

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) 2022-2025

Equality and Diversity Action Plan guide for Good Growth projects

Introduction

This guidance document has been created to assist Good Growth projects to create their own Equality and Diversity Action Plans. These plans are usually required as a condition of Shared Prosperity Fund awards and they play an important role in driving Good Growth behavioural change.

What do we mean by Good Growth?

The intention is that the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) should drive Good Growth behavioural change in recipient organisations. This means that projects should deliver well paid, high quality and inclusive opportunities, as well as delivering environmental benefits from this economic growth. Finally, recipients should align their practices to the principles of Good Growth permanently. For this plan, the goal is to form a structured approach that enables a diverse workforce and a culture of openness and inclusivity. The values of diversity, equality, and inclusion refers here to the principle that all different groups of individuals should be supported to be able to fully participate and succeed in all aspects of life, including within the workplace.

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Good Growth Principles

Equality

- Invest in projects that encourage a healthy lifestyle
- Reduce the gender pay gap
- Increase levels of functional numeracy and literacy in the adult population
- Maximise opportunity for people with disability and ill health (including mental health)
- Maximise work-based opportunities for those with special educational needs (SEND), particularly relating to spectrum disorders and dyslexia
- Support for the ageing population to remain economically active
- Support young (under 30) entrepreneurs
- Levelling up of towns and neighbourhoods throughout CloS
- Increase capacity and place-based leadership in our communities
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a [protected characteristic](#) and those who do not (Equality Act 2010)
- Assist individuals with complex barriers to employment to access opportunities
- Have a positive impact on children and promote and uphold children's rights under United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Why do I need to do an Equality and Diversity Action Plan?

Creating workspaces that are inclusive and supportive is not only socially responsible but also brings commercial benefits to employers. The Equality and Diversity Plan provides a structured approach to embedding an inclusive workplace culture.

In terms of recruitment, inclusive work settings are more attractive to a wider range of candidates, which increases the talent pool available to an entity. When employees feel like they belong and can bring their authentic selves to work, they are more engaged and motivated. This can in turn lead to higher job satisfaction and increased productivity. When employees feel valued and included, they are more likely to stay with an organisation, reducing turnover and the associated costs.

A diverse workforce can produce more innovative ideas as different individuals bring a wider breath of experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. When people with different viewpoints collaborate, they can consider a wider range of factors and approach problems from unique angles, leading to more inventive solutions.

For our economy to succeed, we need to unlock the potential of every individual. Small adjustments can mean that workplaces empower everyone to achieve to the best of their ability. Diversity and inclusion in the workplace are not just about meeting quotas or adhering to laws and regulations; they are essential for business success.

The practical steps outlined below are suggestions for what could be included in the Action Plan, it is recognised that each entity will need to tailor their approach to their own context and needs.

Practical steps

1. Review the organisation's current culture

To chart a path towards where the organisation needs to get to, first the current approach and culture must be understood.

- Gauge the level of commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) from the top leadership.
- Analyse the demographic make-up of the workforce, particularly in leadership positions.
- Evaluate the availability and effectiveness of EDI training programs. Are employees and leaders receiving training on topics like disability awareness and unconscious bias?
- After this has all been taken into account, what should be the organisational ambitions for equality, diversity, and inclusion?

2. Consider refreshing the organisational strategy on equality, diversity, and inclusion

Strategies are useful because they can form the basis of a whole organisational approach to shaping the workplace culture, standards, and practises.

- Outline a long-term vision of where the organisation would like to get to on equality, diversity, and inclusion
- How robust is the current equality and diversity policy? Are there clear anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures in place? Are there systems in place for reporting and addressing EDI-related issues? An effective strategy should go beyond legal compliance and meaningfully contribute to the wellbeing of all employees.
- The policy should account for the following topics: recruitment, training and promoting existing staff, equal pay, religious beliefs and practice, dress code, unacceptable behaviour, staff dismissal, redundancy, parental leave, flexible working.
- There should also be specific provisions for each of the Good Growth principles listed above. For example, there should be guidelines around staff mental health support.
- The key individuals in the organisation who may hold responsibilities and even own the application of the EDI policy should also be clearly listed.
- Any EDI policy and strategy will have greater buy in and impact if it is developed in collaboration with the experience of staff at all levels.
- Thought should be given within the policy for getting staff on board with the ethos and practises of the policy to make sure that culture is embedded. For example, there could be mandatory training on EDI, where possible, with an attached budget and a schedule of regular refresher sessions.
- For larger organisations, are there staff networks, employee assistance groups or programmes that can be tapped into.
- Regarding inclusive environments for people with disabilities, there are sources of [government support](#) which applicants and employees can be signposted to. Likewise,

research has shown that simple accommodations such as changes in work schedules can aid people with disabilities to return and remain in employment.

- Do employees feel included, respected, and valued for their unique contributions?
- Do employees feel that their voices are heard and valued? Are there opportunities for employees to provide input and feedback on EDI issues?
- Are there clear signs of progress in promoting EDI? Are there structures in place where progress or issues can be monitored and assessed?
- Have you considered digital accessibility if you have a website or customer user app? How accessible is your building and employment documents?

3. Recruitment and retention

Care should be taken to ensure that recruitment practises source the best talent from all backgrounds.

- Are there initiatives to attract a diverse pool of candidates? Are there diverse interview panels? Is there an emphasis on reducing bias in the hiring process?
- Attracting diverse candidates can be helped by highlighting the organisational focus on inclusion and diversity in the job adverts, signalling that the entity values EDI.
- Hiring managers should be aware of how to make reasonable adjustments to working environments and understand where flexible working arrangements may be needed.
- Hiring managers could also be given training on identifying their own unconscious assumptions and biases that may influence their hiring decisions.
- A truly open recruitment process will be underpinned by a wider culture of inclusion in the organisation where difference is embraced.

An example of how you could form part of your Action Plan is below:

Objectives	Action	How will the impact of the action be monitored?	Who is responsible and what resources are available?	What are the timeframes?	Success indicators

4. Evaluate the Impact

After a certain period, which could be specified in the EDI Plan, it would be worth reassessing the approach and culture regarding EDI.

- Have the efforts on EDI had the desired effects?
- What more needs to be done?

5. The Equality and Diversity Action Plan

The Equality and Diversity Action Plan should be a summary of all these efforts, containing concrete commitments and a clear process for application. A well-executed EDI approach can lead to increased staff wellbeing, improved performance, and a more diverse and empowered workforce.

Resources:

Please contact the Good Growth team at Goodgrowth@cornwall.gov.uk for further signposting, resources, and support with your Action Plan.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – www.equalityhumanrights.com

This is the statutory body with the responsibility to protect, enforce and promote equality across the seven 'protected' grounds – age, disability, gender, race, religion, and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment

Disability discrimination and the law - <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/disability-discrimination>

Find out more about the law about disability discrimination on the disability discrimination page of the equality and Human Rights Commission website

ACAS Plan Templates for Equality Diversity and Inclusion - <https://www.acas.org.uk/equality-policy-template>