

Triskel Arts Centre

**Audience Development Plan &
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

An accessible and inclusion mindset

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Who We Are

Triskel Arts Centre is a vibrant cultural hub established 45 years ago in the heart of Cork City. Since 2011, our state of the art multidisciplinary venue has had its home at the neoclassical Georgian Christchurch, where we programme a culturally and artistically rich music programme that includes a mix of Folk, Traditional, Singer-Songwriter, post-classical genres, and have an acclaimed profile nationally and internationally for Classical and Jazz music. Triskel is the home of Cultural Cinema for the region, and also has a vibrant programme of visual art exhibitions and some literary events.

Triskel is a critical location for the arts in Cork, providing resources and space to nurture makers and audiences. We do this in 3 ways:

We **partner** with organisations across the community to create the widest access

We **programme** a dynamic and diverse programme across artforms

We **platform** the work of artists, festivals and other organisations that share our values

However, our audience is not diversifying as fast or as much as we'd like in order to remain culturally significant in a rapidly changing Ireland. We need to respond to demographic challenges and provide equal access to opportunities and resources to people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

In their national strategy, Making Great Art Work 2016-2025, the Arts Council states "the more people who engage in the arts and the greater their social diversity, the more significant the societal benefits driving from their investments".

We are committed to encouraging and championing social and cultural diversity in our programme and audience, which we achieve through stable and strong creative partnerships of national significance.

What is accessibility and inclusivity?

Accessibility is the quality of being able to be reached or entered, being easy to obtain or use, being easily understood or appreciated. It is achieved through a participatory framework of working with disabled/marginalised people to create access and develop solutions with dignity, agency and creativity. (Tilting the Lens)

Inclusivity is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised. It is a continuous and evolving practice to put accessibility and inclusivity at the core of an organisation.

People can experience marginalisation due to:

- Race or ethnicity
- Disability
- Citizenship
- Religious or spiritual affiliation
- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Age

- Geographic location (such as via access to broadband, amenities, etc.)
- Marital status
- Socio-economic class
- Educational attainment
- First language; lack of fluency in English
- Systems impact (people who are legally, economically, or familially affected by incarceration or the justice system more generally, who are in the foster care or another care setting, in Direct Provision, or other state systems)

There are many barriers to inclusion:

- Personal – learned attitudes
- Cultural – societal understanding
- Institutional – timing/information provided, inherent bias in systems and processes
- Structural – buildings themselves, or inaccessible spaces

We also need to take the time to understand our own biases and privileges. We need to listen and acknowledge where there are gaps in our knowledge, even when – possibly especially when – we experience uncomfortable conversations as a result.

Our ambitions for this work

The writing of this plan is not the work. The work is how we implement the recommendations, engage with communities and evaluate the impact of these actions.

There are three audience types to consider:

- Our established audiences
- Those who have not yet been persuaded to become part of our audience
- Those who are/feel excluded

We acknowledge the gaps in our experience of the reasons why some people may feel excluded from our programme and our building. Audience development work deepens engagement, grows our audience numbers and/or broadens its diversity to people unlike our current audience.

Our audience comprises attendees, artists, visitors, social media followers, programme participants, donors, advocates, funders etc. It also includes those we are ambitious to have within these groups.

This needs to be an organisation-wide commitment to engage with people, whether they're members of our audience or not, understanding their interests, identifying barriers that exist to them participating in our programming and seeking long-term relationship building with them. There needs to be more purpose and objective-driven engagement with the team.

We need to make reasonable accommodations to facilitate access.

We need to be ambitious to activate and lead in:

- Identifiable changes in our programming
- More purpose and intention in engagement with audiences

- Significant growth in audience numbers and the range of communities and identities who engage with our work

A key learning is that one size does not fit all. We need to design a diversity of ways to engage and be involved in the hope of reaching almost everyone. Relevant content, accessible spaces and comprehensive information is key to this.

