

**Irish
Architecture
Foundation**

Audience Development Strategy





Irish Architecture Foundation
Audience Development Strategy

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Proviso

The writing of this strategy document is not the work.

The work manifests in how we, the Irish Architecture Foundation, implement the following recommendations, engage with communities, and evaluate the impact of those actions.

This *Audience Development Strategy* considers three audience types – our established audiences, those not persuaded to date and, perhaps most crucially, those excluded.

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Foreword

All of the people

When the Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF) was convened seventeen years ago, the intention was that this new cultural organisation would be independent, formative and above all else, ensure that architecture served all of the people.

For nearly two decades, the IAF has established a network and track record of delivering major projects, primarily aimed at developing audiences for architecture in Ireland, while also raising the profile of Irish architecture abroad.

We have an audience that is engaged and growing, a network that is national and international, a sector that is active and responsive, a following that is in need of innovative solutions and creative responses to urgent issues in the contemporary built world.

Of course, we are jubilant that we are surpassing audience targets with high profile projects, but our audience was not diversifying as fast as it was growing. The demographic landscape of our cities, towns and villages is changing as fast as our populations grow. As cultural and creative practitioners we must respond to this demographic challenge and provide equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

Mentored by Tilting the Lens and Blue Line Consulting we focused our attention on the people that we have not been engaging with and opened a much-needed discussion with them about the IAF and architecture in general. Through their generosity they helped us begin a process of critical self-reflection and acknowledgment of the gaps in our experience and practice. The intended outcome goes beyond audience development and will result in institutional transformation as well as informing our programme choices.

We hope this document and the critical path to create it is used as a template, guide and resource for other organisations in their journey to more equitably deliver their work and programmes.

This document has become essential to everything we do.

Nathalie Weadick, FRIBA

Director

Irish Architecture Foundation

Introduction

Audience development work is that which deepens engagement, grows our audience numbers, and/or broadens its diversity to people unlike our current audience.

The Irish Architecture Foundation *Audience Development Strategy* describes and supports our organisation-wide commitment to engaging with people, be they members of our audience or not, understanding their interests, identifying barriers that exist to them participating in our programming, and seeking to develop a long-term relationship with them. This understanding brings mutual respect and benefit, through providing reasonable accommodations to facilitate access, alongside programmes and activities that are relevant.

Early in the process of writing this strategy, we realised and acknowledged that everyone in IAF has a role in ensuring our events, experiences, and programmes meet the needs of our audience; and that our audience should be a part of conversations within the organisation about these things.

And so, we approach our audience development work with this philosophy and commitment: nothing about us, without us.

We do not (and will not) make assumptions on behalf of communities in terms of what they need or want. Instead, where possible, we involve them in the discussion and planning.

Our audience development work spans and feeds our programming, events, marketing and communications, commissioning, outreach and education programmes, advocacy, customer care, fundraising, and recruitment and HR processes. Ours is an audience-centred or audience-first approach across our curated events, learning, Open House Dublin and placemaking strands.

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

This plan describes a more purposeful and objective-driven engagement with them. While we've always had strong engagement, added nuance and purpose will deliver results we can, and will, measure and evaluate.

Who we are

The Irish Architecture Foundation's purpose is to inspire people to build a better world.

Our mission is to champion the power of architecture to transform lives and improve the places where we live, learn, work, and play. This mission is manifest in our programming.

Since 2005, IAF has promoted public awareness of the aesthetic and cultural value of architecture in Ireland. Our programme comprises four distinct activities - curation, learning, placemaking, and the annual Open House Dublin festival - through which we inspire people to understand and confidently shape their world.

Within our values of openness, excellence, and courage, is the promise that:

...we are open to ideas, inclusive of all people and generous in creating opportunities for everyone to engage with and be inspired by architecture.

We have to ensure that the work we do is inclusive, that the opportunities we create are available to everyone, and that we advocate within the sector for our partners to think about how everyone can engage equally with architecture.

We believe in an Ireland where architecture is a civic right, fundamental to the fabric of our life, culture, and history. But access is not a given for all our citizens. While we work to champion access for all to Ireland's built environment, IAF cannot continue to create and deliver programmes that are not available to everyone, whatever their access challenges.

Our Strategic Plan includes the ambitions to

- commission a fit-for-purpose *Audience Development Strategy* that considers and supports a hybrid programme of physical/virtual events.
- prioritise access for diverse audiences.
- create e-tools to ensure no one is socially, digitally, educationally, economically, physically, or geographically excluded from IAF's work.

We begin this work here.

