



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Research and innovation  
**by everyone, for everyone**



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# Foreword

## **Excellence in research and innovation requires a culture that values and supports different people, ideas and perspectives.**

Embracing the widest possible range of exceptional talent and skills will strengthen research and innovation and the ability to improve lives, helping to create a knowledge economy that benefits everyone and supports growth and prosperity.

In 2022, we ran a consultation on our draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. We received a broad range of feedback and views. We have used this feedback, together with our long-term work across UKRI and extensive engagement across the research and innovation sector, to help us refine the strategy and develop a suite of action plans.

It is clear that a variety of approaches and interventions will be needed to create a more inclusive research and innovation system, where people, creativity, and ideas can flourish. The UKRI EDI strategy serves as a unifying framework, to which our suite of action plans are directly linked.

These action plans enable us to test, pilot and evaluate approaches in different contexts – some will be system-wide, while others will be more focussed. The plans are informed by data, insight and engagement with our communities. The action plans are living documents that will continue to evolve as we learn from ourselves and others. We will use our People, Culture and Talent portfolio approach to connect work across these action plans, actively share learning as we make progress

Through this approach, we are giving greater visibility of the work happening across UKRI to foster a research and innovation system 'by everyone, for everyone'. We will continue to share our experiences, successes, and challenges as we develop and evolve our plans.

**Professor Melanie J Welham,**  
***UKRI Executive Champion for People,  
Culture and Talent***

# Foreword

**Studying humanities means standing in awe of the diversity and complexity of our existence as human beings.**

The differences between us are as essential to our flourishing, as prejudice and oppression are inimical. Equality, diversity and inclusion are not optional extras; they are our moral imperatives and must run through everything we do and are. Our EDI plan is at the core of AHRC's Vision. We will drive up representation through our peer review college and our own organization; we will rigorously pursue fairness and equity in the way we set up our grants; we will monitor the change that we make and present the result openly and transparently; and we will actively promote the value of arts and humanities research to, for, with and about everyone in our society, equally and equitably. The measure of our success will be that those who research arts and humanities fully reflect the rich diversity of our human existence, and contribute to a richer understanding of being human.

**Professor Christopher Smith,**  
*Executive Chair, AHRC*



# Introduction

**The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is committed to promoting the values of equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusivity. This publication presents an updated EDI Action Plan for AHRC.**

It reaffirms our commitment to our EDI vision and priorities, published in April 2021, and is closely aligned with our strategic delivery plan and people plan. The Action Plan was developed in the context of the first edition of the UKRI EDI Strategy and holds the same overriding ambition to ‘foster a R&I system for everyone by everyone’, as stated by Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser in its CEO foreword<sup>1</sup>.

It is our view that arts and humanities disciplines depend on a diverse range of methods, viewpoints, subjects and approaches in order to continue to thrive and develop. As the Bonn Declaration puts it, freedom

of scientific research is inseparable from a plurality of voices. One important way to achieve this is through continuing to fund a diverse range of people and projects. We will work closely with UKRI colleagues to ensure EDI is embedded both at all levels of our organisation and in the portfolio of research that we fund and support. In doing so, we support our vision and contribute and benefit the R&I ecosystem.

As a UK public sector organisation, we are fully committed to our legal obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#) legislation and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Our actions on internally-facing EDI work are also included within the UKRI EDI Workforce Plan and the AHRC People plan.

We are committed to actively listening, valuing and demonstrating respectful and inclusive behaviours to everyone who works for, and with, AHRC.



**“Foster a Research and Innovation system for everyone by everyone.”**

# Vision statement

## AHRC aims to:

- ensure a transparent, consistent and robust approach towards embedding good EDI practice in governance, decision making, policies, practices and processes as both a funder of innovative research and as an employer in order to support our vision and priorities
- support and champion the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in arts and humanities research
- offer and advocate support for arts and humanities researchers from under – represented groups through the various stages of their research careers
- build a strong evidence base of EDI practice in arts and humanities research with stakeholders.