Action Plan

1. Set SMART goals

If we can't measure it, then how will we know if anything is working? At the beginning of each year, we will set ourselves SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely/Time-bound. We will review quarterly and adjust as necessary.

2. Decide the leadership of the key team who will implement

Everyone within Triskel needs to be part of whatever plans are put in place. At different times, different managers will take lead e.g. programming, marketing. Our Board needs to be fully behind every initiative. We are committed to growing our Board sustainably and widening its diversity, through implementation of the Board Development Plan.

3. Identify specialist expertise required

We intend to harness through board membership, the expertise that will help us to implement our objectives. For example, to deepen our engagement with the Cork Traveller Women's Network and the engagement of Irish Travellers with Triskel's work, we are exploring the opportunity for a dedicated Arts Resource Worker role to increase the impact of our own programming work, and activate those of our partners in the Cork Traveller Women's Network, and support the building of capacity and skill with their community.

4. Assess our current audience

We have been traditionally more instinct-led than evidence-based. We will no longer make assumptions. To that end, we carried out a social identities analysis of our audience. We had 269 responses. The results show that 81% of respondents to the survey identify as non-disabled, 80% state they need no accommodations to participate in activities in Triskel, 69% are White Irish, 68% are heterosexual/straight. Does this mean we do not have to make any accommodations for any other ethnicities or abilities? The data suggests that we need to do things differently to encourage a more diverse audience to attend. We need to consider are we communicating effectively how accessible our building is, or how broad our programme is? Are we communicating in the right places? Do we need to make accommodations to consider the needs of people of other cultures or ethnicities, people whose first language is not English?

We carried out two internal workshops with staff – on Audience Development and on EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) – with interesting insights reached from both. Marketing and communications were cited as opportunities to more effectively tell our story. For example, our main auditorium is a 300-year-old church with fixed pew seating. There is a lift from the ground floor of Triskel to the main floor of the church and a ramp to the main seating area of the church. It's not possible to remove any of the seating to create wheelchair accessible places, however, our centre aisle is wide enough that a wheelchair user could purchase a ticket for any aisle seat (or, indeed, any seat at all) and place their chair in the aisle alongside that row. We will be more explicit on our website and on site about accessibility in the building.

We also need to communicate information like accessible toilets, distance from bus routes or car parks.

If disabled people see from our website that we are intentional in how we present our information, and the details we give, we have already signalled our wish to include them. We also need to include an open invitation to accommodate needs.

We have worked with the CTWN to programme cultural and artistic works of value and of interest to Travellers. Triskel staff took Traveller Cultural Awareness Training. We need to engage more effectively with the community during our survey campaigns, considering the best way to attract data from this community to ensure their views are counted and considered.

5. Consider what we didn't know

We will engage with groups such as Cultural Companions to assess the accessibility of our website and booking processes from the point of view of older people, some of whom are not comfortable with technology and therefore resist purchasing tickets online. We need to explore what outreach or communications we can do to ease any fears/reluctance on their part.

We are aware that resources within Triskel have led to a largely digital-only marketing strategy, which can exclude those who are not tech-savvy or who do not subscribe to social media platforms. This is due to staffing challenges and also the Covid-19 global pandemic which meant placing posters/leaflets in locations around the city was not possible. As our staffing situation improves, we will be in a position to reach out to appropriate groups/locations to re-introduce posters/leaflets.

6. Involve the people we want to have in our audience

Instead of focusing on compliance and minimum standards, and buoyed by our new knowledge of our audience and the communities we are not currently reaching, we have chosen to approach inclusion and access creatively, through invitation, dialogue, and solutions. We have set our ambitions higher, and will strive to do better.

It is our work now to consider how we can programme in a way that feels welcoming and is relevant; produce communications and marketing messages that speak to audiences in a way that connects; and reach out to groups/communities who currently feel excluded/marginalised. This will mark and make the change in our audiences – by increasing engagement and participation, growing numbers, and broadening diversity.

