnation, ensure that the committee’s membership has term limits so that new members can generate new ideas. The committee should work based on agreed goals that are focused and attainable.⁷²

Barriers to Advancing DEI&B in Your Network

- **Competing Goals/Mission:** DEI&B may lose out in a conflict with multiple network goals (pressing challenges, tough economy, need to weigh costs of various actions)
 - » Prepare strong arguments for prioritising DEI&B.
- **Disagreements:** people may have strong feelings about DEI&B and there may be difficult conversations which display disagreements what DEI&B is all about or should be about
 - » Be ready for difficult conversations and listen actively to different perspectives.
- **Cliques:** competition among different diversity claims; fear that doing something for one group would be a disservice to others.
 - » Be transparent about what you are doing and why.⁷³

What Works and What Doesn't

Adopt a Step-by-Step Approach

- Design initiatives that are worthwhile to those they are intended to serve
- Suggestions:
 - » involve individuals from the marginalised group in question from the beginning – then listen to them
 - » don't assume what is needed, ask
 - » don't add up an excessive number of activities that require a lot of time and effort from your target group – be respectful of their time
 - » encourage feedback from participants (especially if leadership is considering ending a particular DEI&B initiative)

One-Size Does Not Fit All

- Attracting diverse constituencies requires catering to a diverse set of needs, as they may look for different benefits. This could be achieved through:
 - » special membership categories for members working in specific subfields
 - » task forces to try to understand how the needs of underrepresented groups could be met by the network
 - » focus groups to challenge the network's status quo, ideally welcoming individuals from in and outside your network. Different contexts can open up new ways of seeing things and addressing challenges⁷⁴

Example: Cards for inclusion

In 2017, the UK-based Unlimited programme launched a card game to help develop a positive, solution-focused attitude to access for people with disabilities. The aim was to create a tool that sparked conversations and changed mindsets, and that could resonate internationally. With regard to international reach, language was kept to a minimum, and illustrations played a key part in the information on the cards. The initiators realised that translating the minimal text wasn't enough since cultural reference points need amending too for some contexts. This led to the creation of new sets of cards by local artists, for example in Taiwan, to be relevant to the Chinese-speaking world.

If the content had remained rooted in Western aesthetic, the concepts of inclusion it raised were easier to dismiss and the whole project would have failed.

The Importance of the Board

Powerful groups in a network can make or break any DEI&B initiative through their control over decisions about resources and the network's direction. The same is true for DEI&B initiatives, and at any stage in the design or implementation process. Term limits can be key in this respect to allow for the will for necessary change to arrive.

Diversity in a network's board is a strong indicator for better decision-making. Simultaneously, representation of people from marginalised groups on the board can inspire trust and encourage potential members from the same or similar groups to join.

Strategically improving board diversity is a visible way to enhance your network's credibility on DEI&B issues. (See also [Chapter 2.3 on Diversifying the Board](#))

Adopt a Long-Term Perspective

Integrating DEI&B into all aspects of a network's operations helps lay the groundwork for future advances.

- Anticipate and accept that DEI&B initiatives can take time to bear fruit and sometimes the results are not readily apparent. Allow time for learning and improvement and cultivate continued engagement in your network.
- Helping younger members learn the skills and knowledge they need for leadership will require dedication and patience. Creating space for youth leadership, for example through a youth committee, can lead to long-term change in an organisation.
- Do not assume that one-off budget allocations will lead to successful DEI&B outcomes. DEI&B work deserves a long-term, strategic approach.

An ongoing focus on DEI&B necessitates a degree of staff leadership as term limits naturally mean that members will have shorter periods in leadership positions. Staff leaders, however, are under pressures for performance in other domains, so clarity about expectations and accountability as well as sustained support is very important. With DEI&B policies and processes put in place, evaluating progress on DEI&B can become a habit that underpins a sustained commitment to diversity as a core value.⁷⁵

Assign Responsibility

Defusing responsibility to everyone leads to no one feeling responsible. Transparency and accountability to the membership are key to any DEI&B process.

Responsibility could lie with one or a combination of:

- Executive Director
- Another member of staff/board member (DEI&B champion)
- DEI&B Committee

See also [Chapter 2.1 DEI&B Statements, Strategies and Plans](#) for more on DEI&B champions and committees.

Make your Organisation Accessible

Be sensitive to the economic inequality of your members:

- Differentiated membership fees
- Provide travel and accommodation grants
- A 'taxi fund' to travel from one venue to another could make all the difference as to whether some persons can attend and take part in meetings and events
- Organise network meetings in diverse geographical regions, in big cities and smaller towns (you will need to balance transport access issues; for more on this, see the [SHIFT resources on Environmental Sustainability](#))

For your events:

- Take into account accessibility needs, both for physical and mental needs. For example, knowing there is someone to go to in case of heightened anxiety or mental health shifts allows some people to more readily engage with an event and have a safety net if they need it (see also [Chapter 5.2 Making Physical Events Accessible](#)).
- Explicitly invite cultural professionals from diverse backgrounds and with diverse characteristics to attend your network events and take the opportunity to get to know each other (see also [Chapter 5.1 Making Events Inclusive](#)).
- Ask yourself: Who is not in the room? And why?⁷⁶

Provide free access to your publications, to both members and non-members of the network. Be mindful of adapting your publications for people with visual impairments (for more on this see [Chapter 4 Making communications more Inclusive](#)).

Developing skills and practice for better embedding access and inclusion into your ways of working does not come overnight. It requires training, notably for the staff of your network, who need to be responsive to questions of access and inclusion, as they are often the ones to be dealing directly with members and potential members.

Embrace Diversity at the Core of the Power Structure

Inclusion is about sharing and giving away power. This means that someone needs to step back from power and make room for individuals from marginalised groups to raise their voice in decision-making and have their contributions valued and implemented. Give agency!

The Leader in the Network

Any network is eventually made up of individuals (who may represent organisational members) so your network's ability to become more inclusive always has a personal aspect. Consider that every person is a set of multiple identities (age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other statuses).

Realising your own privileges and prejudices is the first step to begin an inclusion process, opening up for a conversation with “the others” is the next one.

- See the human being behind the label and prejudices
- Embrace people's multiple identities (intersectionality, see Embracing Complexity under [Chapter 1.1 Models of Diversity](#)) in order to transform your network from within and make it truly inclusive spaces for collaboration
- Understand yourself (and others) as a work in progress
- Strive to understand how you and “the other” are alike and how you differ, how you both bring, through your varied experiences and understandings, a widening and deepening view to your network

Be inspired by participatory art practices, which use the principles of cultural democracy and open decision-making, giving agency to participants and embracing their (artistic) choices.⁷⁷

What is true for cultural venues, is true for networks: if you want to see new people coming to your place, you have to take the risk and offer content that resonates with them, hence the need to co-create with them.

Certainly, this may feel like a risk to challenge the organisational norms of our networks, but if what is at stake is the genuine and sustainable inclusiveness of your organisation, it is worth the effort.

Be aware of the effect of perceptions, stereotypes, points of view, assumptions, experiences and cultural narratives have on the people with whom you work and on the work you do. Push back the temptation to be drawn to those seemingly “like” you, thereby excluding “others” who could challenge and enrich your perspective and your narratives (see [Chapter 1.2 Identifying and Mitigating Unconscious Bias](#)).

As leaders of cultural networks, we can take inspiration from artists, who have the space to deconstruct our own assumptions and open ourselves up to a larger world view, one that actively embraces ideas, however foreign or other.

“If we can hold our defensive reactions at bay and embrace our curiosity, we have the potential to generate work and community beyond the social and political limitations of the dominant paradigms and identities under which we live.” (Dianne K. Webb)

As leaders, not only do we have the responsibility to be open and respectful of the diverse people and identities in the network but also to create a safe space for all collaborators. Many leaders might be unaware when a particular person among the membership feels isolated or unable to question the leaders’ decision or process due to their unique point of view or experience.

There is no harm in admitting that you are aware that you may omit, miscommunicate, misstate something that demonstrates your ignorance and that this can be challenging or even hurtful to a network member:

A Safe Space for Members to Advance on DEI&B

Create safe spaces for your organisational members to explore and discuss what DEI&B would look like for their own organisation. This might involve the following points:

- Name and acknowledge barriers that exist, identifying them clearly in order for each organisation to stop reflecting the inequalities that exist in society, where some groups have to struggle more than others at different stages of their careers.
- Ask members some open-ended questions. Listen to and reflect on the answers from each person:
 - » What are the diversities already present among us? Which are visible and which might not be visible?
 - » How do we make the space safe for everyone?
 - » How do we hold space for challenges to dominant assumptions or ideas?
 - » What are the stereotypes we hold around any given identity? How can they be challenged?
 - » Are we in the habit of asking people with a particular identity to speak about their experience rather than operating on presumptions or speculation?
 - » How do we make sure we are not practising “tokenism” in our inclusion of people from marginalised groups? (See [Guide to Terminology](#))
 - » Are we reinforcing the dominant paradigm or subverting it? What is our intention? What are the consequences of our choice?

- » apologise in advance and invite people to let you know when this happens. Be specific about how they can reach you to do this
- » you want to learn, be respectful and thankful for their guidance in dialogue with them

Developing sensitivity and respect as a leader of a cultural network is essential to the inclusivity of the network as a whole.⁷⁸

- Be ready for difficult conversations. Conflict is inevitable. However uncomfortable, you do not grow unless you come face to face with the limitations of your own perceptions and tackle the meaning of new ideas. When conflict arises from our different perceptions, it is critical to remember that everyone has the right to their perceptions, and no one speaks for all of us.
- Empathy is key to a functional ensemble – it is equally key to a functional network: create spaces for empathy.⁷⁹
- Make room to explore what it means to be marginalised with those among us from those groups. Listen carefully.⁸⁰
- Create room for intercultural exchanges: Gain and spread knowledge about the huge variations of wealth, freedoms and access to resources across the broad array of countries that your membership covers. In globally connected European networks, some members from outside Europe may find their history and their challenges having little context in Europe.
- Learn by doing, including sharing experiences with others, also from outside your field.⁸¹

2.10 PARTNER AND SUPPLIER DIVERSITY

Partners and suppliers usually represent an important part of the work of organisations in the cultural and creative sectors, from providers of office supplies, to catering and external facilitators, to partners for your events and projects.

More diverse partners in particular have the capacity to bring in new perspectives and open doors to new audiences or target groups that were not participating in your activities previously. Suppliers from independent-owned organisations may also offer better customer service and added value, including being more easily reachable due to proximity.

Step 1 - Data analysis

Without data you won't know where you are coming from and which targets you need to set. It will be therefore necessary to analyse your current level of supplier and partner diversity. See also Chapter [2.11 Evaluation and Data Collection](#)

Step 2 - Prepare your plan

Once the data has been gathered, you will need to consider where you should place your efforts and focus. The aim will be to create a plan for more diversity which stands along with other inclusion strategies of your organisation. In order to achieve this, support from your team and board will be essential.

Step 3 - Set targets

In order to measure your efforts, it will be important to set targets. In line with a long-term sustainable strategy to work with more diverse suppliers and partners, it will be key to start with reachable short-term goals and plan medium and long-term goals so as to understand what works and what doesn't throughout the process.

Step 4 - Look for diverse suppliers and partners

This step might be difficult as you will need to see beyond the suppliers and partners you are already working with and you might not know where to look for new connections. Some networks, platforms or chambers of commerce

Before getting involved in this process, it is advisable to look first at your own biases and structural biases existing in your organisation and to make sure that you are ready to change (See [Chapter 1.2 Identifying and Mitigating Unconscious Bias](#)). Follow these 7 steps developed by Jenny Garrett for CIPD⁸² to start diversifying your partners and suppliers.

might help you find diverse suppliers as well as your own network and their contacts could also be handy.

Step 5 - Engage with diverse suppliers

Get in touch with suppliers and provide information on how you work, your needs, your events and activities so that they can be better equipped to submit suitable proposals to them. Don't forget to provide feedback on your experience and talk through anything that didn't go well according to you so that they can learn and grow from it.