National and international contexts of inclusion

The objectives and ambitions laid out in our *Audience Development Strategy* are identified and will be delivered in the context of the ambitions in the Arts Council of Ireland's national strategy *Making Great Art Work 2016-2025*, which focuses on the inter-dependent priorities of the artist and public engagement, alongside the belief that the more people who engage in the arts and the greater their social diversity, the more significant the societal benefits deriving from their investments.

All IAF staff should read ***Making Great Art Work 2016-2025***.

This *Audience Development Strategy* also continues IAF's implementation of the ambitions of the Arts Council's Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy, which strives to respect, support, and ensure inclusion of all voices and cultures that make up Ireland today - from all sections of society, both existing and new communities, and from all social backgrounds, ethnicities and traditions.

IAF staff should read the ***Equality, Human Rights and Diversity Policy and Strategy***.

We will also include and be cognisant of the ambitions of Ireland's National Policy on Architecture, when published.

On an international level, **Article 27 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights**, states:

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

We support and are emboldened in our work by these collective ambitions.

“Being excluded is an invisible form of bullying that doesn't leave bruises, and therefore we often underestimate its impact. When a person is ostracised, the brain's dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, which registers physical pain, also feels this social injury. The process of ostracism includes three stages: the initial acts of being ignored or excluded, coping and resignation.”

Kipling D. Williams, a Purdue professor of psychological sciences, Purdue University

What we mean by inclusivity and accessibility

Inclusivity is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

In Ireland, people can experience marginalisation or exclusion in some settings 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)

Accessibility is the quality of being able to be reached or entered; or the quality of being easy to obtain or use; or the quality of being easily understood or appreciated. So, when our physical or digital working environments, resources,

and services are accessible, they can be used by everyone, regardless of ability.

Tilting the Lens, the accessibility consultancy that supported the work towards this plan, believe accessibility is achieved through a participatory framework of working with disabled people to create access and develop solutions embedded with dignity, agency, and creativity. This moves beyond baseline standards to create more equitable places, spaces, and policies for all. Accessibility is a continuous and evolving practice. It varies with the audience and the context, and as technology and conversation progress.

As a team, we have come to believe that when considering inclusivity in our work, we are not designing one process or thing for all people, but rather a diversity of ways to participate so that everyone has a sense of belonging.

We also believe that helpful supports and accommodations can be useful for everyone.

A quick example of this is that for online events, we include live captioning and Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreters alongside the audio stream. Captions are useful not just for the d/Deaf Community, but also for people in a public space who don't have headphones, people who are learning English, people for whom accents are challenging, etc.

Barriers to inclusion

Barriers to inclusion exist everywhere. It is important to take time to understand our own privilege and biases, and do what we need to get comfortable with discomfort. That discomfort will manifest perhaps in difficult conversations, listening and acknowledging where there are gaps in our knowledge. We simply don't know what we don't know.

At IAF, we endeavour to inform ourselves when we discover those gaps. Once aware of the systems of oppression, they cannot be ignored.

Bob Mullally, author and emeritus professor of social work at University of Manitoba, describes four systems of oppression, or barriers to inclusion - personal, cultural, institutional, and structural.

Personal - Within ourselves we have in-built, inherited, or learned attitudes, opinions, and assumptions that inform how we think about, respond to, and engage with the world and the people in it. It is human nature to respond differently, even in subtle ways, in interactions with people or situations. Those responses can be conscious or unconscious, and could manifest in subtle notions of the superiority or inferiority of different kinds of people, based on assumptions of class, education, and so forth.

Cultural - Describing societal understanding of different kinds of people, this is often learned through what we see on TV shows, in books, and in the news. Myths are perpetrated in the stories we tell or are told. This societal understanding can be problematic and difficult to change. For instance, consider how often we see or are presented with a Disabled person described or presented as having 'overcome' something, or 'suffering' an illness, etc.

Institutional - Organisations can have policies and processes that create unintentional barriers for people. Small and purposeful changes to things like the timing of events, the breadth of information we provide (rather than the assumption that people know it), the level of written documentation we request in forms or job applications, the complexity of the language we use in our communications, can be powerful, because these things can be barriers to people for different reasons. For instance, an all-day event scheduled during Ramadan, with food served in the same room, would present significant challenges to a member of the Muslim Community who is fasting and cannot eat until after the sun sets.

