Inc Arts

Hold on.

Diversity and Managing in the Arts.

Bridge
Group
research
action
equality

Preface

This report is an abridged version of the full report available here.

The research is a collaboration between Inc Arts UK and the Bridge Group, made possible by support from Arts Council England.
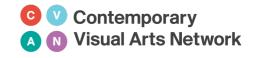
The study includes over half a million quantitative data-points, more than 500 survey responses and 60 hours of qualitative interviews. Thank you to everyone who has participated and shared their views generously and openly.

Thanks also to the following partners for their support:

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"A global pandemic, economic and social shutdown and ongoing uncertainty have taken a huge toll on many industries. But many cultural organisations have a special level of difficulty to overcome. We all still have hard times ahead, and difficult decisions to make."

(Arts Council)

"During Covid-19, I was thinking about who are the big advocates for the arts, who has been writing in The Guardian or appeared on the BBC for the arts? Mostly it is privileged White, middle-class people who are not representative of the population but have a platform to do this. It's not wrong that they use their platform to support the arts, but it is wrong that they are the ones chosen to do it … We need more voices … We need best value for everyone."

(Interviewee)

"I think the long-term impact of Covid-19 will be harmful to all sorts of diversity. Freelancers are losing work and there are redundancies in the arts already, which is affecting people disproportionately. It is a tough sector to get into."

(Interviewee)

"There is still a bit of a culture of patronage in the UK. A lot still goes on personal recommendation, with people pushing their candidates forward for jobs."

(Interviewee)

"The people who get ahead are those who are able to walk out of university and who can afford to work for free as a volunteer or an intern for 10 hours a week or more. This gives them the experience to take the next step. People who don't have this privilege have to take on other jobs to try to do the work they want to do in the arts because they can't afford to volunteer."

(Interviewee)

"I think online provision during the pandemic has been positive. The arts needed a push to become more digital in their provision. I've noticed my friends have been discussing what they've seen, there are a lot more conversations online about theatre productions, so that's been quite a positive outcome."

(Interviewee)

"You have to consider who will be excluded from online work, it's an economic and a class issue. Not all of our staff have access to a spare room or a desk, some are working on the kitchen table … and if you have children and are home schooling, the demands on your time are even greater. Digital exclusion is a major issue in the pandemic."

(Interviewee)

Foreword

We began this research, led by the Bridge Group, in March 2020 during the week that the pandemic triggered the initial lockdown in the UK. Through analysis of survey responses from over 500 people and sixty hours of interviews, we capture the experiences of those in the arts management workforce at a time when many organisations face existential challenges. We place these in the context of a review of relevant published work.

Management in the arts sector has received little attention, and these roles can often be conflated with the more creative and craft roles in the sector. From the management community across the UK, we hear wide-ranging opinions – from optimism to despair. The stark findings from the quantitative data, and the experiences of interviewees, demand urgent action.

The survey and interview findings highlight many familiar themes. The arts management workforce is deeply unrepresentative of the wider population and where greater diversity exists, it is concentrated in public-facing roles - which often serves to makes the sector seem more diverse than it actually is. Entry-level, casual, front of house and public-facing roles have been the first major casualties of CV-19; and for many organisations these are roles where much of their diverse workforce are found.

In the UK we have a long tradition of maintaining structural inequalities, while simultaneously wringing our hands about it. What is stopping systemic change from happening, and for incremental change to be embedded? Overwhelmingly it is the widespread and sustained adherence to established hierarchies and structures. The persistent retention of power is driven by fear, and a lack of imagination: a fear of losing relevance, status, incomes – considerations that all can relate to. Imagination takes courage: and right now, imagination is what is required of all global citizens.

Clarity can be found in many of the practical recommendations outlined here. We recommend that the sector lobby for changes to the Equality Act and its enforcement; and that all organisations improve their practices in relation to recruitment and progression. More robust data collection will contribute to the latter and will also deliver better understanding, challenge and accountability in the sector. These actions require minimal resource at most.

