

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

BLACKWATER VALLEY OPERA FESTIVAL CLG

Brief Policy Summary

This policy sets out how Blackwater Valley Opera will achieve its aims to promote equality, diversity & inclusion as an employer and in its work. It sets out the ways in which BVOF will embed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion into all areas of the organisation's work, including the communities within which it operates. This policy links to all policies, procedures and strategy documents adopted by Blackwater Valley Opera.

1. Purpose - Policy Statement

Informed by the company's values of integrity, respect, fairness and courage, we aim to actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion and we are committed to continuous improvement,

Blackwater Valley Opera Festival recognises that its contractors, board members, artists, production teams, volunteers and audiences come from diverse backgrounds, with varying experiences and needs.

We are committed to ensuring that equality, diversity & inclusion is embedded into our day-to-day working practices and in the way we engage with those who work with us and for us or visit us.

BVOF is committed to promoting equity and fairness and combating unlawful discrimination. We believe that everyone has an equal right to engage with, and participate in, the Arts regardless of Gender, Civil status, Family status, Sexual orientation, Religion, Age, Disability, Race (includes race, colour, nationality of ethnic or national origins), Membership of the travelling community or socio-economic status.

We actively promote fairness, respect, equality, diversity inclusion and engagement and are committed to continuous improvement.

2. Objectives

2.1 In order to effectively implement its commitment to being an equal and diverse organisation, Blackwater Valley Opera Festival has identified the following objectives:

- Provide the organisation's leaders: the Executive Director, Artistic Director and the Chair of the Board with the skills and knowledge to fully embed fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement into the organisation's culture, strategy, and processes.
- Provide diversity & inclusion training to all contractors and board members, which will include content on their responsibilities, relevant legislation, and this policy.
- Ensure opportunities are accessible to all, introducing reasonable accommodations to facilitate this where required.
- Gather data to identify and address any negative trends by the ten Grounds of discrimination.
- Create an environment where all contractors are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- Enforce a zero-tolerance approach in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour, thoroughly investigating any reported incidents and taking appropriate actions.
- Ensure fair treatment for job applicants, which is free from bias
- Make the best possible use of our existing and potential workforce through effective talent management.
- Provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment where everyone can contribute to their fullest potential.
- Challenge discrimination and promote diversity.
- Provide training to contractors on Blackwater Valley Opera Festival's approach to diversity & inclusion, its commitment to zero tolerance in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour and the contents of this policy.
- Act as role models to partner organisations and other external stakeholders.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to the whole organisation, including its contractors, board members, artists, production teams, volunteers and to partners and any external stakeholders who are supported by or engage with the organisation.

3.2 Equality, diversity & inclusion imposes rights and responsibilities on every member of the organisation. All members of the organisation will be informed that an equality, diversity & inclusion policy is in operation and that they are bound to comply with its requirements. The policy will also be drawn to the attention of external stakeholders and job applicants.

3.3 The policy ensures that our statutory duties outlined in the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 and Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014 (Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty) are met.

3.4 The nine grounds on which discrimination is prohibited are:

- Gender
- Civil status
- Family status
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Race (includes race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins)
- Membership of the travelling community

3.5 In accordance with the Arts Council's EDI Policy and Strategy, we also note the ground of socio-economic status as a further basis for which equality of opportunity, access and outcomes must be guaranteed,

4. Key Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Concepts

4.1 **Equality:** ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favourably through discrimination (either direct or indirect) or bias. Equality of opportunity is about treating people fairly, creating conditions in the organisation that encourage and value diversity and promote dignity and ensuring all those involved with or wishing to be involved with the organisation, regardless of their diversity, are provided with opportunity based on their ability or potential to perform the required activity.

4.2 **Diversity:** understanding, appreciating and embracing differences and practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from the majority.

4.3 **Inclusion:** is a sense of belonging; feeling respected and valued; feeling a level of support and commitment from others so that one can achieve their best at work. Inclusion aims to provide the conditions for people to know they are welcomed by the organisation regardless of their background.

