



create national development
agency for collaborative arts

Connect

Create

Change

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
and Action Plan

September 2023

Introduction

Create is the national development agency for collaborative arts. Our work initiates cross-sectoral national and international partnerships which support artists and communities to co-create work of depth, ambition and excellence.

Our mission is to lead the development of collaborative arts practice by enabling artists and communities to create exceptional art together.

As a resource organisation we offer supports for artists working in social and community contexts. Create believes that by working together, artists and communities can purposefully explore how collaborative arts engage in distinct, relevant and powerful ways with the urgent social, cultural and political issues of our times.

Within our current strategy, *Connect Create Change 2020-2025*, we have five strategic goals. The second of these goals is: Develop cultural and cross-sectoral partnerships to support greater diversity in the practice and strengthen its capacity for social change.

A number of actions are set out to achieve this goal:

- Connect with relevant support organisations to enable collaborative artists from ethnic and other minority groups to access opportunities in Ireland
- Influence discourse within the arts and wider public discourse through symposia; initiatives such as Learning Labs with Counterpoints Arts; and targeted communications, so as to broaden definitions and deepen understandings of cultural diversity
- Increase our community and civil society alliances and collaborations to strengthen our programming, research and advocacy work
- Connect with more geographically dispersed communities through programmes such as the Artist in Community Scheme and our Collaborative Practice Clinics
- Link actions under this goal with other strategic commitments e.g. our international agenda and the relationship between digital practices and collaborative arts

Our Values

In our programmes, the delivery of our services, our decision-making, and our organisational behaviour, Create strives to be:

- **Open:** We welcome diverse perspectives that challenge our thinking and enrich our practice
- **Adaptive:** We are responsive in our work; continuously developing to best support the interests and needs of artists and communities in this evolving field
- **Innovative:** We value artistic experimentation and risk-taking and work in a spirit of creative solidarity with artists and communities
- **Informed:** We stay attuned to broader socio-cultural and political developments as they unfold in community contexts and are reflected in artists' practices
- **Engaged:** We value the richness of cross- sectoral alliances and artistic partnerships, promoting engaged cultural action, critical debate and experiential learning

Context

As an organisation, Create was founded on principles of inclusion and a desire to contribute to a more just and equitable society through alliances with progressive socio-political causes. From our very earliest days, this has been the essence of what we do and it continues to be a primary concern across all of our work.

Create operates within a broader environment which is governed by Irish legislation around equality, diversity and inclusion, such as the Equal Status Acts and Employment Equality Acts. Our core funder, The Arts Council, published its own Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy in 2019, and, more recently, its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan (2023-2028), which sets out how it aims to take actions over the course of the coming years to actively deepen its understanding of inequalities in the arts and develop substantive ways to address them.

Ireland has evolved rapidly in the 40 years since Create was founded, both in terms of its diversity across a number of characteristics and also in recognising some of the diversity within our society that had not been understood or appreciated before. Throughout these years, Create has always been at the forefront of progressive change, supporting artists and communities to navigate and understand the profound changes that have taken place in Irish society.

We recognise that, politically, we are in a period where the progress made in recent decades in terms of diversity and inclusion is being threatened by the rise of far-right groups operating not just in Ireland, but internationally. The aggressive targeting of certain groups with hate speech and violence has raised the concerns of all those who value a free, tolerant and equitable society.

Create stands firm in its belief that all people are entitled to fully enjoy their lives and participate in culture without fear of prejudice, hatred or discrimination. We believe that working towards a just and equitable society is core to the work of our organisation. Therefore, this policy and action plan seeks to go beyond simply ensuring our own working processes are meeting the minimum requirements, but rather that we are setting exemplary standards and actively pursuing new models through our work.

We believe in constructive dialogue and acknowledging that none of us is perfect, and no individual or organisation holds ultimate authority over others when navigating the intersectional nuances of this work. We do not seek to unduly criticise or vilify any other person or organisation. We aim to listen, learn and share in the hope of building alliances and moving forward together, as a sector and as a society.