Step 6 - Monitor targets and review obstacles

It will be key to review the targets you've set for your organisation on a regular basis, depending on your size and capabilities - it could be every 6 months, annually, biannually. Look carefully at the obstacles which prevented you from moving forward with your goals such as not finding any diverse suppliers, more paperwork, time-consuming, in order to know where to act to overcome the difficulties and achieve the targets set.

Step 7 - Communicate and share progress

Be sure to share with your target groups and community (team, board members, members...) the progress that you make on your diversity goals.

Look beyond your traditional way of working as this process will be very enriching and create new opportunities.

2.11 EVALUATION AND DATA COLLECTION

Developing inclusive policies and processes and increasing the diversity of our organisations and the people we work with is not a single-stage task. We must also evaluate the impacts of any newly implemented DEI&B strategy or plan. How to measure impact should be decided from the start. What will you measure? Using what criteria? How much data do you need? What data can people reasonably be expected to share with you? Diversity and inclusion are sensitive topics built on a foundation of trust. Data collection in this area must therefore be approached in a considerate manner that is appropriate for the people and context it concerns.

Planning What to Measure

What you intend to measure should be established at the time that you develop your DEI&B strategy. Remember the importance of having diverse participants at the table during the development process. You may even wish to bring in an external DEI&B professional to help you break with habitual patterns and spot different opportunities for improvement.

Your aim should be to create a comprehensive list of factors to measure with agreed processes for tracking progress. You should also be clear on how you intend to use and communicate these results (see sections below).

For any policy or process you will introduce, identify what it is that you wish to achieve by doing so. What would you consider a successful result? You can be ambitious, but avoid trying to change the world overnight. Goals set too high will only serve to demotivate.

After reading this section, you should feel more confident to:

1. Collect the data you need (within the limitations of what is possible and legal)
2. Analyse the data and identify disparities
3. Set goals and plan how to meet them in stages
4. Plan how to communicate your progress

For more information on carrying out evaluations, see the [SHIFT resources on Cultural Leadership](#).

You can also consider creating “goal corridors”. This means identifying a set of scenarios and rating them from least ambitious to most ambitious. You can consider assigning a number scale to them, thereby allowing you to quantify qualitative data, and demonstrate progress. This progressive approach captures the differences between limited, moderate and significant success.⁸³

You may wish to take into account the following areas when planning what to measure:

1. Fair treatment: recognition and reward
2. Integrating differences: respect and valuing different opinions
3. Decision-making: fair consideration of ideas and suggestions
4. Psychological safety: feeling able to express true feelings
5. Trust: honest and open communication
6. Belonging: feeling valued and important
7. Diversity: at managerial/board level, in the team, in the membership, in partners and suppliers and so on.⁸⁴

How to Measure for Diversity and Inclusion

Collecting data on diversity and inclusion requires a sensitive approach. Overstepping by asking for too much data or asking for it in a poorly phrased way can be perceived as invasive, offensive or worse. This can breed bad relations, achieving exactly the opposite of what you are aiming for. How you collect your data is therefore a critical consideration.

Arts Council England provides a clear set of principles to abide by to improve your collection and use of diversity data:

- a. decide what you want to know and what information you need to collect, as well as ensuring you are fully aware of what information you are legally permitted to collect
- b. collect information to understand the scale, e.g. numbers and qualitative information
- c. tell people why you want to collect the information – link this to your aspirations on enhancing diversity
- d. only collect information that you will use
- e. tell people how you will use the information
- f. reaffirm how you will maintain confidentiality
- g. collect information in a way in which you can compare your organisation with similar organisations
- h. use the data to put in place pragmatic actions for enhancing your business
- i. tell people how you have used the information
- j. monitor the outcome of actions and put in place plans to review the data again⁸⁵

When asking for details of which marginalised group a person belongs to, it can be preferable to allow people to self-identify. Self-identification can be better received than pre-conceived identification by a third party. In some places this may be the only potentially legal way to collect this data, although in others it will still not be permitted.

You can format this self-identification question in an open way, such as “how do you identify in terms of [characteristic/background]?”. You might leave the response entirely open, which would allow people to write in an authentic description of themselves, although this can be time-consuming when analysing the data. A middle ground might be providing a checklist of a range of identities while still providing an option “I prefer to self-identify” that allows people to write in something different.

Avoiding Skewed Data and Other Data Collection Mistakes

Does the data you collect unearth the truth of the situation you are analysing? Different ways of grouping datasets can give you different results. Group the data in one way, and you can expose previously unobserved challenges; group it in another, and you can end up covering up problems.

Jemma Desai gives some examples of this in her paper 'This Work Isn't For Us' who cites her surprise at:

“the willingness to believe narratives of “progress” oriented in the “right direction” circulating with data that compares the numbers of national work-force of BAME people [black, Asian and minority ethnic] in its measurement (15%) rather than locating its analysis in cities like London where a third of funding is delivered and where the figure of 18% BAME workers contrasts alarmingly with the BAME population of 40% ... or that combine the ‘diverse populations’ BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled with that of white upper and middle class women to give vastly inflated narratives of progress.”⁸⁶

Comparing like with like is critical. Making averages across different geographic areas can give rise to various distortions, for instance by mixing urban and rural experience, or countries with different socioeconomic statuses.

Grouping people together in one “non-white” category can serve to disguise the differences in experience of people from different backgrounds. Moreover, grouping all women together ignores intersectional impacts that may affect, for example, women of different ethnicities, women with disabilities or women from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Go beyond establishing demographic representation. Finding out the number of people present of different ages, sexes, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, races, ethnicities, origins, religions or economic or other statuses will only tell you so much. Look for the systemic questions that will really help you identify areas for improvement, such as questions about the experience of the recruitment process, facilitation of learning opportunities or career advancement.

Do not accept the majority view without question. Even if 80% of the people you survey are happy, you may find that you are missing emerging trends from the underrepresented groups you are aiming to include.⁸⁷

Finally, data collection should not be seen as an end in itself. It is an element in a wider system of evidence-based decision-making.⁸⁸ Losing focus on the reason for which you are collecting data reduces the impact of your DEI&B efforts on the people they were intended to empower. Being seen to “tick boxes” rather than show a real commitment to DEI&B may also detract from your organisation’s image, damaging relationships with people from marginalised groups.

Prohibitions on Diversity Data Collection

The collection of diversity data is not permitted in all countries. Whereas it is a common and often required practice in some countries (for example, in the US, UK and Ireland), it is prohibited in others (for example, France and Canada) on the basis that it is discriminatory.

One view you might take is that this represents a problem for understanding the situation in which you are operating and acts as a barrier to informing your decision-making. The governmental decision to disallow diversity data collection could be considered a parallel to such statements made at an individual level as “I don’t see colour”. While this might stem from a desire not to appear racist, it serves to dismiss the problems faced by people of colour and to close down opportunities for the expression and communication of lived experience.⁸⁹ In this case, you may choose to make

it part of your advocacy work to allow for the collection of diversity data in general or to get a derogation for diversity data collection in your specific circumstances.

An alternative view, especially if you are coming into such a system from outside, is that this is a cultural difference that should be respected and worked with. By accepting that things work differently in different places, you can adjust and adapt your strategies to be more nuanced. Your strategy may look different but still achieve the same thing. In trying to force the collection of diversity data on people who are not accustomed to it, you could foreseeably face a lot of resistance and lose a lot of trust and relationships. Instead, you can think about what your goal is and push forward on other parts of your strategy.⁹⁰

Analysing Your Data and Taking Action

When you have collected your data, your next step is to start identifying disparities and determining why they exist. What is at the root of any disparity? What is getting in the way of successfully reaching out to people from marginalised backgrounds? What is making some people feel more secure than others? Use this information to develop a plan to address the identified disparities. Including milestone points will allow you to revisit the issue and track your progress.

Be transparent about the disparities you have identified and the steps you are taking, including how you intend to measure your progress. Feeding this into an action plan provides a concrete means of holding your organisation accountable for change. Including a progress update as part of your annual report also demonstrates genuine commitment to improving. Be aware that while transparency might make you feel vulnerable, hesitating from being open on this topic will not serve to make changes to your organisation’s current position in relation to diversity and inclusion. Instead it risks hiding disparities and leaving them unaddressed.⁹¹

Even with this plan in place, do not become complacent. Maintain and build on your level of awareness. Engage in self-reflection. Consider your management style and approach and look for ways to increase the inclusivity of your behaviour and that of your team. See how you can support growth and development, foster networking, encourage constructive conflict resolution and promote interpersonal integrity.

Most of all: keep listening. Pay attention to identified disparities and any new ones that you observe. Try to understand the different cultures in which you operate professionally and improve their inclusivity. Through awareness, evaluation and adjustment, you can create the dynamic approach needed to place inclusion and diversity at the heart of your operations even as your organisation faces new challenges and an evolving work environment.⁹²

3

INCLUSIVE ACTION

3.1 Policy and Advocacy

3.2 Projects

As chapter 2 addressed the inner workings of our organisations, chapter 3 turns the focus outward, looking at the actions that our organisations take out in the real world. This is divided into two areas: policy and advocacy on the one hand, and projects on the other. These represent two of the tools available to cultural organisations in pursuing a more inclusive sector and society, so long as they are turned to best advantage.

Read on to finetune your actions for inclusion.

3.1 POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Why Advocacy?

As a European cultural organisation, you might want to embark on a journey to advocate for reducing inequalities in the field and in society at large, because you feel it is your role to address this issue and act upon it together with your partners. There are quite strong imbalances across Europe in the appreciation of the current situation, different levels of awareness from stakeholders and various knowledge gaps that you feel you should act upon.

However, advocacy for reducing inequalities is a transversal issue, so it should also form part of your broader advocacy action. This might include responses and feedback to EU documents or when advocating on other issues. Here you also have an opportunity to consider whether DEI&B aspects are sufficiently or properly considered, whether something should be added in that regard or whether something you are proposing could have the potential for unwanted backlash with regard to DEI&B within the cultural and creative sectors. Consistently pausing to check these issues are in position in your process before publishing, truly

embedding DEI&B thinking throughout all of your advocacy and campaign activities, will make a considerable contribution to the strength and efficacy of your advocacy on this front.

Moreover, the pandemic made obvious that people from marginalised groups were more likely to suffer from the crisis – from populations with low health and social protection to people with disabilities being particularly at risk because of COVID-19 itself. Many also fear that attention, awareness-raising efforts and necessary investments could be abandoned by public authorities, public and private funders or the culture field itself. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the crisis, concerns are voiced that reducing inequalities might not be a priority in recovery plans, erasing or limiting the outcomes of years of advocacy campaigns. Acknowledging the complexity of the situation, still unfolding, many express their hopes, in particular when it comes to rethinking practices and making use of lessons learnt.

What Challenges Can you Expect?

The first challenge you might encounter is the discrepancy between the strong belief generally expressed by culture stakeholders that reducing inequalities is a central issue in the field and the limited knowledge in relation to inclusion issues. Many organisations express that they are not knowledgeable enough or do not have enough solid inclusive practices embedded in their organisation to provide information or voice an informed opinion. Lack of confidence and knowledge gaps lead to many stakeholders turning towards 'specialised' organisations.

The second challenge is directly connected to the definition of terms and what realities they cover. The term 'inequalities' refers to various concepts and situations on the one hand, but is also interpreted differently according to context on the other hand. It is not always clear what all-encompassing definitions of people from marginalised groups refer to, including for those at risk of exclusion due to age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. For example in relation to ability, stakeholders may immediately associate it with physical disability and tend to forget to take into account other disabilities (such as psychosocial or cognitive disabilities).

On this particular example of 'disability', the British Council's guide *Promoting Inclusion*⁹³ underlines the broadness of the concept:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) states: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

The UK Equality Act (2010) definition similarly states that a disability is: "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." Impairment here means 'a physical, mental or sensory functional limitation within the individual'. But impairment is only part of the experience of disability, which also includes: "...the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers" (Constitution of Disabled People's International, 1981).