## Current EDI priorities:

- further diversifying our Peer Review College and other decision-making structures to more accurately reflect the diversity of UK society
- understanding and addressing barriers to inclusion for applicants from under – represented groups across all our funding schemes and doctoral programmes
- recognising that many EDI issues are systemic and not specific to arts and humanities research, and so committing to collective working across UKRI on the wider structural EDI challenges faced by researchers, students and institutions
- Ensuring AHRC is an inclusive employer and champions a diverse organisation.

**“We are committed to valuing, actively listening to, and demonstrating respectful and inclusive behaviours to everyone who works for, and with, AHRC.”**



# AHRC updated EDI Action Plan: Overview

**AHRC published its first EDI Action Plan in April 2021. An updated EDI Action Plan has been developed in response to a review of this initial plan, as well as the UKRI EDI strategy and EDI Workforce plan, and AHRC's Strategic Delivery Plan and People Plan.**

Our Action Plan is structured in alignment with the four key objectives set out in the UKRI draft EDI strategy. These objectives state that UKRI will:

- foster an inclusive R&I system
- advance equality and inclusion through our investments and how we work
- ensure that everyone who works for UKRI will feel included, valued and able to contribute and participate
- develop approaches to monitor, measure and evaluate change.

With the aspiration that EDI will be embedded across AHRC in all that we do, the Action Plan has tangible links with AHRC's Strategic Delivery Plan and aspires to reflect the breadth of our investments and portfolio.

When we talk about diversity within the Action Plan, we do so with a holistic approach, as outlined in UKRI's strategy 2022-2027 principles of change, which state that UKRI will 'champion a creative and dynamic R&I system by supporting diversity of ideas, people, activities, skills and infrastructures'<sup>2</sup>.

The updated Action Plan continues to position AHRC as an EDI learning council. It demonstrates our commitment to learn, share good practice, mature our practice and policy, and place EDI at the core of everything we do. In doing so, we also set an example to those we work with and fund.

The Action Plan states our intentions to embed good EDI practice across our council in terms of governance, decision making, policies, practices and processes. It states that EDI responsibility is the responsibility of every member of staff. In order for this to happen successfully, AHRC will ensure all employees feel supported and confident to embed EDI principles in their work schemes.

The Action Plan should be seen as a living document, where we monitor and review its importance and value.

**"The Action Plan should be seen as a living document, where we monitor and review its importance and value."**

# Highlights of the Action Plan

- Commitment to nurture diverse talent pipeline via our doctoral funding programmes in order to support diverse talent needed for arts and humanities research to thrive.
- Co-commissioning of the EDI Caucus to inform and mature our EDI practice and policy
- Build on the success of the last Peer Review College recruitment round, embedding key learnings in future recruitment rounds to ensure our decision making is informed and enriched by diverse voices.
- Develop our grant management and awarding processes to ensure they are as inclusive as possible. We will improve our approach to conducting equality impact assessments (EIAs) for all new investments. We will identify opportunities to improve EDI on a funding opportunity-by-funding opportunity basis.
- Support staff in accessing EDI learning opportunities so AHRC colleagues feel confident in developing their EDI knowledge and understanding.
- AHRC's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy will inform our approach to how we monitor, measure and evaluate change.

**Please note – to find out more about the investments we reference in our EDI Action Plan, please visit our Strategic Delivery plan: [AHRC strategic delivery plan – UKRI](#)**



# 1.

## Foster an inclusive R&I system

### We will:

- Support a diverse talent pipeline
- Support inclusive progression pathways for diverse roles across R&I
- Champion the development of diverse ideas, people, activities, skills and infrastructures
- Co-fund the EDI Caucus to inform our EDI policy and practice.
- Provide opportunities and a platform for those in our community to share their learning and best-practice.

Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>1.1</b> Nurture a diverse and inclusive talent pipeline. We will champion diverse cohorts of students within our doctoral investments.	Increase accessibility of our doctoral programmes for all, regardless of background and career stage. Barriers to participation will be addressed, and inclusive practices and programmes developed.	Diverse range of people, from different backgrounds and career stages, will be encouraged and supported to study at postgraduate level and embark on a career in R&I.	Respond to key findings of review of Doctoral Training Partnerships by CRAC / Vitae to develop and deliver AHRC's Future Doctoral Provision programme.  Work with doctoral investments and advisory groups to ensure EDI good practice is being embedded and developed within EDI Action Plans.  Work with UKRI colleagues from the Collective Talent Fund on the new deal for postgraduate research.	Delivery of Future Doctoral Provision programme.  Work with UKRI colleagues from the Collective Talent Fund on the new deal for postgraduate research.
<b>1.2</b> Offer inclusive progression pathways for diverse roles across R&I. Support development of those working across the entirety of this ecosystem, within industry and academia and interdisciplinary research. Support different entry points for people in R&I.	Meeting the skills development needs of a diverse workforce working across the R&I landscape.	AHRC is supporting a diverse talent pipeline so everyone working within R&I can realise their potential and make meaningful contributions.	Delivery of programmes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AHRC/ Research Libraries UK joint fellowships working with the Institute of Conservation.</li> <li>• Early Career Research Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum (GLAM) fellowships.</li> <li>• Innovation scholarships.</li> <li>• UK-US digital scholarship fellows.</li> </ul> Support cross-council UKRI programmes, such as Future Leaders Fellowship scheme.  Contribute to the delivery of the UKRI People and Teams Plan.	Commit £1.1 million over three years for fellowships in public policy and the Galleries, Libraries, Museums and Archives (GLAM) sector.  Investment of £7 million in the next three years in key leadership roles to connect ideas, sectors and geographies.  Commitment to cross-council, interdisciplinary and strategic investments – infrastructure, place, health and humanities, innovation scholars, and international.

Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>1.3</b> Support and champion the development of diverse ideas, people, activities, skills and infrastructures on which the R&I landscape depends.	Continue to realise the significance and value of interdisciplinary research. Deepened links between industry and academia. Encourage a wider and more diverse R&I community to apply for AHRC funding.	A diverse range of people, organisations and sectors who contribute to the arts and humanities R&I landscape are acknowledged and empowered to apply for AHRC funding, and they contribute to the R&I landscape in significant and meaningful ways. Skills gaps are being addressed.	Work closely with partners in interdisciplinary investments to understand needs of teams delivering these programmes of research, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem</li> <li>• Mobilising community assets against health disparities</li> <li>• Future observatory: Design the Green Transition</li> <li>• -Creative Industries</li> </ul> Contribute to the delivery of UKRI's Technician Commitment Action Plan.	Invest £16 million in the next three years through the Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science Fund (RICHeS) to improve innovation in the culture and heritage sectors.  Launch new £15 million Creative Research Capability Awards.  Development of a new national infrastructure for digital innovation and curation, investing £8 million in the next three years.  Development and delivery £75.6 million CoSTAR investment over next six years.
<b>1.4</b> We will fund primary research and knowledge exchange activities aligned to EDI as a theme through the co-commissioning of the EDI Caucus.	We will be able to plan our approach to EDI founded on a robust, academically-informed evidence base.	Decision making is informed by research and evidence. EDI as a theme will run through all our investments.	Support the delivery of the Caucus by contributing to steering group.  Ensure key learning outcomes are communicated at all stages of the project to inform EDI decision making, process and policy.	Ensure learnings are embedded into EDI policy and practice.
<b>1.5</b> We will support, provide opportunities and a platform for those in our community to share their EDI learning and good practice.	We will raise the visibility of cross-sectoral work and identify opportunities to support structural change to address EDI collectively.	Best-practice is shared and adopted on a sector-wide basis. Opportunities to challenge and address structural inequality are identified and supported.	Create opportunities where members of our community share EDI learning to inform our EDI activity e.g. via webinars, roundtable discussions, talks at Council meetings, staff webinars, content for AHRC blog.	Ensure all AHRC networks are actively discussing and reflecting on EDI good practice and learning.  Implement learning from stakeholders.