7. Identify strategies

Programming

It is not just our physical space that needs to be accessible but also programming in terms of relevance to multiply marginalised communities. To engage and encourage participation in our work/attendance by multiply marginalised communities, we need to develop, plan and make programmes with these communities rather than for them. To this end, we have partnered with the LGBTI+ InterAgency Group in Cork to programme films each quarter. Our Head of Cinema identified a film distributor that specialises in LGBTI+ films so the group's committee can select the film they believe their members will want to watch.

Co-creating and co-curating programmatic elements within the communities we want to reach will go a long way to engaging with those communities.

Co-creating and co-curating has been an essential part of our partnership with the Cork Traveller Women's Network. Our work was interrupted by the Covid-19 global pandemic when their focus shifted to survival of their community. Now that restrictions have lifted, more attention can be given to the artistic and cultural programmes.

Marketing and communications

We will do an audit of our Owned, Paid, Earned and Shared media use to identify ways to be clear of our intention to be more inclusive to new audiences. We also commit to engage with different people/audiences in the way that best fits their experience, attitude, or need to allow them to feel included, rather than simply removing accessibility barriers.

Owned: We will assess our website and online platforms in terms of colour contrasting, alt-tagging and ease of use for adaptive technologies. We will update content on accessibility of building, seating, public transport and parking, and make it more visible on the site. We will ensure our signage, brochures and posters are accessible and readable. We will be careful when we embed URLs to use phrases that describe what the link does e.g. instead of 'Click here', use 'Buy your tickets for [insert film/show]'.

Earned: We will target media platforms and outlets that connect with the communities we want to engage and ensure we tell compelling stories that are relevant to those groups. For harder-to-reach audiences, we will consider who should deliver the message. Could we use different media and different people across it? What languages should we consider using, as well as English?

Shared: Our social media posts and newsletters will be accessible to disabled people in the future by ensuring we add image descriptions, caption our videos, etc. We will move towards a plain English approach to writing posts to ensure we don't alienate some audiences. If appropriate for particular programmes, we will use alternate languages.

8. Outreach

We want to identify and activate opportunities to resource the creation of a dedicated Arts Resource Worker role for Triskel to increase the impact of our own programming work, and activate those of our partners in the Cork Traveller Women's Network, and support the building of capacity and skill within their community.

We will assess how to connect more effectively with communities within Cork city and county, for example communicating the foreign language films already in our programming and programming for specific groups in their native language. We will include information on our website about venue hire and so diverse communities are aware of the potential to host events in Triskel Christchurch.

9. Accessibility

We will assess our website and online platforms in terms of accessibility and will ensure this is communicated appropriately and effectively. We will ensure information about accessible toilets, wheelchair areas in Triskel Christchurch are communicated appropriately on our website and other relevant communications.

10. Consider and engage potential collaborators

Partnership is key to achieving success in audience development by opening up routes to target audience groups. Shared ambitions, understanding and aims are essential. Partners must have a shared understanding of the barriers to inclusion and a shared ambition to address them.

11. Implement audience development activities

Setting out specific ambitions, targets and objectives for each audience development activity will help us to proceed with more purpose in implementation and put in place the measures and measurement processes we need.

12. Manage campaigns alongside day-to-day marketing

We will continue to develop our marketing messages, practising our inclusion mindset and approach.

13. Establish monitoring procedures and progress meetings

Regular measurement allows us to make compelling cases for support to funders, as we show a need developing. Where possible, our measurements will continue to be quantitative and qualitative. We have set baseline standards through our Audience Survey, and we can carry that out annually to track progress of diversification. We will look at metrics such as audience numbers, media coverage, web and social engagement, on a quarterly basis. We will incorporate reporting on EDI and Audience Development into our weekly Operations meetings.

14. Revisit the plan and continue

This is not a one-time activity but an ongoing, long-term process that we commit to implementing. We will revise the plan as we work through our SMART goals, committing to updating at least quarterly.