Nuffield Foundation

Equity, diversity and inclusion: Action plan 2026-27

Introduction 2

Our three areas of focus 3

Aim 1: Embedding and championing EDI in the substance of our work 4

Aim 2: Funding a more diverse range of partners and grant-holders 6

Aim 3: Diversifying our workforce and embedding an inclusive culture 8

Introduction

The Nuffield Foundation's founding purpose is to advance social well-being. Our aim is to open opportunities and improve lives for individuals, families and communities, within a just and inclusive society. Understanding and highlighting inequalities, disadvantage, discrimination and vulnerabilities faced by people - and what should be done about them - has long been a major theme of our work, and will remain so. We focus on groups defined according to legally protected characteristics alongside other characteristics, such as social class and socio-economic background, neurodiversity, migration status, and care experience.

Understanding, explaining, and finding solutions to inequality is increasingly important in the current context of greater polarisation in the UK and elsewhere. Divisions over issues such as identity, migration, race, religion, and gender have become more pronounced and visible, accompanied by an increase in hate-driven rhetoric and incidents. This is creating a sense of fear, exclusion, and insecurity across many different communities. As an organisation we oppose discrimination in all its forms. We have a clear responsibility - in line with our values - to listen carefully, act independently, remain grounded in sound evidence, and work sensitively with others.

We know that persistent structural inequalities exist in the research and funding sector. The Nuffield Foundation is part of a wider system which is not yet reflective of the make-up of wider UK society, and where marginalised groups often have negative experiences of working. We are committed to taking practical steps to support change, working with other research organisations and networks to test different approaches.

This action plan sets out how The Foundation will make improvements through the work we do, the people and institutions we work with, and in our own workplace. We will take an evidence-led approach, using data and insights to monitor our progress and identify future priorities. We aim to have an organisational culture that values difference, individuality, fairness, and respect, and that empowers colleagues to contribute their perspectives, experiences and strengths.

Over the last few years we have undertaken a programme of EDI work, and in 2025/26 we began delivering our first formal action plan, achieving a great deal and learning a lot. Our approach for 2026/27 is to focus on fewer priorities with clearer resourcing in order to have more impact. We are also broadening responsibility for actions across the Foundation and Centres, so that every team can see its contribution to meaningful change.

Statement on racism

Racism and racial discrimination have profound and damaging impacts on individuals, communities and society alike. Understanding and addressing inequalities associated with race and ethnicity is an important part of our work to build a just and inclusive society. We are clear that there is no place for racism in the research and funding sector, and will continue to work to make our sector more representative of UK society.

Our three areas of focus

01

Embedding and championing EDI in the substance of our work:
We will ensure that our funded work continues to focus on inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination, keeping our coverage under active review and adjusting as needed. We will make sure EDI considerations are identified and embedded in our new projects, and will take part in EDI conversations in our sector to share learning, join initiatives, and contribute to change. To hear a variety of perspectives, we want a diverse range of people to engage in our discussions, meetings, and events.

02

Funding a more diverse range of partners and grant-holders:
We will assess the potential for bias in our grant application processes and make improvements as needed to centre fairness and inclusivity. Alongside this, we will work to support groups underrepresented in research funding to strengthen the pipeline and visibility of future researchers. Working and advisory groups for our in-house projects and research programmes should reflect a broad and representative range of perspectives, backgrounds and lived experience.

03

Diversifying our workforce and embedding an inclusive culture:
We will seek to employ staff from a diverse range of backgrounds and ensure an inclusive workplace culture where we celebrate and respect differences. Our teams will be supported to take forward this EDI action plan.

Aim 1: Embedding and championing EDI in the substance of our work

We are developing a detailed understanding of how the work we fund addresses inequalities, discrimination and disadvantage, identifying gaps in our portfolio and taking steps to fill them.

We want to create a culture where EDI is considered from the outset of projects that we initiate and throughout. And we aim to play an active role in sector-wide conversations, contributing evidence and insight, sharing what we learn, and helping to influence positive change.

In 2025/26 we:

- Ran a seminar series to upskill our staff, predominantly focusing on the latest research on racial inequalities, as well as covering research methodology approaches including trauma informed research and inclusive data.
- Communicated our interest in specific research gaps related to race and ethnicity, aligning these with our strategic interests. We expect to see applications relevant to these gaps in our 2026 grants rounds, and will continue to monitor and evaluate this. We also updated internal systems and processes to better track grant applications by topic and respond accordingly.
- Developed a Foundation-wide inclusive events policy, aimed at ensuring a wide range of people can engage with our discussions, events, and seminars. Implementation continues throughout 2026.

In 2026/27, we will continue to review and address gaps in our portfolio, pilot how we can embed EDI throughout the lifecycle of projects, and better connect with the research and funding sector on EDI issues.

Actions:

Continue delivering EDI seminar series

We will continue our EDI seminar series to deepen understanding and awareness for all those working at Nuffield of the latest research findings, spotlighting a different group or issue each year. In 2026, we will continue to explore racial inequalities and add a further focus on disability, mental health, neurodiversity and long-term health conditions. We will strengthen the seminar programme's intersectional approach, as well as building on our work examining research methods and best practice.

The series aims to encourage informed discussion and reflection. Insights and learnings from the seminars will inform practical changes.

Continue to review our grants portfolio and identify gaps

We will continue to review our grants portfolio to spot priority evidence gaps and will communicate these to potential applicants. Building on last year's review of how our funded work addresses racial inequalities we will continue to encourage applications in these areas and monitor what we receive and fund. We will also extend our mapping to identify gaps focusing on disability, mental health, neurodiversity, and long-term conditions.