So disabled people are not "people with impairments" but: "...people with impairments who are additionally 'disabled' by socially constructed barriers" (Colin Barnes, *Disabled People in Britain*, 1991).

These differences between disability, disabled people and impairment are important distinctions. They underline how the physical, mental or sensory impairments which can limit someone's abilities, or indeed the fact of neurodiversity (discussed later), are different from the external conditions which can also limit them. These conditions can vary from an inaccessible office or unreadable safety notice, to the attitude of someone recruiting for a job, or a line manager or a teacher.

It's also important to realise that impairments aren't always obvious or physical: many are hidden or invisible. These might include mental impairments, like bipolar disorder or chronic depression,⁹⁴ or cognitive ones like learning disabilities, or autism or dyslexia, as well as physical ones, like sickle cell anaemia, diabetes, cancer or HIV/AIDS.

The third challenge is the lack of data that clearly establishes the current state of affairs. It is difficult to find reliable sources of information in many countries, across sectors and in the cultural field, that could help you assess the situation and identify what the needs are. For example, already in 2012, the European Blind Union warned about the fact that

progress in cultural accessibility was not being monitored at European and national levels, and this remains a concern to this day, as stated in the cultural agenda published in 2020 by the European Arts & Disability Cluster: 'Europe-wide data [on disabled audiences, arts professionals, and artists] is not available as this has never been researched'.

Tips for an Informed Advocacy

The first piece of advice is to ‘advocate with’ and not ‘advocate on behalf of’: many specialised bodies at European level have been advocating for reducing inequalities, including in the cultural and creative sectors. We strongly advise you to reach out to people from marginalised groups before proposing measures to reduce inequalities as well as including people from marginalised groups in the process. Communities directly dealing with such issues should not be excluded from your efforts and they will have precise knowledge of the topics you want to investigate.

The second piece of advice relates to legal frameworks that exist at international, European and national/regional levels. In advocacy efforts, a rights-based approach often prevails and depending on the concern(s) you want to voice, you might find existing regulations that will help you frame your message and establish the right targets.

Not only you can use international texts ratified by the EU and Members States (for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and so on) but also Resolutions from the

European Parliament (for example the resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2017,⁹⁵ on fundamental rights of people of African descent in Europe,⁹⁶ on European disability strategy post 2020⁹⁷ and more) and Strategies from the European Commission (for example, Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030⁹⁸, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025⁹⁹, the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025¹⁰⁰, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹⁰¹ or the EU Roma Strategic Framework¹⁰²). You might also consult the annual Fundamental Rights Report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA),¹⁰³ or the European Pillar of Social Rights (an initiative of the European Commission).¹⁰⁴

The third piece of advice is to reinforce existing advocacy efforts by supporting the campaigns of other organisations within and outside the cultural field and relaying the resources, guides and tools made available. Advocacy is not a solo/silo initiative but more a joint action that implies being able to respond to external events, to contribute to knowledge sharing and to partner with other players to address constantly changing situations.

3.2 PROJECTS

What does a Project that Promotes Inclusion Look Like?

Projects promoting inclusion may differ a lot with regard to topic, aim and target audience or participants.

A project promoting inclusion might show limited diversity in terms of the team that designs it, the target audience it serves and even the topic it is addressing, but have for an aim to 'educate' the dominant group. It might achieve this by amplifying the voices of marginalised individuals in order

to expose the barriers that they face and the measures that need to be implemented to reach equality.

At the same time, a project promoting inclusion might be founded on participatory practice, in which a diverse group of project designers work together within a system that allows and ensures equal levels of influence.

Fundamental Principles of a Project Promoting Inclusion

DEI&B should be mainstreamed through any project promoting inclusion from the design phase, through implementation, right to the final evaluation.

We need to have the following fundamental principles at the heart of our project processes:

- 'nothing about us without us'¹⁰⁵: the involvement of the marginalised communities that form our target group in all stages of the project. This should ideally be in a leading role and not just as an adviser on the side. In all cases, remuneration should be provided for the expertise that they bring.
- willingness to listen and to apply what we learn by adapting our narratives, working processes, aesthetics or more¹⁰⁶

The Project's Relationship to Inclusion

There are different forms that promoting inclusion can take within a project. Projects may (and mostly do) combine at least two of these aspects, if not three.

- a. **Showing inclusion** - the participants represent diverse marginalised groups

The most common example of this is the performance/film/concert with a mixed cast of actors/musicians. The level of positive impact depends on the status or position held by those representing marginalised groups in terms of the design and creation. This can range from tokenism, with a few marginalised individuals exclusively in small parts or represented in a stereotypical fashion, to them holding leading roles.

- b. **Advocating inclusion** - the project aims to create an inclusive mindset

The project may be centred on the topic of discrimination, unequal access to opportunities and/or how to eliminate barriers. Individuals from marginalised groups should ideally lead on the design - or at least be consulted - but certainly they should receive remuneration for taking the time to share their knowledge. In this type of project, the target audience or participants tend to be part of the dominant group.

- c. **Bringing inclusion** - the project advances the process towards an inclusive practice or society

A project of this kind aims to create a safe and accessible space for everyone to participate, with the aim of shaping a more inclusive context, neighborhood, city or society in general.

Making a Difference in Society

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 27 (1): “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.”¹⁰⁷

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides for the right of minorities “to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”¹⁰⁸

Cultural projects have the capacity to play a transformative role in the creation of a society that makes the above cultural rights a reality for everyone by promoting equity of opportunity.

Cultural projects focusing on the actualisation of these cultural rights may take the form of enhancing access to culture, especially in relation to individuals or groups who are marginalised by reason of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.

In addition, there is a wide range of issues and topics that a cultural project can address, for example:

- reviewing and/or recovering heritage in association with identity factors (language, customs, historical/colonial legacy and so on)
- breaking down barriers for people living in poverty, with disabilities, struggling with substance abuse and so on
- the relationships between different cultures
- the relationship between different social groups
- the act of marginalisation, stigmatisation or stereotyping

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion in the field of cultural projects can be understood as the creation of scenarios that are the meeting point for the transformative power of culture and the arts on the one hand, and social challenges on the other. These social challenges may arise, for example, in the face of inequity, exclusion, marginalisation or economic divides. The inclusive dimension of culture in social terms may put a focus on:

- The development of the creative capacity of citizens, especially of marginalised individuals and groups

- The promotion of access to cultural facilities and projects, in any of the phases of the cultural cycle (creation, production, dissemination, access, and training)
- The promotion of cross-sectoral platforms in which entities from the cultural and social fields cooperate
- The promotion of a system of values of culture and citizenship, which favours a shared construction of a geographic area (whether a neighborhood, city or country)

Follow-Up

“When you plan to do this kind of project with this target group without follow-up..
...don't do the project.”¹⁰⁹

Projects must also take care of their impact and legacy if they are going to have any sustainable effect and if your organisation is going to position itself as a credible ally with the marginalised group in question.

A project promoting inclusion should:

- **be part of a whole.** Events within a project should not be stand-alone. Individual events can leave an impression on participants, but the intensity and power of a joined-up experience can achieve a much greater impact on all involved.

- **have a well-planned follow-up.** If participants gain new experiences and new perspectives through a project, it is a waste of these benefits to have no follow-up. Participants should ideally experience some sustainable change in their lives, so know in advance how you will maintain the connection afterwards and be able to monitor the impact.
- **provide next stage support.** Filled with energy and motivation, the participants have gained new skills. Now they need to take practical action and transfer them into action plans. Offering support at this stage can make all the difference.¹¹⁰

4

MAKING COMMUNICATIONS MORE INCLUSIVE

4.1 Inclusive Language

- ➔ **Fundamental Questions**
- ➔ **Reducing Bias in Written Language**
- ➔ **Gender and Language**
- ➔ **Plain Language**
- ➔ **Spoken & Signed Communication**

4.2 Designing Accessible Communications

- ➔ **Text**
- ➔ **Images**
- ➔ **Numbers, Dates and Addresses**
- ➔ **Printing**

4.3 Web and Social Media Accessibility

- ➔ **Website, Newsletters and Email**
- ➔ **Social Media**

This chapter serves as a reference guide for cultural organisations to consult in advance of producing communications material. Whether your communications are formal or informal, written or spoken/signed, printed or digital, you will find the key relevant points to consider in the following pages.

Our intention is to support organisations in the pursuit of two aims:

- including everyone, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance
- making information accessible to everyone, regardless of their ability
- Here you will find guidance on inclusive communication relating to:
 - Using inclusive language and avoiding bias in written, spoken and signed communication
 - Designing and formatting different kinds of text-based communications in an accessible way
 - Making the online world accessible, including websites and social media

The resources that we used to compile these recommendations can be found at the end of the chapter.

4.1 INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

We can include people or exclude them based on what we say and how we say it. This is often not a conscious process and it is therefore critical to develop awareness of the different ways in which bias can enter language and make it exclusive. By learning how to use language intentionally, we can begin to transform cultural norms to become more inclusive.

A selection of resources to support you can also be found in the [Annotated Bibliography](#) that accompanies this handbook.

Fundamental Questions

For each text you write, whether internal or external to your organisation, ask yourself the following questions¹¹¹:

- Who am I writing for?
- What do they need to do?

- How can I help them do this?
- Can what I am saying be interpreted in different ways?
- Who might feel excluded by what I am saying?

Reducing Bias in Written Language

Writing using unbiased language requires an understanding of how biases can be expressed. Below is a list of fundamental principles to bear in mind, along with a selection of examples.¹¹²

- **Be aware of your own biases and exclusive cultural norms.** Identify what elements of your text may be interpreted as exclusive, offensive or belittling, even if they are commonly used in your culture. (For more on identifying your biases, see [Chapter 1](#)).
- **Be specific.** Avoid assigning people to broad categories and avoid prejudicial terminology.
For example:
 - » 'We support adults over 65 to engage in cultural activities'
 - » instead of 'We support the elderly to engage in cultural activities'
 - » 'This opportunity is open to people with a household income of under 20.000€ per year'
 - » instead of 'This opportunity is open to people from low-income households'
- **Be accurate.** Avoid exclusive terminology.
 - » **For example:** use terms like 'humanity' or 'human beings' rather than 'man' or 'mankind'.

- **Only refer to a person's relevant characteristics.** Choose clear, precise words, avoiding prejudicial terms.
 - » **For example:** You might mention someone's gender if you are discussing gender-based discrimination, but not if you are discussing their professional accomplishments.
- **Adopt the appropriate gender-inclusive terminology for your language.** How to do this varies from language to language. See the next section for some basic principles to be aware of.
- **Be sensitive to labels.** Refer to people in the way they wish to be referred to. Ensure the individuality and humanity of people are respected.
For example:
 - » Depending on the preferences of the individuals or groups in question, it might be most appropriate to use:
 - » person-first language, which talks about what an individual 'has' rather than 'is' (such as: 'a person with autism')
 - » identity-first language, which emphasises the role a disability plays in an individual's identity and contributes to a positive view of disability (such as 'an autistic person')
 - » or both may be acceptable

When in Doubt: ASK!

If you are publishing communications materials and are not sure of how to refer to an individual or marginalised group, talk to a member or members of the group to whom you wish to refer.

Check the resources available in the [Annotated Bibliography](#) accompanying this handbook for more on this topic.

Gender and Language

Different strategies are required in different languages in order to be gender inclusive. This section offers a starting point for understanding the key issues in the use and development of gender-inclusive terminology across three main categories of language.¹¹³

Natural Gender Languages

(including Danish, English and Swedish)

Be neutral regarding gender wherever possible. Gender-specific terms should be avoided.

- 'Chair'
 - » instead of 'chairman'
- 'Police officer'
 - » instead of 'policeman' or 'policewoman'
- 'Spokesperson'
 - » instead of 'spokesman'

In English, the use of 'they', including in the singular, is increasingly used.