The sector is at an important point of inflexion. It is the perfect time to experiment with radically different strategies for employment, progression and retention in the sector. Our recommendations are inclusive: it's vital that the knowledge held by those within the existing hierarchy is retained, and that the legacy of current leaders is recognised and valued.

Amanda Parker
Director, Inc Arts

Key findings

1. This study explores the workforce in arts management: who gets in, who gets ahead and how, and what needs to happen to advance greater diversity (with a focus on ethnicity, socio-economic background and gender). The level of diversity addressed in performances and presentations in the arts is not reflected in the workforces of arts organisations. Entering, and maintaining a career in, arts management typically requires economic and social capital, which is most readily available to workers with affluent parents.

Who responded?

2. Over 500 people working in a range of arts management roles responded to a survey. They provided demographic information and occupational data, and shared their perceptions of opportunity, progression, diversity and inclusion across the arts sector.

3. Those who responded to the survey were more diverse in terms of ethnic and gender identity compared to national averages. 16% of respondents identify as ethnically diverse, Black and Asian, compared to 14% of the UK population. 77% of respondents identify as female (compared to 51% of UK population), while 17% of respondents belong to LGBTQ communities (compared to 4% of UK population). This diversity is to be celebrated.

4. However, respondents were generally less diverse in terms of socio-economic background (SEB): 34% had a parent in a higher managerial or professional occupation (at age 14), compared to 10% of the UK population; and 17% of respondents have attended an independent or fee-paying school, compared to the national average of 7%.

Who gets the staff jobs?

5. Respondents told us about the form of their employment. A much higher proportion of respondents are, or have been, freelance or on self-employed contracts (46%), than the UK labour market in general (15%).

6. Contracts are more likely to be over shorter periods (3 months or less), than for longer periods (more than 9 months).

7. Those from ethnically diverse, Black and Asian communities are more likely to have been freelance and self-employed than those identifying as White.

8. Those from lower SEB are more likely to be in freelance positions than those from higher SEB. The precarity associated with freelance and short-term contracts represents an additional barrier to entry and progression for people from less

privileged backgrounds.

Diversity on stage, homogenous back-office

9.   We found variations in the areas in which respondents worked. Those that identify as ethnically diverse, Black and Asian are more likely to be in programme creation (40%). Looking at socio-economic background, those from higher SEB are more likely to be in the professional back-office functions (fundraising and business development, communications and marketing, finance HR and business operations). Those from lower SEB are more likely to be in 'Other' roles (36%).

White men have longer careers

10.   Arts management is less likely to have formally defined levels of seniority, consistent across the sector. It may be more appropriate to see 'getting ahead' in terms of having had a longer career (10 years plus) and having greater management responsibilities (managing 10 or more people). The survey found that those identifying as male are more likely to get ahead in this way. SEB has less impact on getting ahead than factors such as ethnic identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Over-qualified, under-promoted?

11.   We also asked in the survey whether people's current role matched their ambitions and reflected their training and skills. Those from lower SEBs and those that identify as ethnically diverse, Black and Asian are less likely to agree. Taken together with our findings about getting ahead, this suggests that there is a problem around progression for these groups. The free-text responses highlight problems around the lack of structured training and progression within the arts sector. Many respondents reflected on the unpredictable and improvised routes they have had to take to build their career.

Covid-19: a threat to inclusion

12.   There was widespread concern about how the sector would respond to the Covid-19 crisis. Many are worried about the reduction in opportunities, and what this would mean in terms of reduced funding for programmes focused on diversity and inclusion. The pandemic has amplified respondents' concerns about not being able to reliably and securely plot a route to progression in the sector.

13.   Like survey respondents, interviewees were deeply concerned about the possible impact of Covid-19 on the arts sector and their future careers. We note that creative industries are predicted to be hit twice as hard as the UK economy overall by the Covid-19 pandemic, risking a "cultural catastrophe."

Why are we still here?

14.   In investigating further why people from lower socio-economically diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in arts management, we interviewed sixty people working in such roles. The interviews reveal a wide range of factors that contribute to this lack of diversity.