This work will take time to translate into applications and then – if successful - finished research.

Develop a tool to embed EDI throughout the lifecycle of projects

To help create a culture where EDI considerations are proactively discussed and embedded throughout projects, we will develop and pilot an approach to using EDI reflective tools for research and project work. We will test this in one area of the organisation, with the aim of then using it more widely.

Build external networks and partnerships to strengthen EDI practice

We will participate in networks and discussions about EDI in the funding and charitable sector. We will also build relationships with peer organisations, sharing insights and identifying opportunities to collaborate. Strengthening these connections will help us amplify efforts and contribute to sector-wide change, as well as informing our future plans.

Aim 2: Funding a more diverse range of partners and grant-holders

We want to ensure that a more diverse range of partners and grant-holders can engage with, apply to, and work alongside the Foundation. We have committed to assessing the potential for bias in our grant application processes and to making improvements as needed to be confident our systems are as equitable as possible.

To do this, we also need to understand and tackle the barriers that underrepresented groups face in the research sector, including those related to ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic background. We want to play our role in strengthening the diversity of the research pipeline by supporting and championing underrepresented researchers and organisations. Alongside this, we will work to ensure that our steering and advisory groups reflect a representative range of perspectives and backgrounds.

While our initial focus is on the grants review, we expect its findings to generate further actions. For example, there might be a focus on how we undertake outreach, contribute to sector-wide EDI efforts, and support our grant-holders' own EDI ambitions.

In 2025/26, we:

- Continued to collect and report demographic data of applicants and grant-holders to continuously understand our applicant and grantee base and identify groups who are more or less likely to seek our funding and be successful in doing so. We will continue to use data collection as a measure of whether the actions we undertake are having an impact. Our data showed that Black Principal Investigators are underrepresented in our grant-holder base.
- Sponsored the Society of Black Academics' (SBA) annual conference, which brought together over 200 attendees. We took part in a panel discussion focusing on "Research with reach".
- Completed work to build relationships with, and better understand, the barriers experienced by Black researchers.
- Hosted a webinar for Black applicants attended by around 150 researchers on how to apply for Nuffield funding and held individual follow up calls to answer questions.

Actions for 2026/27 will focus on the active role we can take in creating a fair and inclusive research sector, and by supporting groups that are underrepresented in the research sector early in their career development.

Actions:

Complete review of grant making process

We will conduct a review of our grant-making process to work through how best to minimise any biases or barriers in our application processes. This may include aspects such as our guidance, assessment and decision-making, and communication with applicants. We will generate recommendations and then take forward the implementation of agreed improvements in next year's action plan.

Provide sponsorship for conferences for groups underrepresented in the research sector

We will again sponsor a small number of conferences for groups underrepresented in the research sector. We recognise the importance of creating such spaces where researchers can connect, build partnerships, and share insights, as these opportunities play a critical role in professional development and visibility.

Develop a consistent approach to appointments to project advisory boards and working groups

We will create a clear and consistent approach across our organisation to appointing members to project advisory boards and working/steering groups, to ensure a diverse range of people and perspectives are represented.

Aim 3: Diversifying our workforce and embedding an inclusive culture

We are committed to building a workforce that better reflects the diversity of London and its surrounding areas, and creating an organisational culture where everyone feels included, safe and valued. We will run fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment processes that encourage and support a broad range of applicants, so that opportunities to join the Foundation are accessible to people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. We will also equip our leaders and managers with the skills and confidence to lead inclusively within a fair, respectful and values-driven culture.

In 2025/26, we

- Started an Inclusive Leadership programme for our Leadership Team
- Continued to develop our recruitment processes, trialling longlisting a greater number of candidates and multi-stage interviews
- Developed a 'ways of working' framework for staff linked to our organisational values.
- Established the Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage (REACH) peer group, alongside our other staff peer groups including the LGBTQ+ network, and the network for staff with long-term physical and mental health conditions, neurodiversity and disabilities
- Continued to review and update staff policies

Actions for 2026/27 build on work to date with a particular focus on embedding an inclusive culture. Changes to our recruitment processes will continue and will evolve in line with best practice recommendations.

Actions:

Deliver and embed an Inclusive Leadership programme

We will continue to implement the senior leadership development programme so that senior leaders are well equipped to demonstrate our values and leadership behaviours and build strong relationships with staff. We will achieve this through training and coaching, feedback, and objective-setting, and we will also provide development training for all line managers.

Embed organisational values into everyday practice

We will further embed our values and 'ways of working' framework into everyday practice so that positive behaviours are reinforced, and values are clearly reflected in how we work and make decisions. We will incorporate our values into recruitment and HR processes and will celebrate success where they are being actively demonstrated, ensuring that staff can also raise concerns if they are not being followed.

Deliver training to build an inclusive workplace

We will deliver training to equip staff with the skills and confidence to contribute to an inclusive workplace and embed inclusive behaviours in their everyday work. Training for all staff will focus on behaviours and communication, as the building blocks for an inclusive culture. We will also provide inclusive line management training for all managers.

Celebrate our diversity and heritage

We will actively celebrate our diversity and heritage to strengthen everyone's sense of belonging in our organisation. Through these events and initiatives, our staff will have a greater awareness and understanding of different identities and experiences, leading to more informed and empathetic conversations.