- 'People must do their part'
 - » instead of 'Each must do his part'
- 'They were driving the car too fast'
 - » instead of 'He or she was driving the car too fast'

Grammatical Gender Languages

(including German, Romance languages and Slavic languages)

There is a lot of debate and few widely-accepted neutral terms.

Inclusive approaches also vary between these languages, but some features may include:

- The generic masculine is no longer so common
 - » 'Unionsbürgerinnen und Unionsbürger' instead of 'Unionsbürger'
- Alternatives are in development, but not universally practised
 - » 'Bürger*innen' instead of 'Bürger'
 - » 'Les député.e.s' instead of 'les députés'
- Feminisation of job titles in occupations previously dominated by men
 - » 'Kanzlerin', 'présidente', 'sénatrice', 'assessora'

Genderless Languages

(including Estonian, Finnish and Hungarian)

These languages do not usually require a particular strategy to be gender-inclusive.

Nevertheless, specific cases to be aware of do exist in each language.

Gender Identity

Gender pronouns are how people are referred to when their name is not being used. Some are neutral (them, they, theirs), some are not (she, he), and new pronouns have also been created outside of the gender binary by and for those who identify as non-binary.

In English, these include:

- They, them, theirs as a singular pronoun
 - » Morgan ate their dinner
- Ze (or xe, or zie), hir. Ze, pronounced “zee,” replaces she, he and they. Hir, pronounced “here,” replaces her, him, his, them and their.
 - » Morgan ate hir dinner
- Some people prefer not to use pronouns at all, using only their name instead.
 - » Morgan ate Morgan’s dinner¹¹⁴

Similarly, in French, someone may use iel or al instead of il or elle¹¹⁵, and in German xier, xie, nin, sier, sif, es, per oder dey¹¹⁶.

It is not always evident from someone’s appearance what gender pronouns they prefer. Making the effort to ask and use the chosen pronouns correctly is a sign of respect. Asking might look different in different situations and with different people. In one situation, you might ask everyone to share their pronouns, but this may also cause feelings of anxiety and exposure. Creating the means for people to provide this information confidentially in writing (for example, by email) can be more sympathetic. In any case, if someone tells you their pronouns, you should use them.

Plain Language

Plain language is an inclusive and accessible form of writing that is designed for the widest possible range of people to understand, find what they need and make use of the information they have read.

You can increase the accessibility of the language you use by incorporating plain language principles, such as the following.¹¹⁷

- Have a clear message.
- Present key information first and details last. Avoid unnecessary detail.
- Use simple and clear language.
- Avoid difficult words or explain them every time you use them.
- Write in short sentences.
- Include one idea per paragraph.
- Use examples to help readers understand what the text is about.
- Make sentences positive, where possible.
- Avoid abbreviations.
- Be consistent with your terminology and punctuation.
- Proofread your material.

Spoken & Signed Communication

Sometimes we will represent our organisations in spoken or signed form rather than written. Here you will find some initial guidance to assist you in communicating respectfully with people with disabilities.¹¹⁸

Communicating with People with a Visual Impairment

- Introduce yourself to the person, clearly identifying who you are.
- Speak to the person directly; do not speak via a third person.
- Speak naturally and clearly; do not shout.
- If you are speaking to someone with a visual difficulty in a conversation involving multiple people, ensure to address them by name if you wish to speak to them directly.
- Be specific in your descriptions
 - » 'the chair is in front of you'
 - » instead of 'the chair is here'
- Always say goodbye when you leave the conversation.

Communicating with People with Speech Difficulties

- Give your conversation partner time and space to express themselves.
- Do not interrupt, jump in or finish their sentences.
- If you did not understand what they said:
 - » Politely ask them to repeat themselves
 - » Summarise what they said and ask if you have understood correctly
- Do not pretend that you have understood what they have said if you have not.
- If appropriate, ask if there is someone who can interpret for them.
- Consider alternative means of communication.
For example, some people may prefer to communicate using notes.

Communicating with People with a Physical Impairment

- Try to put yourself at eye-level with the person, e.g. by taking a seat.
- Do not treat the person like a child.
- Do not touch or move the person's assistive devices without their explicit permission.
- Talk directly to the person, not to their companion.
- Ask if the person would like assistance.

Communicating with People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- To enter into a conversation, stand where the person can see you.
- Ask how the person would prefer to communicate.
- Check if they have understood what you have said by asking for feedback.
- Speak clearly and slowly; do not shout.
- Do not put your hand in front of your mouth while speaking.
- Repeat key messages; consider writing them down.

Communicating with People with Intellectual Disabilities

- Speak clearly and slowly, using simple words. Give one piece of information at a time.
- Give the person time and space to express themselves.
Do not rush. Make the conversation a calm and safe space.
- Do not interrupt, jump in or finish their sentences.
- Try to talk in a quiet place if possible.
- Check if they have understood what you have said by asking for feedback.
- Make use of gestures and facial expressions to support what you are saying, for example, making a sad face when talking about something sad.

General Advice

- Not all disabilities are visible. Adapt to people's needs as and when they are expressed.
- Be patient. Different people may need more time to think and respond.
- Be aware of the language they use and their ability to express themselves.
- If you are offering assistance, wait for permission before you act.
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication. Smile and speak in a calm tone of voice.
- Give the person enough space. Do not stand too close.
- Do not touch service animals (e.g. dogs for people with visual difficulties) as this may distract them from their task.

4.2 DESIGNING ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS

The presentation of communications is another essential element in ensuring that information is understood. Good design and formatting support an organisation's message. Conversely, bad design and formatting prevent an organisation's message being understood and thus reduce its reach and impact. Below you will find design and formatting recommendations for inclusive communications.¹¹⁹

Text

- Use a clear design with plenty of white space.
- Use a font that is easy to read, such as Luciole, Verdana or Tahoma, and make the text at least font size 12.

Luciole is a font developed specifically for people with visual impairments. Designed by the Centre Technique Régional pour la Déficience Visuelle and the type-design studio typographies.fr, you can find out more and download it on [their website](#).

- If you want to emphasise important information, use **bold** or a bigger font size.
 - » BLOCK CAPITALS, *italics* and underlining are more difficult to read
- Do not split words across two lines or paragraphs over the end of a page.
- Use left-aligned text rather than justified text.
 - » Inconsistent spacing between words makes text hard to read.
- Use headings that clearly explain the content below them and make them **bold**.
- Use bullet points for lists. Do not make a list in a sentence using commas.
- Include a contents page in long documents.
- Number all pages after the title page.
- Embed hyperlinks. Full web addresses are obstructive for people using screen readers as they will be read out a character at a time.
- If possible, make alternative formats of the same document
 - » with a larger font size for people with visual difficulties
 - » in an 'easy-to-read' format for people with intellectual disabilities

Images

- Use relevant images to help readers understand what the text is about, but make sure they add to your message.
- Use graphs to explain complex facts and figures.
- Keep it simple. Do not insert images or graphs with too much information.
- Images should have good colour contrast.
- It is better not to put text on an image. If you do, make sure it is easy to read.
- If you are using text-wrapping around an image, place the image on the right-hand side of the page so that the flow of the text is not disrupted.
- Different readers have different needs.
Insert text explaining images and graphs near to them.

Numbers, Dates and Addresses

- Write the numbers one to nine in words.
- Write number 10 and higher in digits.
- Avoid decimal points if possible. They can be hard for some people to read.
- Write percentages using digits and the percentage symbol (%).
 - » For example, write 60% and not sixty percent
- Be consistent in your date format. The clearest format is date month year.
 - » For example, 24 February 2022
- Write addresses as they would appear on an envelope. Do not write them all on one line.

Printing

- Use matt paper. It avoids glare and absorbs ink better.
- Make sure you cannot see text printed on the other side of a sheet through the paper. As a guide, your paper should weigh over 90 grams.
- Documents should lie flat without having to be held open. This helps people with dexterity difficulties and people using text-to-speech reading devices.

4.3 WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to the guidance in the previous section, the following key points should be implemented for online communications.

Website, Newsletters and Email

People read online information in a different way to printed information. They are more likely to scan an online text for important information. As a result, text on your website should be kept brief, and key information should be easy to find.¹²⁰

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) set the standard for web content accessibility. Cultural organisations should as a minimum be aware of the four key principles upon which the WCAG are built, that state that a website should be:

1. Perceivable - users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it can't be invisible to all of their senses)
2. Operable: users must be able to operate the interface (the interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform)
3. Understandable: users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding)
4. Robust: users must be able to access the content as technologies advance (as technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible)

Content

- To make web text useful for your visitors, present information in order of importance:
 - » Highlight key facts at the top of the page
 - » Add further information
 - » Provide links to more background or related information (if appropriate)
- Provide information on your website in different languages where possible, or integrate a translation tool
- Include your organisation's name in full on every page.
 - » This helps visitors who arrive directly from search engines, especially those using screen readers.
- Create a web page with a list of the difficult words you use on your website. Insert a hyperlink when you use a difficult word to take people to the definition.

Good Practice

Inclusion Europe's ['Easy-to-read explanations'](#)

Content Quality

- Keep your content up-to-date. Out-of-date content decreases your perceived reliability.
- Put an organisational style guide in place to ensure consistency with terms and formatting. Consistency enhances readability.

Microcontent

- Ensure you include Alt Text for any images or videos.
 - » This text can be transformed into other formats (such as large print, Braille, speech), helping people with visual difficulties to read the content.
- Use sub-headings to enhance readability and support the visitor scanning the page for information.
- Use heading styles or tags consistently and correctly, so that screen readers can read the page effectively.
- Avoid CAPTCHAs if possible. No alternative is completely accessible, but W3C offers [a list of alternative options](#) with advantages and disadvantages.
- Avoid pop ups.

Website Navigation

- Your whole website should be accessible through the use of a keyboard (that is, without a mouse).
- Keep your navigation layout consistent, with the navigation bar always clearly visible.
- The navigation bar should show clearly where the visitor is on the website.
- Ensure rotating banners give enough time to visitors to understand information and act on it.
- Ensure your website can be used by different browsers, devices and assistive technologies.
- Make a search function available that is easy to use.

Emails and Newsletters

- Use a black font (or at least a dark colour).
- If possible, provide a plain text and HTML option on your emails.
 - » Plain text is compatible with all email systems and assistive technologies, but it can only include full URLs and does not support structuring with headings.
 - » HTML is the most accessible email format, and it allows you to format and structure your email like a web page.
- Make your subject line clear and descriptive.
- Tell the recipient if a file is attached and ensure the titles of any attached files are clear and descriptive.

Accessible Documents

- Provide a summary in HTML for any documents that can be downloaded from your website. Also include details on the document's format (such as pdf or docx) and file size.
- Fill out the properties of the document (author, title, subject, keywords).
- Save or export to pdf. Do not use the print to pdf function - the document will be as if printed on paper. Characters will not be recognised, the document will not be searchable and hyperlinks will not be functional.
- Ensure accessibility features like tagging are turned on when saving.
- If available in your word processing programme, use the accessibility checker.
- See the following links for guidance on creating accessible documents:
 - » [Creating accessible documents in Microsoft Word](#)
 - » [Creating accessible presentations in Microsoft PowerPoint](#)
 - » [Creating accessible PDFs from Microsoft Word](#)
 - » [Creating accessible PDFs from Adobe InDesign](#)
 - » [Creating accessible PDF forms using Adobe Acrobat Pro](#)

Presentations

- Present one idea per slide with a maximum of five bullet points.
- Simplify information on slides by using only keywords (no complete sentences!).
- Emphasise ideas and key concepts using your organisation's colour palette.
- Use clear, sans serif fonts like Verdana or Tahoma.
- Use at least a font size of 24 points.
- Justify text to the left.
- Ensure sufficient colour contrast.
- Keep graphs and images simple.
- Describe all the images you have put in the presentation to your audience.
- Ensure any videos contain closed captioning and a voice over.
- Give people enough time to read each slide.
- Make hard copies of the presentation available and offer alternative formats (for example, large print or braille).
- If possible, offer an electronic version of the presentation to anyone using a screen reader in advance.
- Share your presentation in advance with interpreters, both sign and foreign languages, to facilitate their work.