Definitions

Under Irish law, there are nine 'protected grounds' under which it is unlawful to discriminate against someone. These are:

- Gender (male, female, transgender or nonbinary)
- Civil status (single, married, separated, divorced, widowed or in a civil partnership)
- Family status (a pregnant person, a parent, an acting parent of a child, or a carer of a person with a disability who requires continued care)
- Sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual orientation)

- Age (only applies to those who are aged eighteen years and over)
- Religious belief (including religious background and those who have no belief)
- Membership of the Traveller community
- Race (skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Disability (intellectual, mental and/or physical disability)

Terms as defined by [IHREC](#), [Racial Equity Tools](#), [Athena Swan](#) and others

For the purposes of this policy, we use terminology that is broadly understood in Irish society but not always perfect. For further useful definitions, please visit the [IHREC](#) and [Racial Equity Tools](#).

Recent Work

In 2017 Create began to develop the 'Cultural Diversity' strand within the [Artist in the Community Scheme](#), which Create manages on a devolved basis for the Arts Council. Recognising the changing demographic of Ireland and the fragile conditions and challenging circumstances of artists who were underrepresented or marginalised by the sector, an aim of this work was to increase the capacity and engagement of artists and communities from minority ethnic and migrant backgrounds to access the Scheme.

Additional features in the Scheme were [Artist Residency Awards](#) (to date 2018- 2023), as well as [Summer Schools in Cultural Diversity and Collaborative Practice](#) (2018 - 2022), and a [Bursary award](#) in Collaborative Arts and Cultural Diversity (2020- 2022). In response, we have seen a significant increase in applications from artists from a minority ethnic or migrant background to the scheme and the development of a rich ecology where previous awardees - both artists and communities - are reconvening to develop and initiate new projects. One of Create's strategic goals is that diversity in collaborative arts be understood beyond questions of ethnicity alone, Create's approach has been to advocate for a more intersectional approach and focus on equitable access to the AIC Scheme. This process has been iterative, involving in-depth dialogue with artists as well as implementing and testing different ways to approach the support offered to applicants, the application process, assessment process, access supports and more.

In 2020, Create published the report [Creating a Welcoming Environment, Stimulating Diverse Art](#) by Evgeny Shtorn, which gathered together interviews covering the experiences of 14 artists from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2021, we commissioned an evaluation review of the Cultural Diversity strand by Dr Francesca La Morgia and Hassan Mahamdallie, who presented a report to Create and the Arts Council in July 2022. This report noted the evidence of progress against the aims of the strand as well as many positive anecdotal comments from artists. The report makes five key recommendations, which we aim to address in this policy and subsequent action plan.

Recommendations:

1. Create needs to overhaul and expand its data collection and analysis across the AIC scheme and its discrete strands

2. It is recommended that Create reconsiders the continued use of the term 'Cultural Diversity'. The organisation should look at more focused and tightly drawn descriptions that arise from the specific interventions the organisation undertakes in the field of EDI.
3. In the future, Create should have the ability and resources to construct bespoke processes that reflect as fully as possible the outcomes that they see as strategically important. This would also allow Create to move into the area of devising and piloting new methodologies and programmes for Ireland's arts sector, that can be studied and adopted by other companies who also want to be part of fundamentally diversifying the arts landscape to fully reflect the rapidly changing nature of Irish society.
4. It is recommended that Create, in the development of its new EDI plan, concentrate on developing new approaches and programmes of work that more accurately express the context it is presently working in, its ambitions, and the aspirations of its stakeholders, including the cohort of artists and communities it wants to fund and support.
5. Create's new EDI plan should set out a bold leadership agenda, underpinned by a clear articulation of the resourcing needed to achieve success. The EDI plan should also signal Create's willingness to positively interrogate existing orthodoxies and to advance new thinking, learning and fresh approaches more aligned with the diverse cohort of artists and organisations it works with and supports.

The effectiveness of Create's efforts in recent years are borne out by the figures collected via the AIC Scheme for areas where we have specifically focused our efforts. In the *Equality Data and Arts Council Awards* report on 2022 funding, it is noted that ethnic diversity in both applicants and award recipients in the AIC Scheme is higher than in any other Arts Council funding scheme or artform area. The report also notes the high level of applicants reporting a disability within the AIC Scheme (11.5% of applicants), with the 15% of award recipients being both higher than the national figure from Census 2022, and higher than any reported figure for an artform or Arts Council funding scheme other than Arts & Disability Connect, which reports 100% due to the eligibility requirements of the scheme.

