

Immersive Arts approach to demographics as part of funding portfolio balancing

In 2021, the Creative Majority Report, commissioned by a UK government All Party Parliamentary Group for Creative Diversity found that *“Despite enormous goodwill, good intentions and decades of work by activists and EDI leads, the UK’s creative and cultural workforces still do not reflect the diversity of the UK population. Indeed, the most powerful positions in the creative economy are still some of the least diverse. For real change to happen, EDI needs to come out of the margins and into the spotlight.”* (Wreyford et al., 2021).

The Immersive Arts consortium agree and, working with guidance from our strategic partners XR Diversity Initiative and Unlimited in particular, we have endeavored to;

- communicate our opportunities in inclusive and accessible language/formats
- share opportunities widely across networks that aren’t always reached by funders
- consider fair pay in our funding guidelines
- ensure that people can apply in the way that best suits them
- recruit and train a wide range of external reviewers

We also thought carefully about what we would need from applicants to help us make funding decisions which move towards that ‘real change’ – weighing up what is reasonable to ask people at such an early stage with our desire to avoid making any assumptions about applicants.

There have been a number of recent reports and studies that evidence the current make up of the sectors we are working with. In particular, the 2022 Immersive Economy Report highlights a number of structural inequities already evident in the immersive sector. It recommends that *“As well as race and gender, both visible and invisible disabilities are characteristics that need greater consideration when developing immersive technologies.”* (Immerse UK & Oxford Insights & Data City, 2022). For this reason, in our first funding round we have decided to focus on asking

questions about and balancing for, ethnicity, gender and disability. We will review this approach and may adjust for future funding rounds.

Over the course of the programme we are aiming to reflect population data for each of our four nations. We will monitor progress against that benchmark by asking those who are funded to complete an anonymous demographic survey and comparing the results to census data. We know that lived experience is complex and intersectional and that there is no perfect way to do this work in such an imperfect environment. We are open to challenges and feedback about our approach.

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