Social Media

For many organisations, social media is a primary means of communicating publicly on a daily basis. With the application of some basic accessibility principles, your social media posts can become much more accessible to people with disabilities, and clearer to your audience as a whole.¹²¹

Fundamentals of Accessible Social Media

- **Contact** - Include your organisation's contact information on your social media account profile pages. It is best to include more than one method of contact.
- **Hashtags and Mentions** - Put them at the end of your post. Capitalise each word in a hashtag to allow them to be read by screen readers.
 - » For example, #CapitaliseEachWord
- **Acronyms** - If you have enough space, spell out acronyms in full.
 - » For example, European Union (EU)
- **Prefixes** - If you are inserting multimedia in a post, use a prefix to communicate to people using screen readers what to expect.
 - » Images: [IMG]
 - » Videos: [VIDEO]
 - » Audio: [AUDIO]
- **Emojis** - Use emojis and emoticons sparingly. Do not use them to replace words.
- **Images** - Ensure that there is sufficient contrast in the images.
- **Alt Text** - Use alt text to convey the information included in multimedia.
- **Subtitles** - Provide closed captioning (subtitles) for videos.
- **Twitter Threads** - Thread tweets on the same topic.
- **Links** - Use shortened URLs for links and do not use more than one per post.

How do I...?

- **Insert Alt Text...?**
 - » On [Facebook](#)
 - » On [Twitter](#)
 - » On [Instagram](#)
- **Add Closed Captions to Videos?**
 - » On [YouTube](#)
 - » On [LinkedIn](#)
- **Share an Accessible YouTube Video Link?**
 - » Upload your video to your YouTube channel and enable closed captions. Posting this link (rather than uploading the video to social media sites) will ensure people are directed to the accessible version.
- **Find Out More About Facebook's Accessibility Features?**
 - » [Facebook Accessibility Page](#)
- **Thread Tweets?**
 - » [How to create a thread on Twitter](#)
- **How do I shorten a URL?**

Many online options exist to shorten links, for instance:

 - » [Cutly URL Shortener](#)
 - » [Bitly URL Shortener](#)
 - » [ShortURL - URL Shortener](#)

5

HOLDING INCLUSIVE EVENTS

5.1 Making Events Inclusive

- ➔ **Inclusive Audiences**
- ➔ **Inclusion and Representation on Stage**

5.2 Making Physical Events Accessible

- ➔ **Fundamentals of Accessibility**
- ➔ **Ticket Sales, Accessible Bookings and Registration**
- ➔ **Venue Accessibility**
- ➔ **Information Accessibility**
- ➔ **Transportation**
- ➔ **Accommodation**
- ➔ **Sound, Lighting and other Technology**
- ➔ **Public Relations**
- ➔ **Roles and Responsibilities**
- ➔ **Food and Dietary Requirements**
- ➔ **After the Event**

5.3 Making Online Events Accessible

- ➔ **Accessible Invitations and Registration**
- ➔ **Accessible Conference Software**
- ➔ **Clear Programme and Schedule**
- ➔ **Accessible Documents and Presentations**
- ➔ **Ensuring Participation**
- ➔ **Providing Accessible Information after the Event**

Events organised by cultural organisations can take many forms - general assemblies, conferences, festivals, performances and so on - and may be open only to members or also to members of the public more broadly. With the COVID pandemic, we have also seen an enormous rise in the use of digital technologies for online events, which promises to affect the way we run our events in the future. Hybrid events will become more commonplace in the post-pandemic environment.

All events, whether physical, digital or hybrid pose challenges in terms of inclusivity and accessibility. This chapter looks at:

- Issues of inclusion in terms of who is in the audience and who is on the stage
- Accessibility for physical events
- Accessibility for online events

5.1 MAKING EVENTS INCLUSIVE

Inclusive Audiences

Understanding the Needs of Diverse Audiences

It is of paramount importance that cultural organisations firstly understand the needs and requirements of diverse audiences attending their events. Once the needs of diverse audiences are clearly understood, the planning of an inclusive event can truly begin.

Understanding the requirements of diverse audiences beforehand will lead to a more engaged, encouraged, and supported audience during the event.

Tools such as [Audience Finder](#) (UK) can help you understand who your audiences are and who they could be.

Consider the following tips¹²²:

- Ask attendees as early as possible about what specific support they might need to attend the event
- Ask about specific needs in the booking process
- Use open questions so people can express themselves fully
- Find solutions in cooperation with your guest and check with them that they are sufficient
- Making mistakes is normal; learn from them
- Remember: Accessibility does not mean the same thing to everybody

Three general aspects to bear in mind when aiming for an inclusive audience¹²³:

- Programming - does your audience identify with the programme you are running?
- Staffing and boards - you will inspire greater trust in your audiences if they can see diversity in the people of your organisation
- Reaching out and becoming relevant to new audiences - create a space that brings different people together. Doing this supports social cohesion and allows you to contribute to a better society

Inclusive Groups

Where your audience is also actively participating, you will need to know how to ensure everyone is comfortable and able to do so. Inclusive groups are usually composed of highly diverse individuals with different perceptions, expressions, and learning abilities. This necessitates the use

of different forms of communication when planning and facilitating group activities. The guide *Creability: Creative and Artistic Tools for Inclusive Cultural Work* provides general guidelines for both, which we summarise here.

General guidelines for **planning your activity**:¹²⁴

- Think about the target group you want to address.
- Use inclusive or mixed-abled language so that everyone feels addressed.
- Promote the activity in an accessible way (e.g. Video messages, sign language videos, information in simple language, etc.).
- Ensure the activity takes place in an accessible venue.
- Ensure participants' needs are supported.
- Request information on participants' needs.
- Use open questions.
- Keep the communication open and transparent!
- Allow yourself to make mistakes and engage with the participants to find solutions.
- Keep in mind that perfectionism can create barriers as well.

Here are the general guidelines for **facilitating your activity**:¹²⁵

- Identify the needs of the group as early as possible.
- Use different formats and media to inform the participants.
- Adapt forms of expressions and the actions to the participants' circumstances.
- Allow individuals who experience problems to come up with solutions themselves.
- Encourage feedback within your group.
- Consider forming tandems for support.
- Ensure there is enough time and opportunity to engage in and complete a task.
- Use varied ways to keep the group motivated.
- Offer varied learning opportunities.
- Make things less complex (whenever possible).
- Give participants more than too little time to complete a task.
- It can be helpful to repeat a tool to achieve its goal.
- Respect the boundaries or preferences of individual participants.
- Consider explaining terminology, especially when mixing disciplines and with an international audience.

In the same guide, you will find a wide range of tools to facilitate inclusive group activities.¹²⁶

Best Practices

These practices are some examples of projects that maintained the integrity of their programming whilst encouraging diverse audiences to participate. These projects all have in common that they successfully responded to the needs of diverse audiences and managed to engage diverse

communities by encouraging participation and co-creation. These projects showcase the relevancy of programming in order to attract an audience with different cultural and social backgrounds.¹²⁷

- **The Ljubljana museum MGML (Slovenia)** realised that a lot of the city's 'faces' were missing in its exhibitions and also in the museum's documentation and collections. Since the museum's mission is to be the museum 'about people and for the people,' it decided to bring cultural objects of underrepresented communities into the museum with the help of their representatives, so that its programme would become more relevant for wider audiences.
- **Imagine IC (Netherlands)** promotes itself as 'pioneer of contemporary living together'. The project's objective is to present the identity and culture of migrants and their descendants in the Netherlands, and to make this information available to a broad audience by collecting stories about everyday life in an innovative way, both on the street and online, and to develop them into digital, visual and sound productions.
- **The Hortus Litterarum Foundation (Estonia)** created a bilingual literary artistic project based on the reading of poems in two languages, Russian and Estonian, and is intended for audiences with different cultural backgrounds. In the performances, actors of different nationalities use one or the other language, playing with the texts and meanings. The result of this work is a new kind of art, which combines two languages and two cultures.

Inclusion and Representation on Stage

Increasing representation on stage helps to show individuals from marginalised groups that they are welcome and that they belong in the environment in question. However, inviting speakers or artists purely on the basis of one characteristic or because of their background - rather than because out of respect for what knowledge, perspectives or ideas they have to contribute - constitutes tokenism and should be avoided. The principal aim of diversifying the speakers or artists at your events should not be to appear diverse or simply to attract a wider segment of marginalised people in your audience.¹²⁸

Include people because of their range of abilities, their experience, their knowledge, and the value they can bring to your sector.

Panel discussions on diversity and inclusion are important, but if this is the only place in your event where speakers from marginalised groups are invited, you might ask yourself whether you are truly appreciating the full identities of individuals from these groups.

Consider the following points in your programming process:¹²⁹

- Why does diversity matter in your organisation?
- Why do you seek diverse programming?
- Have you publicly committed to representing diversity?
- Does your programming reflect your commitment to diversity and inclusion?
- What steps can you take to develop diversity among all stakeholders (audiences, committee members, staff, board, people on stage)?
- How can you increase collaboration with marginalised communities, artists, programmers, and producers?
- Are your hierarchies preventing diversity and what can you do to counteract this?
- Accept the challenges that might occur and listen to the voices you aim to include

Possibly the most critical point is to avoid “programming for”. Who is designing the programming for your event? A diverse planning committee will by its nature be in a position to create a more diverse programme and have a broader network of contacts to draw from in order to achieve better representation. Ensure that the committee goes beyond diversity for diversity’s sake and genuinely includes and acts upon the diverse perspectives of the committee members.

Transparency in this process will demonstrate to your audiences that you are taking diversity and inclusion seriously. This will not make you immune from criticism, but take this as a learning opportunity. Ask for open and honest feedback from participants at your event to find out what they think could be improved in future. Ask your invited speakers and artists whether they are comfortable to give you feedback and if they are, ask about their expectations and experience and what you could have done differently.

Disabled Artists on Stage

Opportunities for creative self-expression and co-creation should be available to all artists. The Creative Case for diversity argues that diversity enriches the arts for artists and audiences, as well as wider society. Each artist has a unique experience of the world and therefore can bring in different perspectives in order to make new and interesting art.

The exploration of difference or 'the other' can help us understand the complexities of our societies.

Disabled artists are often in a particularly strong position to make artistic works that disrupt the usual.¹³⁰

Consider the following questions to put into action plans to include disabled artist:¹³¹

- What are you doing to address the barriers preventing people with disabilities from achieving fully equal access to the arts as audiences and as artists?
- What are you doing to ensure the arts benefit from the aesthetic challenge to aesthetic and discipline related norms and traditions offered by disabled artists?

"It is surely long overdue for creative artists with and without disabilities to be employed on an equal basis. This is, in my view, what the contemporary stage should look like in the 21st century."

Magali Saby (Artistic Director, Be TOGETHER – académie des arts vivants 100% inclusion et Diversité, France)

"Mixed-abled performers belong on the stage. They need to be researched artistically and their numerous talents need to be trained professionally"

Wagner Moreira (Un-label Company)¹³²

Best Practices

The following projects support creative work by disabled artists:

- **Unlimited** - is an arts commissioning programme that includes work by disabled artists within the UK and international cultural sectors.
- **Europe Beyond Access** - supports disabled artists to break the glass ceilings of the contemporary theatre & dance sectors in Europe through a support from the Creative Europe programme.

5.2 MAKING PHYSICAL EVENTS ACCESSIBLE

Creating a framework for people with disabilities that enables their equal participation in events by factoring in people's specific needs is essential to making your event accessible and thus truly inclusive. In this section we will explore how you can improve access provisions and remove preventable barriers. You may also wish to consult the selection of toolkits and checklists available in the accompanying [SHIFT Annotated Bibliography on Inclusion](#).