We believe that these figures demonstrate the impact of many years of concerted efforts to deeply explore the needs of a greater diversity of artists and understand the systemic barriers that are prevalent within the sector and our application processes. The willingness of our staff, partners and funders to experiment and test new approaches has paid dividends and provides encouragement for the future as we seek to further our progress in this area.

Commitments

First and foremost, Create is committed to ensuring that our work adheres to Irish legislation around discrimination and equal status of individuals. Our existing organisational policies on Equal Opportunities, Diversity Management, Dignity at Work, Training and Development, Recruitment and Selection, and Grievance Procedures all provide a minimum standard of practice in these areas to ensure fair and equitable treatment of individuals.

This policy and action plan aims to take us further and lays out our commitment to ensuring our programme delivery both reflects contemporary Irish society and drives positive change.

Create aims to strengthen its position as a leader within the cultural sector and wider Irish society in advancing towards equality. We are committed to carrying out more in-depth monitoring of diversity in key areas of our work and publishing our findings annually. These findings will inform our action plan for the subsequent year, as we address disparities or identify areas for improvement.

At this point in time, our primary areas of focus are:

- Internal – staff, board, working processes, programming decisions
- External – applicants, awardees, decision-makers, and participants and audiences

As we gather more useful data, we will review the findings and work with our staff, board and external advisors to devise the best way to address the area of concern. We acknowledge that this requires further testing and experimentation and that we will not always get everything right. We reiterate our commitment to learning from, and sharing, our experiences.

We intend to take account of the principles of Targeted Universalism in our efforts to effect change. Targeted Universalism means setting universal goals that can be achieved through targeted approaches. This approach targets the various needs of each group while reminding us that we are all part of the same social fabric.

Action Plan		2023-24
<i>Area</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Data	Revamp of data collection: new questions to capture consistent anonymised information on gender identity, religion, and class.	New format for diversity monitoring data capture to include additional questions. (Oct 2023)
	Data will be gathered across five key groups: Staff/Board, Decision Making Panels, Artist Applicants, Artist Awardees, and Programme Participants/Audiences.	First year of anonymised baseline monitoring data captured and analysed. (Jul 2024)
	An annual report on each area will be published in the summer and fed back to our funders. Issues highlighted by the data in the annual report will guide actions for the subsequent year's action plan.	Report providing summary data to be published. Transparency of data will be prioritised but balanced against privacy issues with smaller sample sizes. (Aug 2024)
Awards	Testing and monitoring the effectiveness of changes to the 2023 AIC Scheme bursary and the application process, which aims to broaden its scope and support artists facing barriers to developing their practice.	Review of new structure and eligibility for AIC bursary and iteration of the process for subsequent award. (Nov 2023)
	Create will engage Chronic Collective as consultants to review all aspects of the AIC Scheme to provide an assessment and recommendations on possible improvements with a particular focus on the needs of disabled and chronically ill artists.	Report with observations and recommendations relating to the AIC Scheme produced by consultants. (Jun 2024)
Training & Development	The Summer School on Collaborative Practice and Social Change will continue to evolve and prioritise the platforming of artists, activists and other changemakers from underrepresented backgrounds. Following a change of name in 2023, we will expand the offer of the School in 2024 to	Summer School 2024 to be delivered in partnership with Counterpoints Arts and international collaborators. (Jun 2024)

	encourage individual and collective action stemming from the event and activate experimental initiatives with both funding and support.	
New initiatives	New funding support will allow Create to take risks and experiment in new, more equitable, ways of working (including commissioning and grant-making). We will convene multiple fora to share and explore ideas that challenge the current dominant systems in the arts and culture sector and provide the means to activate and test ideas that emerge from these discussions.	Funding secured from Rowan Trust and new initiatives supporting the work of artists from marginalised backgrounds. (Jul 2024)