15.   There is a pipeline issue: interviewees believe that many young people from more diverse backgrounds are not attracted to arts management because they do not feel their voice is heard in the arts, or that the arts are relevant to them. They also suspect that young people are unaware of the range of career opportunities in arts management - and conversely that some may be put off by being aware of the lack of employment security.

16.   Interviewees echo survey respondents' comments about the lack of clear pathways for progression. Patronage (*who you know, and who knows you*) and personal connection play an important role in determining who gets opportunities. They perceive senior positions to be dominated by White men from higher SEB. Funding and sponsorship tend to favour more elitist forms of art rather than grassroots initiatives, and there is a rural-urban split in the level of funding available.

Sustaining inequality of opportunity

17.   It emerged during interviews that, despite existing government and Arts Council England guidelines, many people building a career in the sector are still required to work for free, either during unpaid internships (many of which are also unadvertised), or in other relatively informal arrangements ostensibly aimed at building experience and exposure. We observe that this is deeply excluding for those who do not have independent financial support.

18.   Interviewees noted that geography matters. There is a rural/urban split in terms of, for example, diversity initiatives and the funding available for arts activities. Creative businesses are disproportionately clustered in the South East of England, and especially London, where the cost of living is higher than in the rest of the UK. This is likely to make it more difficult for people who grow up outside of London and/or from lower-income backgrounds to break into the sector.

19.   Given these barriers, it is perhaps unsurprising that interviewees expressed scepticism about diversity and inclusion initiatives, which some describe as a "tick box exercise" and/or leading to tokenism. Interviewees want diversity to be embedded throughout teams, volunteers and audiences; and in structures and processes. They generally support data collection to monitor inclusivity and diversity, though some express misgivings about some aspects, such as the terms used.

What works?

20.   Diversity in the arts matters. Interviewees noted that local participation in the arts promotes cultural democracy and increases societal benefits, while cultural tourism can attract arts participants and improve place image, regional competitiveness and differentiation. Diverse teams create diverse audiences. A lack of diversity amongst arts managers and administrators may result in narrower or more homogenous approaches, cultural tastes and perspectives; and may make it harder to realise the wider benefits above. Interviewees suggest a range of measures to improve diversity in arts management, from institutional processes to reforming funding mechanisms and developing a national body to drive change.

21.   The UK's creative sector was previously growing at five times the rate of the wider economy, employing over two million people and contributing £111.7 billion annually to the economy. Revenues are forecast to drop by £74 billion in 2020, representing a 30% fall, and job losses are predicted to hit more than 400,000. The loss in gross value will be £29 billion in 2020. The introduction of the JSS and changes to SEISS will have further impact on redundancies and employment within the sector. It seems likely that arts managers without independent financial support are most likely to be forced to leave the arts sector for alternative employment, further reducing its socio-economic diversity.

22.   Finally, when asked about how to improve diversity in arts management, respondents highlight the need for representative staff and clear, transparent recruitment/progression processes. There needs to be investment in reducing barriers. Respondents recommend that diverse voices should be involved at every stage in project delivery.

23.   To help address these issues, we make practicable recommendations for the arts sector, as listed in the following section. These relate to, for example, embedding ethnic and socio-economic diversity as a condition of funding, and ensuring that those making decisions are themselves diverse. We also support the development of a national action plan for diversity in the arts.

Recommendations

The advice here is for a range of stakeholders, including arts organisations, government, education and audiences. Their successful execution will require collaboration between some, or all, of these stakeholders.

R1. **Embed ethnic and socio-economic diversity as a condition of funding and government support – contextualised regionally.** Recession disproportionately affects the ethnically diverse workforce and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Prioritising funding to organisations that can actively demonstrate a minimum of 15% diversity across each type of role (arts management separately from creatives)[1] will boost recovery in a way that is equitable and allows the sector to build on the valuable equity, diversity and inclusion gains made in recent years.

R2. **Embed diversity in the decision-making and evaluation underlying artistic and cultural funding and production.** A robust monitoring and evaluation system will support the UK government's ambitions for regional and socio-economic equity. Those who make decisions about the distribution of arts funding are disproportionately from the majority group. Diverse arts and cultural practitioners are routinely assessed by non-diverse evaluation teams and managers. Stronger representation of diversity in the systems and processes of cultural production will support equitable outcomes for diverse creatives. And as the Arts Council outsources funding decisions, accountability needs to be carefully considered here.