Fundamentals of Accessibility

Accessibility measures should be taken into account transversally, including in the following areas¹³³:

1. Information on event accessibility
2. Price points of tickets
3. Booking system
4. Contact information (for access requirements)
5. Transport and routes (to and from the event)
6. Support at the event venue

Staff members may need to be able to provide additional support in several different ways. This may require training or the onboarding of team members with specific expertise.¹³⁴

- Mobility assistance
- Communication assistance
- Interpretation into international spoken languages
- Interpretation into sign languages
- Interpretation into simple language
- Simultaneous speech translation
- Audio description experts
- Programming of accessible websites
- Special graphics for accessible information material
- Experts for creating accessible information materials (videos, audio flyers, audio description, translation into simple language, interpretation into sign language, etc.)

The following points are the most common access requirements in response to barriers, according to Shape Audiences¹³⁵:

- Audio Description
- Captioned Performance
- Guide Dog
- Induction Loop
- Leg Room
- Level Access
- Seat Near Front
(this might be required for facilitative hearing, visual, navigation, and mobility purposes)
- Wheelchair

Common Barriers

People with disabilities may have one or more of several different access requirements that present barriers. This often results in the individuals feeling isolated and unable to participate in cultural events.

According to the Shape Audiences, the most common barriers people with disabilities face when accessing the cultural and creative sectors are:¹³⁶

1. Transport - for example, the need to use public transport might present a barrier for someone who requires additional support.
2. Financial - for example, the price of tickets might be expensive for people on low incomes.
3. Lack of Assistance and Support - for example, the lack of assistance and support on-site can present a barrier for navigating the event.
4. Lack of Information - for example, the lack of information provided in accessible formats can present a barrier.

Removing Barriers

You can remove common barriers by supporting individual access requirements, for example, by:¹³⁷

- Reviewing the access provisions available at the event and comparing them with the individual's access requirements
- Assigning a volunteer or staff member to support the individual during the event
- Providing transport assistance for them to attend the event
- Sharing in detail the individual's access requirements with the volunteer or staff member to ensure they can support them
- Contacting venues to book accessible tickets for the individual and their companions or volunteers
- Providing feedback to organisations on the experience of people with disabilities at the relevant venue

Ticket Sales, Accessible Bookings and Registration

Ticket Sales

It is a common practice for cultural organisations to offer free admission to people with disabilities and/or to their respective companions. While this may remove the financial barrier to participation, there are instances that it is offered to compensate for the continuing existence of other barriers, namely, conditions that make the event content and programme inaccessible.¹³⁸

Do not overlook creating access to content and programming in the first place and evaluate accessibility both to and at the event. For example, ticket sales offices should be located in a place that is accessible to people using wheelchairs and online ticket sales platforms should be navigable by people using different assistive technologies like screen readers.¹³⁹

When deciding on your ticket pricing policy, consider:¹⁴⁰

- a discount on the purchase of tickets, to contribute to balancing the so-called "extra costs of disability" such as the probability of unemployment or living on a low income, or the transport barriers that might occur.
- free admission for assistants accompanying people with disabilities.

Accessible Bookings and Registration

There are five key points to keep in mind when designing the process for people to register to attend your event or book tickets:¹⁴¹

1. A simple and consistent system for displaying access requirements
2. Accurate and disability-aware information and customer service
3. Choice and flexibility when booking tickets
4. The individual should be able to trust that promised access requirements will be met
5. Equal access should be available to everything

When developing your booking process, you should bear in mind:

- Online ticketing platforms such as [Eventbrite](#) may be the preference for people with disabilities who are not able to pick up tickets in person
- Some people with disabilities may have difficulties navigating online booking processes, so alternative options are essential
- Different booking options might include online platforms, in-person booking, or booking by phone
- When using online ticketing platforms or online registration forms also take the opportunity to ask attendees about any accessibility requirements they might need in order to attend

Statement examples:

'Please detail any access requirements prior to the event so we can provide the right support on the day.'¹⁴²

'The event is accessible for people using wheelchairs and all handout materials will be available in accessible electronic format. If you have any other access requirements in order to participate fully, please let us know on this form.'¹⁴³

'If you have any access requirements in order to participate in this event please note them in the space below, and an event organiser will contact you to discuss your requirements further.'¹⁴⁴

- Try to identify needs early in order to accommodate attendees. This can be done by pre-listing common options such as:

1. Wheelchair access
2. Allowing an accompanying assistant
3. Sign Language Interpreters
4. Note-taker
5. Assistive listening device
6. Video-captioning
7. Large print
8. Braille
9. Providing information on a USB memory stick instead of paper
10. Orientation to the facility
11. Diet restrictions
12. Scent-free environment¹⁴⁵

- More options include: a real-time captioner or provision of quiet rooms
- Indicate a deadline by which requests should be known¹⁴⁶
- Inform attendees about the access provisions in place at the event
- Consider offering disability-specific access forms for people with disabilities to fill in. See [this website](#) for disability-specific access forms.

3 things to keep in mind when offering support with booking and registration:

- Provide an email address and/or a telephone number to contact when requiring additional support.
- When providing a telephone number, make indications of the times available, time zone and the languages spoken
- Consider including a phone number that can be contacted using an instant messaging platform, for example, WhatsApp.¹⁴⁷

Access to Information for Diverse Needs

People with disabilities are diverse in their needs and requirements. Therefore, it may be useful to use specific access information forms to be fully aware of their needs. The Mobility International USA website offers [sample accommodation forms](#), e.g. for people who are blind or have low vision, who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, with a learning disability or ADHD, or with a physical disability.

Brief Registration Materials Checklist ✓

- Include a statement that meeting/event is accessible
- Include a statement outlining how someone can make a request for accommodation
- Designate a contact person to handle accommodation requests
- Ensure that your website is accessible
- Include an accessibility link for meeting/event on your website in a prominent place
- Identify any barrier that cannot be eliminated
- Offer materials in alternative formats
- Provide alternative registration options (online, telephone, text phone, email)¹⁴⁸

Venue Accessibility

Selecting Your Venue

The **venue selection** for an accessible event is crucial. Keep in mind that the event should ensure that everyone attending can enter, move around in, and exit the building safely, easily, and as independently as possible, based on the accessibility requirements that follow in this chapter. This includes exiting in case of an emergency.

Visit the venue well ahead of the event to have enough time to make additional accessibility arrangements if needed. Consider the number of visitors the venue can accommodate. Keep in mind that people with disabilities may attend with a personal assistant or a support animal for guidance.¹⁴⁹

Physical Accessibility

Physical accessibility includes:¹⁵⁰

1. The Public Space (and Private Areas)

- This means access to the venue: transport, pavements, parking, and pedestrian crossings, stairways, ramps and so on.
- Consider the accessibility of the private areas as well, such as rehearsal rooms, changing rooms, dressing rooms, workshops, toilets, and offices.
- This will ensure the physical accessibility for people with disabilities or temporary impairments such as participating artists, collaborators, as well as team members.

2. Circulation inside the Building

- While visiting the venue, consistently reflect on how easy it would be for individuals with different disabilities to come in and move around the building. For example, pavements, stairways, ramps, handrails, counters, doors, toilets, dressing/exhibition rooms, seating arrangements and so on.
- Take into account the extra space a wheelchair user might require to pass in a crowd, to stop and talk to others or to turn around (the turning circle for a wheelchair should be at least 150cm). Plan the setup, design, and layout to ensure that everyone can move around safely and easily.
- Consider the type of flooring that is easily wheelable, slip-resistant, and walkable such as rubber, stone, firm carpets or parquet flooring. Ideally tactile flooring should be used.

Consider the accessibility of broader services that attendees might require when attending the event. Are hotels, lodges, shopping malls, leisure and sightseeing activities, and banks in the vicinity? Can these services be reached easily from the venue location? Is the location of the venue near to the airport, train station, and public transportation?

See also these [checklists](#) on venue exterior features (p.3) and interior features (p.4) from the ABA Commission on Disability Rights.

3. Access to Information and Contents

- Access to information through clear signage so that attendees can navigate the space as independently as possible.
- For example, printed materials, display cases, labels, and panels should be made accessible.
- Consider accessible placement and positioning of event contents.

Accessibles Routes and Areas

Ensure all relevant areas are accessible for people with disabilities, including entrances and lobbies, lifts, toilets, hallways and corridors, as well as meeting and event rooms.¹⁵¹

Below you can find a fuller list of spaces, objects, and routes that you should take into account in terms of accessibility for people with different kinds of disabilities.¹⁵²

- Doors
- Lobbies and foyers
- Desks (ticket office, shop / bookstore, cafeteria / restaurant, cloakroom)
- Self-service equipment (ticket dispensers, parking payment, vending machines)
- Corridors, rooms and galleries
- Stairways and ramps; handrails
- Lifts and elevating platforms; controls
- Wheelchairs available to the public
- Seats
- Toilets, changing rooms, locker rooms
- Floors; tactile routes
- Concert halls
- Auditoriums
- Exhibition rooms; display cases; tables and panels
- Offices and workshops
- Rehearsal rooms and dressing rooms
- Canteen
- Signage
- Magnetic ring (especially in concert and conference halls, ticket office)
- Audio description equipment (cinemas / theatres)
- Sign Language interpretation equipment (cinemas / theatres)
- Audio guides / video guides
- Visual and sound alarms
- Emergency and evacuation plan

Signage and Orientation

Clearly marked areas and facilities at the event will ease the orientation at the venue for all attendees. Consider the following points:¹⁵³

- Create an **accessible registration area**. Ensure this area is well-lit and that tables/counters are accessible to wheelchair users. Also, ensure that printed copies of key information are available in accessible formats.

Consider the following questions regarding the **reception areas**:¹⁵⁴

- Are the reception areas spacious enough to accommodate wheelchair users, people using scooters, guide dogs, or other mobility aids?
- Are the reception areas near the main event rooms and toilets?
- Is the height of the reception desk accessible to wheelchair users? If not, can an alternative desk be provided?
- Are the front-of-house staff briefed or trained on the various needs of people with disabilities before the event?

- **Provide clear signage** at multiple points at the venue to ensure easy navigation.
- **Provide tactile flooring** for attendees with visual impairments.
- Consider providing and designating a **'sensory break room'** where people can take a break from the noise and the activities of the event.

Placement of Event Materials

Think about the placement of event materials and information at the event.

Assure that event materials as well as information (signage, displays, labels, visuals, and event programmes) are displayed at a height and in a position that is accessible to everyone.

For example, a typical countertop is generally not accessible to wheelchair users. Alternatively, the provision of a low-level section would be ideal. If this is not possible, consider a lightweight clipboard or lap tray as an alternative.

However, if this is not possible, offer additional support by staff to assist attendees in accessing the information and items they require.¹⁵⁵

Communicating the content before the event

- Some attendees might benefit from having access to the materials in advance, especially for people with intellectual disabilities or who require assistive technology to review materials
- If possible provide materials such as presentations, speeches, visuals, videos, and other information prior to the event

Seating

Consider the following points when organising seating arrangements:¹⁵⁶

- Seating aisles should be wide enough, clear, and without steps to accommodate those using mobility aids
- Ensure enough spaces between seating arrangements
- Ensure accessible seating throughout the room, with preferred seating for people with visual and hearing impairments in the front rows
- Ensure that all accessible seating is integrated within the room to avoid seating people with disabilities together
- Avoid seating people with disabilities at the fringes of the venue.
- Avoid fixed seating that is attached to tables
- Offer several types of seats with backs to accommodate people with different preferences in comfort
- Allow flexible seating arrangements so that attendees have seating options within a room
- Consider providing seating for personal assistants
- Ensure an accessible route to facilities such as toilets from those seats

Additional Rooms

Consider providing **extra rooms/areas** at the event for specific uses.