## 2.

### Advancing equality and inclusion through our investments and how we work

#### We will:

- Develop diversity within our decision-making bodies such as our Peer Review College
- Develop our grant management and awarding processes to ensure they are as inclusive as possible
- Ensure EDI is not compartmentalised but embedded across the organisation
- Commit to the ongoing journey of developing good EDI knowledge, understanding and practice

Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>2.1</b> We will continue to focus recruitment exercises to our decision-making bodies to ensure diversity and inclusion and offer these decision-making bodies appropriate EDI training to inform their work.	Our decision making will be informed and enriched by diverse voices. Achieving this diversity is central to achieving our mission to identify and fund the best ideas.	A measurable increase in the overall diversity in the membership of AHRC Council, AHRC Advisory Board, Peer Review College, Assessment/Moderation Panels across all funding schemes and modes and all AHRC-convened committees to reflect HESA research communities and UK population demographic data in domains we collect.	<p>Build on the success of the last Peer Review College recruitment round, embedding key learnings in future recruitment rounds.</p> <p>Work with UKRI colleagues in a cross-council approach to improve Peer Review College recruitment and process.</p> <p>Explore how best to facilitate progression through our decision-making bodies for diverse candidates.</p> <p>Develop an EDI training offer for members and convenors of these decision-making bodies to inform decision-making processes.</p>	Prepare for next round of Council recruitment.
<b>2.2</b> Develop our grant management and awarding processes to ensure they are as inclusive as possible. We will improve our approach to conducting equality impact assessments (EIAs) for all new investments. We will identify opportunities to improve EDI on a funding opportunity-by-funding opportunity basis.	Reviewing our grant management and awarding processes on a funding opportunity-by-funding opportunity basis and completing EIAs effectively should address structural barriers that prevent people from accessing AHRC funding. This will enable us to exercise flexibility in funding opportunity requirements and grant management, and ensure we try to mitigate known barriers to participation.	Development of inclusive funding policy. Support and enable more diverse applicants to apply for funding opportunities. Applicant and awardee profiles, across all domains of publishable data, to (a) reflect HESA research communities (b) drive towards alignment with UK population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of AHRC's responsive mode review and transformation.</li> <li>• Work with cross-council colleagues in delivery of UKRI's Simpler and Better Funding programme and The Funding Service.</li> <li>• EDI review of AHRC Research Funding Guide and development of new EDI content.</li> <li>• Work with UKRI EDI workforce team to support with development of EIA resource and training. All AHRC staff to undertake EIA training.</li> </ul>	Work with cross-council colleagues in delivery of UKRI's Simpler and Better Funding programme and The Funding Service.

Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>2.3</b> EDI will not be compartmentalised but embedded across the organisation and will inform all that we do.	EDI policy and practice informs governance, planning, decision making, development, investment management, stakeholder engagement, public engagement, monitoring, evaluation and learning activity across the organisation.	Everyone in the organisation takes responsibility for delivering AHRC's EDI vision and embeds good EDI practice in their work streams.	<p>EDI is at the core of mature programme and project management culture being led by the Programme Management Office.</p> <p>Public engagement activity celebrating diversity in research via programmes such as New Generation Thinkers.</p> <p>EDI principles informing stakeholder mapping and engagement approach.</p>	<p>Review of EDI Action Plan 'actions' and key learnings, and develop content accordingly.</p> <p>Development of EDI policy.</p>
<b>2.4</b> We recognise that developing good EDI knowledge, understanding and practice is an ongoing process to which we are committed to. We will foster this learning through stakeholder engagement, development of partnerships, networks and working closely with UKRI colleagues.	<p>Develop our knowledge and understanding about good EDI practice and principles to inform all that we do.</p> <p>Set an example to those we fund by demonstrating that we are committed to ongoing learning and development in this key policy area.</p>	EDI is an ongoing learning agenda for everyone in AHRC. All AHRC employees feel supported and confident to develop their EDI knowledge and understanding. EDI is embedded in all that we do.	<p>Consultation with EDI advisory groups and stakeholders.</p> <p>Participation with cross -council EDI working groups.</p> <p>Setting up of AHRC EDI project group.</p> <p>All staff to access UKRI EDI curriculum when launched.</p> <p>Development of key partnerships to develop EDI learning and knowledge.</p> <p>Take forward EDI learnings from investments such as AHRC's pilot EDI Engagement Fellowships call and report; the Indigenous Engagement Programme and International Networks for Disability call- Inclusive Global Development.</p>	<p>Development of partnerships which can support our organisational EDI learning journey.</p> <p>Implement learning from stakeholders.</p>



