

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access

Statement and Policy



We believe that diversity of all kinds enriches our organisation and the broader craft and conservation sectors. We are committed to working tirelessly to become an inclusive, welcoming, and supportive organisation through listening, learning, and taking meaningful action in collaboration with our staff, trustees, partners, and those we fund.

While we are keen to encourage opportunities to develop or excel in craft skills for all, we recognise that historical and structural inequalities, as well as explicit prejudices and preconceptions, can create additional barriers for people from marginalised or underrepresented communities.

We want to be better at representing the multitude of talented makers, conservators, and supporters of craft across the UK, those born here and those that have chosen to make it their home. This includes people of different genders, ages, religions, sexualities, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. To be effective we need to understand the challenges faced by different groups, and how they intersect across identities.

Sector statistics and accounts of makers with lived experiences of discrimination and barriers to participation show how much work there is still to do to build the inclusive future we need. According to the *Who Makes* Report (2018):

- 17% of craft workers have a disability or health problem.
- Craft workers are likely to be paid less than the average wage and are likely to be self-employed.
- 40% of craft workers are over 50.
- Only 4% of craft workers are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background.

We believe the best way to facilitate change is to work in collaboration with others, whether that is through our partnership programmes or our work with grant applicants and alumni.

We are privileged to be supported in our efforts by a board of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Champions, made up of QEST alumni from across our grant programmes and a trustee representative, who advise us and raise awareness of the challenges and barriers facing professional makers and conservators.

Together we are working to reach our objectives which provide a framework for our decision making:

- Improve our knowledge and understanding of equity and access issues, and how they impact individuals lived experiences, as well as broader policy issues.
- Build a more diverse and inclusive organisation at all levels of our activities and partnerships.
- Actively tackle systemic barriers to becoming a craft professional, including (but not limited to) racism, ableism, inequality of access to education, and socio-economic disadvantage.

- Recognise, respect, and celebrate the diversity of our staff, partners, alumni, and networks.
- Champion a socially conscious approach to craft, including environmental sustainability, ethical making, and community engagement.

To make tangible change we also need to commit to bold, measurable actions. In January 2025, we set out the following aims which remain our primary focus.

Over the next two years we aim to:

- Train all staff, trustees and skills assessors in Unconscious Bias, Disability Awareness, and Anti-Racism.
- Improve our support for grant applicants with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and neurodiversity.
- Implement a policy guiding internal and external language, imagery, and branding.

Over the next five years we aim to:

- Increase the number of grant applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds to 16%, with specific focus on makers who identify as Black, African, Black British or Caribbean who are currently poorly represented in our applications.
- Have a cohort of skills assessors where at least 20% are from backgrounds underrepresented in the sector.
- Commit at least 20% of the funding QEST provides to individuals and/or organisations to programmes advancing diversity, inclusion and removing barriers for young people and underrepresented communities engaging with craft.

We are continuously learning and improving, but we formally review and publish our progress annually ensuring that our aims are targeted, relevant, and transparent. We welcome discussion, challenges, and suggestions about our approach.

The table on the following pages provides an update on progress made in 2025 and details our plans to work towards achieving our aims in 2026.

Last updated: January 2026

A note on terminology:

We recognise that any terminology that groups people together can be limiting and contested. In our policies and statistics, we do use some terms that are frequently used in the UK to make comparisons and collate information, as this allows us to monitor progress and align our data with other organisations. However, we keep our approaches to data collection and use of such language under review and regularly seek guidance from our advisory boards. We support the right of individuals to self-identify or reject such terms and always create space for this when asking for information.

Aim	Progress to date	2026 Action(s) and Timeframes
Over the next two years we aim to ...		
Train all staff, trustees and skills assessors in Unconscious Bias, Disability Awareness and Anti-Racism.	We have been applying for funding to support this aim throughout 2025. This has now been secured for Unconscious Bias, Anti-Racism and Neurodiversity training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial training to take place by June 2026. Further funding to be sought for broader disability awareness training by end 2026.
Improve our support for grant applicants with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and neurodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As noted above funding is now in place for grants manager and other members of the QEST team to take part in Neurodiversity training. Application guidance has been updated to include visual aids alongside written information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with Intoart to explore supporting grant applicants with learning disabilities and autism – initial meeting to take place by Spring 2026. Neurodiversity training to take place by June 2026.
Implement a policy guiding internal and external language, imagery and branding.	A language and accessibility guide has been drafted with our EDI Champions. This will sit alongside new brand guidelines developed in 2025.	A briefing to be delivered to QEST team by Spring 2026, with guide to be fully implemented by Summer 2026.
Over the next five years we aim to ...		
Increase the number of grant applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds to 16%, with specific focus on makers who identify as Black, African, Black British or Caribbean who are currently poorly represented in our applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2025, 20% of successful applicants identified as Asian, Black, Mixed or Other Ethnicity. This is an increase from 7% in 2024.* Over the last 3 years 11% of successful applicants identified as Asian, Black, Mixed or other Ethnicity. 1% identified as Black, African, Black British, Caribbean. We have consulted with our EDI Champions and Youth Board about who/how to communicate opportunities better and in a more targeted way. We have received funding for a new microgrant for young people, this will be supported by funding for communications with an aim to reach a diverse pool of applicants currently underrepresented in the sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of mailing list with comments from EDI Champions and Youth Board to be completed in time for Autumn 2026 application round. Comms plan to explore whether increased representation of alumni can stimulate more diverse applicants. Grants project in Spring 2026 (after the current funding round) to understand any discrepancies between the numbers applying and numbers of successful applicants from different ethnic and racial identities.
Have a cohort of skills assessors where at least 20% are from backgrounds underrepresented in the sector.	We have implemented a system to survey and monitor the demographic backgrounds of skills assessors, to better understand our current volunteers and identify gaps in representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of skills assessors will take place before Autumn 2026 grant applications, and new assessors will be invited to join.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alongside ongoing research from the QEST team, our EDI Champions and Youth Board will be asked to suggest candidates. • Our Youth Board will have the opportunity to train as assessors and peer mentors for our new young person grant in Summer 2026.
	<p>Commit at least 20% of the funding QEST provides to individuals and organisations to programmes advancing diversity, inclusion and removing barriers for young people engaging with craft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As our three core partnership programmes have developed we have made significant progress in this area, with 18.82% and 29.11% of our funding in 2024 and 2025 given to our work supporting inclusion. • A new 3-year partnership with National Saturday Club agreed in 2025 gives ongoing funding to that programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently projected to spend 18% in 2026. • New projects to be announced early in 2026, will provide funding and support for partnerships across the UK that support inclusion, as well as offering grants and mentoring directly to young people. • A new fundraising strategy will focus on developing sustainable income to ensure we reach and maintain the 20% target from 2030 onwards. • A review of apprenticeship, emerging maker and young people grants will explore opportunities to better support those entering the sector.

* It should be noted that percentages can represent small numbers of applicants so ongoing monitoring over multiple assessment rounds is essential.