These are some examples:¹⁵⁷

- **Prayer Room**
- **Quiet Break Out Space** (for group discussions)
- **'Low Input' or 'Low-Stim' Room**, also known as a **Quiet Room** or **Sensory Break Room** (no talking, no noise, low lights, etc.)
- **'High-Input' Area** (energetic space with more noise/movement)
- **Smoking Area**
- **Gaming Room**
- **Play Area** (for children)

Information Accessibility

Accessible Digital Platforms

The websites of cultural organisations are usually the first point of contact for potential participants and so they should be designed in a way that makes the content accessible to all users, regardless of their physical abilities or how they use the internet.

You will need to consider the following elements:¹⁵⁸

- **Audio-visual content**, such as advertisement videos must include **subtitling, the use of audio description, and interpretation in sign language.**
- **Specific e-cards and newsletters should be created in an accessible way** that allows people with visual impairments and D/deaf people navigate the contents of the programme
- **Consider accessible formats** such as PDFs (see [Chapter 4 Making communications more Inclusive](#)), Word, HTML, or RTF. Some software, such as Microsoft Office, has an accessibility checker function that highlights issues with accessibility within the document and offers ways to overcome them.
- **The event website should contain an item in the menu section titled 'Accessibility'** that details the conditions of accessibility at the venue, accessibility and support services on-site, accessible programming, and a contact list for additional support on accessibility.
- **Use large fonts (DGVU Meta, Arial, Verdana) and high-contrast colours** to accommodate visitors with low vision or who are colour blind.
- **Create website navigation with a variety of input methods in mind.** Users with physical disabilities might not use a mouse.

A simple solution to avoid miscommunication for users is to create an event accessibility document or add a brief statement that provides additional support for specific access requirements.

The statement can be formulated as such:

Websites, newsletters, online digital documents, application forms should comply with the [Web Accessibility Guidelines](#) (W3C Guidelines). Moreover, the website should be compatible with the various specialist technologies that people with disabilities use to access digital information.

- **Add text descriptions for images, illustrations, and animations.** Most users with visual impairments use screen-reading technology that turns the text into speech.
- **Use accessibility-related pictograms** to help give clear depictions. [\[see the universal symbol for accessibility here on p. 27\]](#)
- **Symbols alone are not helpful**, the user requires more helpful information. For example, what does a wheelchair symbol mean specifically?
 - » Are the doors wide enough?
 - » Is there level access?
 - » Is there an accessible toilet?
 - » Can a wheelchair user manage if unaccompanied?
- **Present print information like flyers accessible.** Avoid layering small text over buzzing images or patterns.
- **Use language that respects the personhood of the individual with a disability** (see [Chapter 1.1 Models of Diversity, sub-section Models of Disability](#)).

1. 'If you would like to attend this event but have specific access requirements, please get in touch to find out more about the event and how we can support you on the day.'
2. 'For accessibility information, please visit the event listing on our website (www.yourwebsite.com) and/or get in touch if you have any questions - [email address/ telephone number/fax number]'¹⁵⁹

Important to note:

- Provide alternative means of contact details such as an e-mail address, telephone number and instant messaging service. This ensures that people with disabilities have varied options for contacting you.¹⁶⁰

Accessible Printed Materials

Printed materials should comply with the standards of accessible graphic design, by considering, for example, the type of paper or other materials, font types and sizes, colours and contrasts, line spacing, density between letters, text alignment, and paragraph width. If possible, you should provide documentation in alternative formats, such as Braille and large print, which is important for people with vision impairments. See also [Chapter 4.2 Designing Accessible Communications](#).

Recommendations for large print materials:¹⁶¹

- Large print text is considered to be at least 18pts
- Use a minimum of 1.5 line spacing for all texts
- Use double spacing when possible
- Use accessible fonts such as sans serif font
- Avoid capitals

Tips:¹⁶²

- Consider the graphic design for event brochures, texts on panels and labels, and programme notes.
- Consider the mother tongue of D/deaf people, which is often not the same as the spoken language of the country they come from. There are over 60 recognised sign languages around the world (including British Sign Language (BSL) and French Sign Language (LSF) and so on), and sometimes different versions in the same country. An example of this is Sign Supported English (SSE), in which the same signs are used as in BSL, but are expressed in the same order as spoken English. SSE is more common among people who lose their hearing later in life. For more information on the different Sign languages around the world read [this](#).
- Therefore, printed material should display the sign language symbol when addressing contents that are also available for D/deaf people.
- For people with intellectual disabilities, create alternative materials with pictograms and only simple text.

Important to note:

- It is good practice for event information and event materials, such as posters, flyers, booking forms and directions, to be available in plain text format upon request. This means simply text, without the formatting and visuals. This way it can be read by any assistive technology if required.¹⁶³

A statement as such could be included prominently on event material:
'Please get in touch with us [email address / phone number] if you would like to request this poster in plain text format or to let us know what format would be more accessible for you.'¹⁶⁴

Visual and Audio Information

Efforts should be made to make visual, and auditory information relevant to the event as accessible as possible to everyone. Some pointers on how to do this are listed below.¹⁶⁵

- Ensure that films, videos, slideshows, illustrations, animations, and other digital materials are **captioned** and use **audio descriptions** (also known as visual description).
- Consider using **graphic facilitation** to provide a visual representation of the presentation's content.
- Ensure there is an **auditory signal** and a visual cue in elevators to alert people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing and people with visual impairments.
- Provide **visual** and **sound alarms**.¹⁶⁶

Tip: Consider using QR codes that lead to a website or an application to provide information in an alternative format.¹⁶⁷

Access to the Spoken Word

An accessible event must provide attendees access to information and contents. It will ensure the participation and engagement of people with disabilities with the events' activities. Implementing the following will help ensure that everyone can access the event contents:¹⁶⁸

- **Audio Description** - for visual contents such as films and videos.
- **Interpretation in Sign Language** - Sign Language interpretation can be done live or pre-recorded in a video guide. Keep in mind there is no universal Sign Language.
- **Subtitling** - this will guarantee access for D/deaf people e.g. who do not speak Sign Language, those hard of hearing, or those whose first language is not that of the country.
- **Relaxed Sessions** - this session allows for a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for people with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum conditions, communication disabilities, attention deficit, etc.
- **Programme notes** - in the case that they exist, provide them in large print and Braille.
- **Audio-Visual Content** - must include Sign Language Interpretation, audio description, and subtitling.
- **Tactile Materials** - 3D prints, models, or raised prints can be made tactile for people with visual impairments.
- **Braille and large Print** - the texts displayed on panels and captions should have Braille and large print versions.
- **Guides with Pictograms** - as an alternative form of assistance e.g. signage of toilets, event rooms, etc.
- **Printed Materials** - should be made available in Braille and large print.
- **Audio induction loops or hearing loops** - this will help people using hearing aids or people with cochlear implants to hear more clearly.

Accessible Speeches and Presentations

Organisers must communicate with presenters and speakers in the preparatory stage of the event to ensure that materials and presentations prepared are accessible to all. You can find more information on accessible presentations in [Chapter 4. Making Communication More Inclusive, subsection 4.3.](#)

Here are some tips to consider when presenting and preparing a presentation:¹⁶⁹

- Time your presentation (factor in time for the audience's questions, summaries, interpretation in Sign Language, etc.).
- Speak slowly, clearly and include pauses
- Use simple language, short sentences, and avoid complex words or technical terms
- Define unclear terms and spell out names or terms
- Describe visual content such as photographs, images, charts, tables and so on
- Avoid reading off of paper, maintain eye contact, and ensure the audience can read your lips
- Presenters should provide a clear view of their mouths and faces
- Consider providing the audience with accessible printed presentation materials to go along with the presentation
- Consider supporting the presentation with means of multiple modalities (visual, auditory, tactile approaches)
- Consider repeating posed questions to ensure everyone understood them
- Ensure that the volume and the pace of the presentation are comfortable to all
- Arrange for captioning when including video materials ahead of time
- Identify each speaker, ensure that speakers speak one at a time

Keep in mind:

All information displayed on the screen should be explained in multiple ways.

Transportation

It is important to take into account how attendees might travel to and from the event. Keep these questions in mind to ensure transport accessibility:

1. Is there public transport (such as train or bus services) for those without private vehicles? How accessible are these services?
2. What are other transportation options?
3. Are the entrance and approach well lit and orientable?
4. Are the drop-off points where cars, taxis, and coaches set down passengers close to the entrance of the venue?
5. Is the timing of the event frequently enough for transport links and at a social hour in which assistants can attend?
6. Are there designated disabled parking spaces available?
7. How are the exit arrangements for people with disabilities? (consider the likelihood of crowds and long queues after the event)¹⁷⁰

Accommodation

When organising an event you should be prepared to assist attendees in finding and booking lodging or hotels which are accessible. It should meet their needs and allow them to attend the event. Consider the proximity and the travel options to the event location from the accommodation.

For example, accessible hotel rooms/ accommodations should fulfill the following requirements:¹⁷²

- **Bathrooms with wide doorways**, room for a wheelchair to have a turning radius, grab bars along and behind the toilet and bathtub, a roll-in shower, and pipes that are not exposed that could potentially injure the guest .
- **Accessible routes to all areas of the room**, including telephone, bed, closets and balcony.

Provide information on accessible public transport, including links to the local public transport provider's website. This will ensure that the attendees are informed prior to the event.

Consider accommodating attendees by arranging their transport. You might consider offering free transfers between key venues (hotel to venue, airport to venue) as it can be stressful for people requiring additional support to navigate an unfamiliar city.

Tips for arranging transfers:

- Ask participants in the registration form if they will need support with transfers
- Find a local taxi or minibus company with accessible vehicles to make the transfers
- Ensure to ask participants for their flight information (if arranging transfers to/from the airport) to provide assistance and guidance at the scheduled arrival and departure times.¹⁷¹

- **Door handles, sinks, taps and other accessories should preferably be levers** rather than knobs.
- **All items should be within reach** of someone in a wheelchair.
- **Good lighting and wide pathways.**
- **High-contrast colours** will help distinguish floors and walls .
- **Safety features** for people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, such as a flashing alarm system
- There should be a **clear path** from accessible parking spots to the lodging's lobby, as well as to the guest's room, with no obstacles or changes in elevation.¹⁷³

Sound, Lighting and other Technology

Most events use sound, lighting, and other technology to add impact to their events without considering the negative consequences on people with disabilities.

It is also important to ensure that all attendees can hear what is being said at large venues. Therefore you should consider providing these options:

1. **Hearing Loops or audio induction** - these systems allow people using hearing aids or cochlear implants to hear more clearly as they transmit and receive communication signals directly to the hearing aid.¹⁷⁴
2. **Magnetic rings** - these can be installed in larger rooms such as conference or theatre halls to improve the conditions for people using hearing aids. It overcomes factors such as the distance from the sound source or background noises.¹⁷⁵

Note:

Be aware that loud sounds such as loud music or loud background noise can cause difficulties for some individuals sensitive to sounds. Therefore, it is advisable to **locate the sound systems and other sources of sound strategically**. In a way in which the attendees can avoid these high noise levels. For example, consider providing a 'quiet room' or 'low-stim room'¹⁷⁶.

Consider the following examples regarding **lighting**:¹⁷⁷

- For example, **special effects** like flash lighting, strobes, and others such as the flicker of fluorescent lights may be overstimulating for people with epilepsy or tinnitus. However, if you do need to use these special effects, be sure to inform attendees beforehand and provide signage at the designated areas.
- For example, **dimmed lighting** may prevent a hearing-impaired person from lip-reading presenters, performers, and speakers.
- Also, those who are sighted or D/deaf and require sign language interpretation may find it impossible to see their interpreters due to the low lighting.

- Notably, at some events lighting is dimmed due to speakers using visual aids like videos, or presentation slides.
- Also, some people with low vision might prefer a room with **low lighting**. For example, you can use tungsten bulbs or uplighters.¹⁷⁸

Ensure **well-lit areas** and **adjustable lighting** at the event to accommodate attendees and presenters, performers, and speakers.