5. Management and Delivery of this Policy

5.1 Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement are the responsibility of everyone within Blackwater Valley Opera Festival.

5.2 Blackwater Valley Opera Festival is committed to embedding equality, diversity & inclusion within the organisation, ensuring that everything we do and the way it is done, makes reference to and considers the impact upon our equality objectives. The leadership team of the Executive Director, Artistic Director and the Chair of the Board will demonstrate their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation and will act as positive role models promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all activities of the organisation.

5.3 It is the responsibility of Blackwater Valley Opera Festival's Executive Director to implement, monitor and evaluate the equality, diversity & inclusion policy in terms of employment practices (selection, recruitment, and retention) and service delivery. The Executive Director is also under a duty to ensure that the Board of Directors is regularly kept updated in terms of the policy's implementation.

5.4 Existing processes are used to review and investigate any complaints in relation to inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour.

6. Equality in Employment

6.1 Blackwater Valley Opera Festival is committed to equality and non-discrimination in all areas of employment, including recruitment and selection, promotions and terms and conditions of employment.

6.2 Candidates will be selected on the basis of merit and ability, consistent with the requirements of the role, and having regard to the principles of this Policy. Selection recommendations will be made by gender balanced selection boards in so far as reasonably practicable. All selection board members will be trained in the principles of equality, non-discrimination and implementation of this Policy.

6.3 Success as guided by this policy will result in:

- Preventing discrimination in employment, selection and promotion.
- Improving employee morale, satisfaction, engagement and productivity.
- Attracting and retaining qualified and able staff regardless of their background or circumstances.

6.4 We regard discrimination, harassment, abuse, victimisation or bullying of staff, customers or of others in the course of work as disciplinary offences that could be regarded as gross misconduct.

Condoning such behaviour could also be treated as a disciplinary offence. As well as disciplining the perpetrator(s), we will give appropriate support to people who complain of harassment of themselves or others.

6.5 We recognise that organisations are obliged, under the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 to make reasonable accommodations to support disabled people and enable them to do their job without unnecessary difficulty.

6.5.1 We will not discriminate on grounds of age in recruitment, promotion, training, or the availability of benefits - such as pension contributions or health insurance.

6.5.2 We will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, where an individual is in the process of gender reassignment or where an individual has completed this reassignment.

6.5.3 Blackwater Valley Opera Festival will not discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership and will support individual need as required.

6.5.4 We will not discriminate on the grounds of the sexual orientation providing everyone, whether a member of the company or an applicant for a job, with exactly the same opportunity to achieve their goals.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Blackwater Valley Opera Festival will evaluate its services and the effectiveness of its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy by a variety of means.

7.2 Information gathered through the complaints, grievances, disciplinary or other appropriate processes, will be analysed by the ten Grounds of discrimination where this information is available to identify any trends. Where any negative trends are identified, these will be investigated fully, and recommendations made to the Board.

7.3 We will report annually to the Board on the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities, including any trends in relation to the ten Grounds of discrimination.

8. Review Cycle

8.1 Responsibility for review of this policy sits with the Executive Director, who will prepare a formal review on compliance with this policy, which will be presented to the board of Blackwater Valley Opera Festival annually.

8.2. Additionally, an interim review would be conducted in the following circumstances:

- A change is made to relevant legislation, including but not limited to the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018.
- The investigation into a negative trend indicates a review of this policy is appropriate.

9. Complaints

Complaints relating to EDI should be reported to the Executive Director who must report any such complaint to the Board of Directors. If the complaint is about the Executive Director, this should be made through the Chair of the Board. All incidents of direct discrimination or breaches of conduct within our organisation will be addressed in accordance with our policies and contractual agreements. Incidents of indirect discrimination will be investigated to determine the appropriate course of action.

Any individual or contractor found to be in breach of this policy will be addressed in accordance with our policies and contractual agreements, which may include appropriate corrective action.