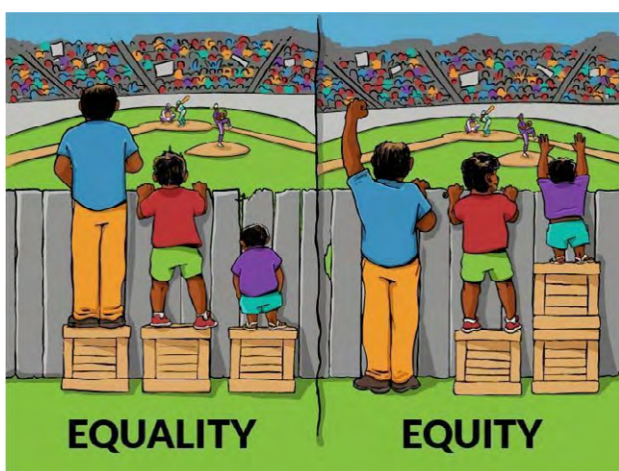
Structural - Our buildings and our built environment can create the most significant barriers to access, many of which can have reasonable solutions. The more types of people involved in the planning and design of spaces, the less need for changes or remedial fixes later to things like entrances, toilet design, lighting, signage, etc.

One of the most significant reasons organisations are prone to unconscious bias in their cultural and institutional systems, processes, and thinking, is because of lack of diversity in the executive and/or the Board. More diversity and representation of different kinds of identities, will begin to challenge group think by bringing new perspectives. That diversity will not be achieved without thoughtful and more purposeful approaches to the wording of job advertisements and the processes of interviewee selection, interview type, and recruitment.

Other relevant glossary terms

Ableism - Ableism is discrimination or social prejudice against people with disabilities, or people who are perceived to be disabled. It characterises people who are defined by their disabilities as inferior to the non-disabled. Ableism in the arts is seen where disabled people are paid less than non-disabled people, or not hired at all; where reasonable accommodations for access are not made or provided; where video pieces are created without audio descriptions or subtitles; where images are uploaded to websites and social media without Alt tagging or image descriptions; or where a talk, screening, or event is held in an inaccessible venue, thereby excluding some participants. We can also be unintentionally ableist in our choice of words, such as with phrases like ‘tone deaf’, ‘blind drunk’, or referring to people as ‘a lunatic’, ‘crazy’, or ‘a bit OCD’. With some thought we can replace these words with others that aren’t upsetting or reductive.

IDEA - Some companies use the acronym IDEA for their diversity and inclusion (D&I) work, to stand for Inclusion, Diversity, Equality, and Accessibility. At IAF, we have swapped out ‘equality’ for ‘equity’, as we know that if we provide our services on an equal basis, this does not lead to accessibility. Some people will always require more supports or accommodations to experience things equitably, as this image represents:



From the Interaction Institute for Social Change |
Artist: Angus Maguire

Intersectional - When we refer to intersectionality in this plan, we are acknowledging the complex and cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups. The theory of intersectionality, which was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor at UCLA and Columbia specialising in race and gender issues, states that when it comes to thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct. To give an example from feminist conversations – gender inequality is not fixed when there are more women visible, if those women are all white and cisgender – but if there are also women of colour, disabled women, trans women, etc.

Privilege - Privilege refers to the social advantages, benefits, or levels of prestige and respect that an individual has by virtue of belonging to certain social identity groups. Depending on the situation, that privilege could, for instance, be due to gender, class, education, race, ability, etc.

Social identity - Social identity is a person’s sense of who they are based on their group memberships. In 1979, Henri Tajfel, a Polish social psychologist known for his pioneering work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice and social identity theory, proposed that the groups that people belong to are an important sense of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity, a sense of belonging to the social world. These groups can include citizenship, gender, socio-economic class, religious affiliation, ethnicity, etc.

Unconscious bias - Unconscious bias refers to a bias that we are unaware of and which happens outside of our control. It is a bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment, and personal experiences.

Our ambitions for this work

We are ambitious to grow an intersectional, vibrant, and dynamic community of people who are motivated to join a conversation about where they live, work, play, and do business. We will do this through social identity analysis to understand different types of audiences to ensure everyone can feel they belong in the discussion. But, we also want to understand how we relate to our audience as individuals, rather than representatives of a demographic, minority, or target market.

While we create work of artistic and cultural excellence, we also ensure this work engages with audiences and leaves a lasting impression. But, who are we not reaching? And, why?

This plan aims to create a best-in-class strategy for audience development that tackles inaccessibility in cultural activity in Ireland by involving experts with lived experience through a series of expert panels who feed in at every stage. We are clear in our purpose to create a plan and strategies that address the need for an intersectional approach to audience development.

We are ambitious for this *Audience Development Strategy* to activate and lead to:

- identifiable changes in our programming.
- more purpose and intention in our engagement with our audience.
- a significant growth in both our audience numbers, and the range of communities and identities who engage in IAF's work.

This document will help us engage with audiences in a more purposeful way, with set objectives and with a knowledge of who they are and what supports or accommodations they need to participate. It will help us make the best use of our limited time and financial resources.

Traditionally, we have been more instinct-led rather than evidence-based in much of our audience development. In the process of writing this document, however, we have set in motion new engagement activities to find out more about existing and potential audiences.