# 3.

**Everyone who works for UKRI will feel included, valued and able to contribute and participate**

## **We will:**

- Work with UKRI colleagues to deliver the UKRI EDI workforce plan
- Work with AHRC colleagues to deliver AHRC's People Plan

Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>3.1</b> AHRC will work with UKRI colleagues to deliver the six priorities of the EDI Workforce plan.	Develop efforts to diversify our workforce and continue to develop an inclusive workforce culture where all staff can thrive in their careers and feel valued.	A world-class organisation which champions diversity of people and thought. All staff can realise their potential.	Work with our cross-council colleagues to deliver EDI workforce Action Plan priorities by 2026.	Work with our cross-council colleagues to deliver EDI workforce Action Plan priorities by 2026.
<b>3.2</b> Deliver AHRC's People Plan	The importance of EDI and our commitment to it is embedded in all key strategic frameworks which support staff, their wellbeing and development, such as our People Plan.	EDI is at the core of our values, behaviours and delivery.	Delivery of AHRC People Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop EDI learning opportunities for staff across AHRC to increase EDI confidence.</li> <li>• Encourage staff to set an EDI objective in employee performance frameworks and leadership reviews.</li> <li>• AHRC's Values and Behaviours and Leadership competency framework to lay out our intentions as an inclusive employer.</li> <li>• Enable staff to work in ways which supports their wellbeing in order to retain and attract diverse talent.</li> </ul>	Review UKRI People Survey 2023 results and update People Plan accordingly.

# 4.

**To develop approaches to monitor, measure and evaluate change**

**We will:**

- Continue to analyse and publish EDI data
- AHRC's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy will inform our approach to how we monitor, measure and evaluate change.



Action	The difference it will make	The change we want to see	Near term deliverables	Medium term deliverables
<b>4.1</b> Ongoing commitment to analyse and publish EDI data and explore how we can work collaboratively with UKRI colleagues to develop these data sets.	Ensure AHRC's decision making is informed by robust data and evidence.	EDI interventions developed to improve diversity of applicants and award holders.	Contribute to UKRI's publication and analysis of EDI data across UKRI.  Develop EDI analysis and commentary of all our investments.	Work with Simpler and Better Funding Programme to develop collection, understanding and analysis of EDI data.
<b>4.2</b> AHRC's MEL strategy will inform our approach to how we monitor, measure and evaluate change	Improved understanding of the EDI impact and benefits of our investments and programmes of activity.	Evolving and maturing EDI policy and practice.	Work with Strategy, Impact and Engagement colleagues to ensure MEL strategy informs how we monitor, measure and evaluate EDI across all our investments and programmes of activity.  Work with UKRI colleagues to ensure joined up cross-council approach to how we monitor, measure and evaluate change across UKRI.	More EDI informed decision making with regards to strategic and operational planning, practice and process.

# Acknowledgements

Developing our first EDI strategy has drawn on expertise across UKRI and from interactions with many people, organisations and partners across the research and innovation sector.

We appreciate and value the insight, expertise and commitment from many people, which has shaped the development of our strategy.

## Annexe

1. [UKRI equality diversity and inclusion strategy: draft for consultation – UKRI](#)
2. UKRI strategy 2022–2027, p.8

## Accessibility

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team at UKRI:

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