For example, a **relaxed performance** allows people with additional needs to enjoy performances in a more relaxed atmosphere e.g. the lowering of lights or the reduction of loud noises.¹⁷⁹

Additionally, you may want to consider installing a **Public Address (abbreviation: PA) System** consisting of amplifiers, loudspeakers, and microphones. It ensures that people can hear what is being said at large-scale events. This will allow members of the audience to participate if they are

invited to ask/answer questions. Therefore, the staff should be equipped with portable microphones for the audience members to use. Make sure the quality and volume of the PA system are clear but not excessively loud.¹⁸⁰

Public Relations

Once an accessibility plan is set in place, communicate it regularly with the public. Use the network's various communications channels to publicise the event - either in a printed or digital format. Also, ensure that the person responsible for the communications includes relevant information regarding the accessibility of the programming in the press releases.

Additionally, consider contacting attendees with disabilities individually, in order to inform them in a direct and immediate way.¹⁸¹

Consider these points regarding **publicity material** and content:

- Publish information about available facilities and accessibility arrangements at the venue
- Offer room for specific individual requirements in the booking form
- When planning to use special effects, notify people beforehand
- Publicise whether free places for personal assistants are provided
- Be sure to include access information in the publicity material
- Make an effort to provide written materials in other formats upon request
- Offer to send copies of written information before the event for those that may benefit from having the materials in advance (e.g. people with visual impairments)¹⁸²

Roles and Responsibilities

The Team

In order to facilitate an accessible event, it is important to realise that everybody on the team can contribute to making an event more accessible.

The event management team that includes speakers, venue staff, exhibitors, session chairs, booking staff, performers, volunteers and suppliers has the chance to contribute to creating an accessible event.

To ensure the team is trained and prepared consider participation in **Disability Equality/Awareness Training**. This will equip the team with knowledge and information on accessibility barriers and how to make necessary changes.¹⁸³

Specifically, the venue staff can support and aid people with disabilities in the time leading up to and during the event. Consider planning a **staff briefing** before the event. You may want to consider asking local disability

organisations to help provide the briefing.

For example:

Let the security staff of the venue know that participants attending may require more time to pass through the security procedures. Also, informing them of any possible adjustments they should be aware of will ensure a more pleasant experience for everybody.¹⁸⁴

A **brief checklist** on staff/volunteer training can be found in the ABA Commission on Disability Rights' toolkit on [Planning Accessible Meetings and Events](#) (p.17).

Important to note:

Brief or train front-of-house staff, such as ticket desk assistants, guards, ushers, mediators and tour guides, shop assistants, waiters/waitresses, invigilators, security, and other staff members who might be interacting with people with disabilities on their requirements and needs before the event.¹⁸⁵

Accessibility Coordinator

It is essential for an accessible event that someone on the team is responsible for the accessibility issues. The person responsible must have current knowledge and experience in the field as they must comply with the current laws and regulations. The appointing of an accessibility coordinator means:

- That accessibility will be considered in every initiative and action
- There is coordination between the various areas of the network
- That there is continuity in this work, even if the team's composition changes
- That communication is facilitated with the public as someone is responsible for accessibility issues
- They should be listed as the contact on all materials and be the person the team goes to with their accessibility questions¹⁸⁶

The Speakers, Performers and Presenters

In addition to designing an accessible intervention (see Accessible Speeches and Presentations earlier in this chapter) speakers, performers, and presenters must be aware of the accessibility policy for the event beforehand. They should be informed about the requirements of people with disabilities within the audience and colleagues on the panel.

The accessibility policy must be considered when preparing a speech, performance, or presentation.

Consider requesting presentations ahead of the event to review their compliance with the accessibility guidelines and make adjustments.

Important to note:

Create an event environment in which speakers with disabilities have access to participate, not only as audience members but also as speakers, performers, and presenters.¹⁸⁷

Food and Dietary Requirements

If you choose to provide food and/or refreshments at the event, be sure to request details of any dietary requirements during the booking process.

Consider the following points:¹⁸⁸

- **Include finger foods** - that won't require the use of utensils/or hold plates.
- **Offer options for cutlery and crockery** - for example, bendable straws, lightweight cups, or mugs.
- **Designate more than one food or beverage area.**
- **Provide inclusive food choices**, for example, gluten-free, sugar-free, vegan, vegetarian, Kosher, or Halal.
- **Clearly label foods/ingredients.**
- **Serve beverages and food on separate platters.**
- **Ensure assistance on-site** for people with visual and physical impairments if food is served buffet-style.
- **Consider the heights of tables and counters.**
- **Ensure there is enough room between the tables** for wheelchair users to move around easily.
- **Ensure that the menus are accessible** by printing them in large Sans Serif fonts and contrasting print and paper.

Keep in mind:

Consider the **type of food** that is being served and **how it will be served and eaten.**¹⁸⁹

After the Event

Make Materials Available

Accessibility does not end once the event is over.

Event materials such as presentations, videos, documents, and other materials should be made available after the event.

Ensure that the event materials are accessible to everyone. Additionally, this will ensure that people who were not able to attend the event have online access to the relevant resources.

Ensure that the video and visual contents have sign language, audio descriptions and captioning. Ensure that any written documents and materials are available in accessible digital formats.¹⁹⁰

Evaluating the Event (Collecting Feedback of the Event)

Organisers should always **ask attendees for feedback** after the event in order to evaluate how successful the accessibility measures were. This will allow room for improvement and you can act on the feedback for future events. Ensure that everyone can take part in this feedback process by providing different means to give feedback.

See the following feedback survey option [Post Meeting/Event Survey](#) from the ABA Commission on Disability Rights (p.21).

5.3 MAKING ONLINE EVENTS ACCESSIBLE

Virtual technologies have become an integrated part of modern life, including for meetings, conferences, remote learning for students and remote work. The way we use these technologies can make them more or less accessible and inclusive to participants with diverse needs. In this section we look at holding events online for an audience, whether your event is wholly online or hybrid (with some participants joining in person and others joining online). You may also wish to consult [Chapter 2.7 on Inclusive Meetings](#).

Accessible Invitations and Registration

Most invitations for online events are sent via email or posted on social media. To ensure accessible invitations and registration in their format and content consider the following points.¹⁹¹ You might also consult [Chapter 4 Making communications more Inclusive](#), particularly [4.3 Web and Social Media Accessibility](#).

- Graphical elements, such as logos or images, should include alternative text describing the graphic
- Provide a plain text version of the invite
- Ask registrants in the registration form if they require any specific accommodation to fully participate in the meeting. For example, include a simple statement like the following:

“If you have additional needs, let the organiser know and we’ll do what we can to help you.”¹⁹²

“Please tell us if there is anything we can do to ensure your participation is barrier-free. Potential requests include things like sign language interpretation, closed captioning, a pre-conference orientation tour of the virtual conference interface, keyboard-only navigation options, or assistance with accessing conference social events. Please note that we strive to be an inclusive, accessible conference, but not all requests can be guaranteed. If you have questions or would like to engage in a more detailed conversation, please contact [Email of Accessibility Chair].”¹⁹³

- Provide contact details of someone who can assist people with their accommodation requests
- Include information on the length of the event
- Provide information on what the format of the event will be
- Include information on the extent of active audio and video participation
- When incorporating an icebreaker or questions directed to everyone, be sure to inform participants beforehand
- Encourage participants to send in comments or questions before the event
- Attach accessible documents relevant to the event in advance

Accessible Conference Software

Use virtual meeting platforms that offer accessibility measures. These may vary from platform to platform. When selecting the video conferencing tool determine whether they incorporate captions and transcripts. Additionally, it is important to understand the participants' use of assistive tools and technologies (such as a screen reader, braille display, Zooming, voice control, foot mouse or other) to ensure that it is compatible with the video conferencing tool.¹⁹⁴

The accessibility features of some common virtual meeting technologies can be seen on their websites:

- [Zoom](#)
- [Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Google Meet](#)

Furthermore, understanding the different communication styles can be helpful when planning a virtual event. These are the main **communication styles**¹⁹⁵:

- **Captions**
- **Sign Language**
- **Tactile Sign Language (Braille Display for virtual events)**
- **Audio Description**
- **Augmented and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices & Text-to-Speech**
- **Text-based communication**

Clear Programme and Schedule

All participants will benefit from a clear and well-organised meeting programme and schedule. Therefore, it is crucial to outline the overall structure of the meeting including breaks, keynotes, breakout sessions and other sessions, as well as how to navigate them all.

Consider including the following in the meeting schedule:

- Include the type of event: Webinar, Conference, Workshop and so on
- Provide the name of the platform used and a link to the event
- Include the names of the partners, teams, and projects involved
- List the key speakers of the event
- Clearly list times (time zones, local times) and dates
- Provide contact details of the event organiser
- Provide links to viewing any presentation artifacts
- Provide tools for viewing and posting questions

Accessible Documents and Presentations

The information shared and delivered virtually should be made accessible to all. All materials relating to the event and presentations should be created in an accessible way and should be made available before the event. You can find more information on how to prepare and present presentations in an accessible way in [Chapter 4 Making communications more Inclusive](#) and [Chapter 5.2 Making Physical Events Accessible](#), the subchapter Accessible Speeches and Presentations.

The following tips will help to ensure accessible virtual presentations:¹⁹⁶

- Choose a clear and contrasting colour scheme for background and text.
- Use an easy-to-read, simple font
- Emphasise relevant points in bold or with larger text
- Keep the text on the slides brief. If you want to include text from your talk for participants to read, put it in the notes of the slide
- Describe the key content of each slide, including images
- Avoid using the phrases 'as you can see' or 'as this shows'
- Make graphics simple. Avoid complex or detailed images
- Avoid using excessive animations and flashing content
- Provide captions for videos played and announce when you are starting the video
- Speak clearly and at a steady pace
- Allow time for clarifications or comments during your presentation
- Test accessibility features before the event
- Suggest a flappause (waving both hands without making noise) at the end of the presentation
- Make your presentation available before the event

You may also consider using [real-time captioning](#), which is an integrated feature of Microsoft PowerPoint.

Even adopting some simple techniques can go a long way in creating accessible documents regardless of the document type (e.g., HTML, Microsoft Word, Adobe PDF):¹⁹⁷

- Use headings
- Use lists
- Use meaningful hyperlinks
- Add alternate text to images
- Identify the language of the document

Ensuring Participation

Encourage and ensure the participation of everyone attending the virtual event by providing different means of participation and an overall safe meeting environment.

These are **general tips** on how to ensure participation:

- Before starting the online event, give attendees enough time to settle in with the platform and its functions
- If access issues should arise, encourage participants to address them via a direct message or in the chat
- Encourage the use of the 'reactions' buttons, for example, the 'hands up' feature in the case of technical issues
- Ask for responses in the chat (However, balance this with the consideration that the constant use of the chat feature can be distracting to some)
- Read comments/responses out loud when referring to them
- Use breakout rooms for more manageable conversations of 3-4 participants.
- Ensure participants mute their microphone when they are not speaking
- Turn on your camera when speaking so people who are hard of hearing or D/deaf can read your lips
- Position yourself in a well-lit space or use good lighting
- Create pauses during and between activities
- Describe visual elements, including yourself when you introduce yourself and what can be seen on the screen
- You might establish a common working document where participants can type comments to common questions

Keep the objective in mind of the four principles of inclusion:
Belonging, Understanding, Participating/Contributing and Valuing.¹⁹⁸

Providing Accessible Information after the Event

Accessibility does not end once the event is over. Online event materials such as presentations, videos, documents, and other materials should be made available after the event. Ensure that the online event materials are accessible to everyone.

Consider the following tips:

- Save the chat and make it available to participants
- Collect links mentioned in chat and share with all participants
- Record the conversations and or the entire online event (with consent) and make it available to everyone online (with captions and transcripts)
- Create a debrief document (summary with key points) to share after the event
- Send a 'thank you' email to participants with any resources as the slideshow used in the event
- Send a 'thank you' email to the speakers and anyone else involved in the event, along with an opportunity to give feedback on the process¹⁹⁹

ENDNOTES

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