R3. **Individual arts organisations should support Inc Arts in the development and implementation of a National Action Plan for diversity in the arts and cultural sector.** The embedding of diversity in the UK's cultural recovery will help the country rebuild and recover in a way that is inclusive and equitable. The creation of a National Diversity Action Plan for Culture will provide a framework for arts organisations to meet diversity requirements through independently created terms of reference and guidance, identifying best practice through a set of national criteria. A robust, independent evaluation process will ensure that the data gathered also includes the freelance sector workforce, which comprises up to 77% of the sector's workforce.

R4. **All arts organisations should pay people undertaking work experience and internships lasting more than two weeks, and openly advertise all internships wherever possible.**[2] In order that these opportunities are not financially excluding, we

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[1] This might mean, for example, at least 15% of roles meeting one of the following criteria: ethnically diverse, parental background NS-SEC 6-7, non-binary gender. This should also be contextualised based on geography.

[2] Unpaid internships are a growing problem in the UK. The total number of internships offered have consistently risen each year since 2010 (by as much as 50 per cent in total – see IPPR research). Each year, there are up to 70,000 interns in the UK, with up to half unpaid. Nearly half of employers report that candidates who have not gained work experience through an internship will 'have little or no chance of receiving a job offer' for their organisations, regardless of qualifications.

recommend that organisations set aside a discretionary budget to fund associated costs such as travel and accommodation expenses.

R5.   **All organisations should access and adopt best practice in advertising and recruiting roles and opportunities – and evidence where possible why a university degree is essential criteria.** This includes preparing inclusive job packs, marketing opportunities beyond traditional networks, focusing on skills and competencies over experience and qualifications, and offering feedback to all interviewed candidates wherever possible. Practical guidance on this is available from the Bridge Group, published with Jerwood Arts.[3]

R6.   **All organisations should consider making senior appointments fixed-term.** For example, in appointments to advisory and/or governance boards, and other senior and influential positions, fixed-term appointments will enable new representative and new ideas to emerge on a regular basis (conditional on following best practice in advertising and recruitment practices).

R7.   **Engage your colleagues in this research. The findings here should provoke open conversations across the sector – and include an opportunity for those at all levels to contribute.** This includes involving, for example, staff at all levels and in all areas of arts organisations, as well as those engaged on a freelance basis and on short-term contracts. There should be safe platforms for people to share their lived experiences and for discussions about how to apply our recommendations to individual organisations.

R8.   **The arts management community should lead by example by using language that is progressive, specific yet accessible, appropriate, and inclusive.** This relates mainly to ethnic group and socio-economic background. Sensitive use of language, and specificity within it, is critical in considering and talking about employees from different backgrounds based on these characteristics – as is working with grassroots groups that work with specific communities to inform themselves. We recommend that all colleagues refer to the appendix in this regard.

R9.   **Lobby for socio-economic background to be a protected characteristic, enacting Section One of the Equality Act.** This would ensure that socio-economic diversity is a key mission across the whole of society. Access to opportunities should not be dependent on the social class you grew up in, and socio-economic background should be considered similarly to ethnicity and gender.

> Enacting Section One of the Equality Act, obligating public bodies to give due regard to how they can reduce the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, would send a signal that opportunities should be for everyone. This would clearly require an agreed definition of socio-economic background, which is addressed in this report.

R10.   **Amend section 159 of the Equality Act to retain inclusion in redundancy decisions.** Section 159 of the Equality Act (2010) allows employers to take active steps to increase

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[3] See: https://jerwoodarts.org/projects/weston-jerwood-creative-bursaries-2017-19/toolkit/

the diversity of their workforce. The Act does not explicitly refer to considerations of diversity in redundancy decisions, nor dismissals. The Equality Act should be amended to provide a clear and supportive message to employers wishing to ensure their organisations remain diverse; and be amended to include regard and attention to protected characteristics in redundancy and dismissals, as well as in recruitment and promotion.

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