



## Diversity Leadership

### 1. The Role of Diversity Champion – non-executive/volunteer role

The Science Council's Declaration on Diversity calls for the appointment of a board-level Champion to advocate the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion and be accountable for improving practice and communicating the organisation's diversity strategies to the staff, membership and other stakeholders.

It is widely accepted that buy-in from senior leadership in diversity matters is vital for its success, with a recent McKinsey report highlighting the importance of real engagement from leaders (see useful links, below). Board members specifically have the opportunity to raise diversity issues at the highest level and have a high degree of influence over the organisation's strategy and its culture. As such they are key to integrating diversity values into the organisation's vision and strategic planning. By appointing a board- or equivalent-level Champion you are demonstrating a genuine commitment to diversity and cultural change.

It is for the organisation and the individual to agree between them how best the Champion role can contribute to supporting diversity. Example roles the Champion might take on:

- Advocate for the importance of DEI;
- Act as a role model for inclusive behaviour;
- Be a focal point for the organisation's diversity programme;
- Prompt and inform discussion of DEI at board level;
- Advise and support staff working towards operational change;
- Promote the organisation's vision for equality, diversity and inclusion to relevant communities;
- Act as a high level diversity contact for the Science Council;
- Be responsible for ensuring the organisation annually updates the Science Council on its strategic approach to diversity, actions taken and any progress identified.

Champions are not expected to be a bastion of knowledge on diversity law, nor to operationally manage any diversity actions, but rather act as a figurehead in promoting and driving DEI work forwards. Theirs is the strategic and tactical role of identifying where the organisation can be more inclusive and supporting the implementation work of the executive team.

Some board members may have a particular interest in diversity, or relevant expertise; alternatively it may be appropriate for the Chair of the Board to take on the role of diversity champion as an indication of collective responsibility. The Science Council can support champions through signposting to information and facilitating networking with other champions and experts.

## 2. Leadership at Operational Level

Developing and implementing a programme of work requires leadership within the executive team. Often this is at two levels with the chief executive, or equivalent, taking overall responsibility and a staff member leading implementation in consort with colleagues. Some organisations establish a diversity committee comprised of representatives for each function. The committee takes responsibility for ensuring all parts of the organisation are working towards inclusivity. Whatever approach taken, experience has shown that successful implementation requires buy-in from all areas of the organisation; this can be achieved through leadership from the chief executive and the alignment of objectives.

The delivery of the key aims can be through a variety of actions, depending on organisational size, resource and point on the diversity journey. Potential actions for executives championing diversity at operational level are to:

- Act as a diversity role model, visibly supporting and championing DEI across the organisation
- Understand where the organisation is on its diversity journey, recognising where there is more to be learned and celebrating success.
- Promote the diversity agenda in all relevant meetings and activities, working towards DEI being integrated into normal business practice.
- Ensure DEI is being considered a priority action in all areas of the organisation and responsibility is cascaded appropriately
- Identify and challenge resistance to DEI
- Encourage a culture of individuality and openness within the organisation
- Actively seek opportunities for collaborative action to increase the impact of DEI action.
- Communicate the organisation's commitment to DEI both internally and externally, representing the DEI position at events and to external partners.

This is not an exhaustive list, but serves to indicate some example actions.

## 3. Support Available

The Science Council aims to develop separate networks for diversity Champions and staff diversity leads, to facilitate shared and collaborative learning. This will be done through Champion-specific workshops, networking events and project updates to ensure all Champions remain engaged and up-to-date with the project. The value of providing occasional opportunities for Champions and staff leads to consider issues together is also recognised.

If you have any further questions, please refer to the links below or get in touch with a member of the Science Council project team.

## 4. Useful Links

For more information on the importance of senior leadership in Diversity:

- Devillard & al. (2014) Why Gender Diversity at the Top Remains a Challenge. McKinsey Quarterly.

[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/why\\_gender\\_diversity\\_at\\_the\\_top\\_remains\\_a\\_challenge](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/why_gender_diversity_at_the_top_remains_a_challenge)

- Lord John Browne (2014) Glass Closet: Why Coming Out is Good Business, HarperBusiness.
- Championing gender equality in Australia (2014) McKinsey Quarterly  
[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/championing\\_gender\\_equality\\_in\\_australia](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/championing_gender_equality_in_australia)
- For more information on the role of the Champion:
  - Race for Opportunity, Job Description for a Race Champion  
<http://raceforopportunity.bitc.org.uk/tools-case-studies/toolkits/job-description-race-champion-stage-2>
  - Enei (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) Guide to Equality and Inclusion Champions and Guide for New Equality and Inclusion Champions (member's only resources; please contact [b.wagenbach@sciencecouncil.org](mailto:b.wagenbach@sciencecouncil.org) to request a copy)