

DEI and what it means to us

(4 minute read)

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This article references our public-facing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy, which can be accessed in full [here](#), as well as our Strategy for 2022-25, which can be found [here](#).

It's been some time since I have written about John Ellerman Foundation's approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and so I hope you will spare me some time in which to share. In May 2022, the Board approved a new DEI Policy for the Foundation, which made clear our commitment to DEI being applied to all that we do. For us, that means: our recruitment, retention and progression of staff and Trustees; the management of our underlying endowment; our grantmaking; our internal and external communications; and our analysis of the derivation of our wealth through our 'History Project'.

For the first time, the DEI Policy is externally-facing, and can be accessed via our website under '[Strategy and Policies](#)', along with our Investment Policy, our Environmental Sustainability Policy and our Strategy for 2022-25. As part of our commitment to accountability in relation to DEI, it was vital that this was a public-facing document that shares with others the framework, or guiding principles, through which DEI is being applied in these areas. For us, we opted for a framework approach because we know DEI practice is ever evolving, and as a small organisation we want to commit to doing that too.

Our DEI Policy was informed and influenced by work happening externally, including the Association of Charitable Foundation's Stronger Foundation's report on DEI, the findings to-date of the Foundation Practice Rating (of which we are a funder), the DEI Data Standard (to which we have contributed ideas), and the learning journey we embarked upon as a funder of Resourcing Racial Justice – on the latter, this work includes a DEI Accountability Plan that we have been implementing since January 2021, which we review and renew every year. We also gain support and insights on DEI through other work we fund, the learning we gain within the team when out and about in meetings and so on, and the insights from our Trustees, including our lead Trustee for DEI.

We know we don't have all the answers, but like many of our peers we recognise that the failure to prioritise and improve DEI practices within institutional philanthropy and the wider charity and philanthropy sectors has led to the inequitable distribution of funding. This failure manifests itself in a range of ways, and our Policy sets out the ways in which we want to change this.

Since signing off our new DEI Policy in May 2022, there have been some things that we have been doing which we hope demonstrate the ways we are taking action. We are in the final stages of implementing the use of the DEI Data Standard as part of our two-stage application process, and we hope to have that up and running by January 2023. In June 2022, we launched a survey with all our existing grant-holders based on the DEI Data Standard, which will provide us with a baseline on the DEI makeup of our current portfolio of live grants.

Over the summer, we have been recruiting for a range of roles relating to our grantmaking, financial management, operations and resources, and research and impact. Embedding DEI practices, transparency and accountability has been integral to the design of these recruitment exercises, and we have implemented approaches we have not used before in the Foundation, like removing requirements for degrees, sharing interview questions beforehand and so on. We accept

that there's still much more for us to do to ensure our recruitment processes are as inclusive as they can be, including introducing anonymised recruitment methods.

In July 2022, we also added Recite Me to our website. Recite Me is innovative cloud-based software that lets visitors to our website view and use it in the way that works best for them. This tool came recommended to us by several other funders, including funders that have been assessed via the Foundation Practice Rating, and was very easy to install. The tool can be used by those on our website to listen to the written text at different speeds, change the font size and type, use different colours for the background, text and links, enable a reading ruler, allow a 'letterbox' that can support focussed viewing of a section of the webpage, open a dictionary, change the language of the text, magnify text, remove images so that the text can be read in 'plain text mode', change the margins, download highlighted text as audio, and users can save their preferred settings and adjust them as needed. The toolbar also provides a link to the [Recite Me user guide](#). Tools like this can help the one in five people in the UK who have a disability, including those with common conditions like sight loss and dyslexia, to access this website in the way that suits them best. It also meets the needs of the one in ten people in the UK who don't speak English as their first language, by being able to translate our web content into over 100 different languages.

There have been staffing changes here at John Ellerman Foundation this year, especially over the summer, and it means a great deal that we have continued to prioritise and progress our DEI work. There will always be more to do, and there is certainly more planned for us in this space, but we look forward to growing and evolving our DEI ambitions and impact.