Through the course of moving much of our activity online during the global pandemic that began in early 2020, we have increased our direct engagement with audiences, broadened the geographical location of attendees at our events, and grown the numbers of people following us on social media and joining our database.

This has given us the impetus and drive to ask questions allowing us to get to know our audiences more fully, beyond the standard demographic questions we've asked in the past after events such as Open House Dublin.

Barriers to inclusion can be personal or attitudinal, societal or cultural, institutional (such as via our formal or informal policies) or structural through access to our built environment. The IAF team began the journey to developing this strategy with an ambition and commitment to inform ourselves. We simply didn't know what we didn't know. When we began to be aware of the types and systems of oppression, we knew that our audience development work needed to be about much more than tackling accessibility and inclusion issues. We now also know that we can no longer make assumptions that our programming is relevant to all the communities we would love to count within our audience.

This work aims to be an exemplar in the engagement and understanding of an intersectional, vibrant, and dynamic community of the broadest level of ability and challenge, creating a model for accessibility, equity, inclusion, diversity, and belonging.

Our principles

We approach our audience development work with the following principles:

**Purposeful engagement and conversation,
'nothing about us, without us'**

Evidence not assumptions

**Long-term thinking, ongoing processes,
rather than short-term activities**

Organisation-wide commitment

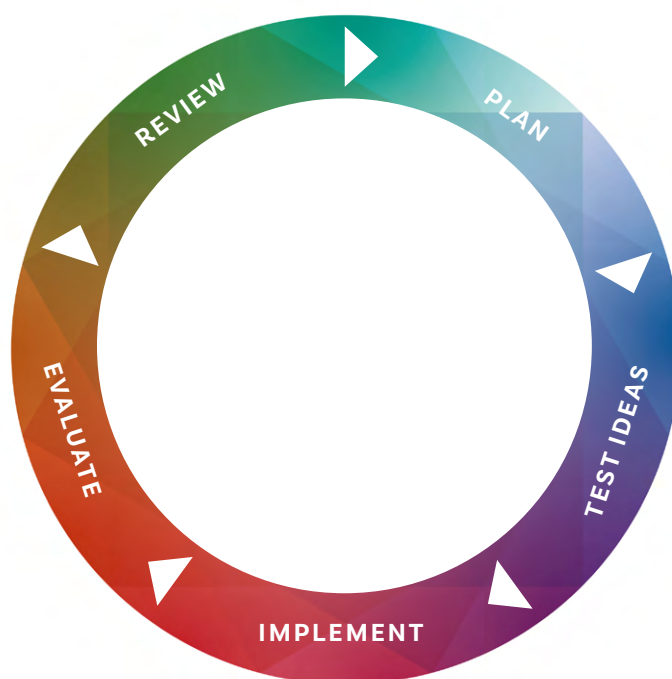
Holistic focus on existing and potential audiences

Constant vigilance on who isn't in the room

Ongoing practice of constructive questioning of assumptions

Planning, implementing, evaluating, reviewing

Most importantly, this is a live document, a live plan, and a live policy that will evolve and grow as we evaluate and review the implementation.



Action plan

1. Set realistic (SMART) goals
2. Decide the leadership of the key team who will implement
3. Identify specialist expertise required
4. Assess our current audience
5. Consider what we didn't know
6. Involve the people we want to have in our audience
7. Identify strategies
8. Consider and engage potential collaborators
9. Implement audience development activities
10. Manage campaigns alongside day-to-day marketing
11. Establish monitoring procedures and progress meetings
12. Revisit the plan, and continue

To follow is our strategy to implement those actions across our events, learning, placemaking and Open House Dublin strands. The processes were modelled at the event, which is discussed here in detail.

1. Set realistic (SMART) goals

Our drive to build the audience for architecture in Ireland has underscored all our projects and work to date. Our goals in audience development are to

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| grow our audience numbers | – | a quantitative increase |
| be more engaged and connected with them | – | qualitative improvement |
| grow the diversity of our audience | – | quantitatively broaden networks |

This document approaches that work from marketing, communications, programming, and accessibility perspectives. We will more effectively engage with audiences across age, gender, race, class, ability, culture, etc.

SMART goals are those that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely, or time-bound.

At the start of each year, when planning our Strategic Plan implementation, we will set targets for ourselves, such as in

- growing audience numbers (attendance, increased capacity at events, increase in mailing list signups, increase in Friend memberships, increase in social media followers)
- increasing the level of engagement (growth of engagement on social media, applications, and participation in our longer-participative programmes)
- improving engagements from target communities in specific programmes, increasing awareness among multiply marginalised communities to the accessibility of events like Open House Dublin, increasing use of accommodation provisions at events

We will measure outcomes through our audience surveys on the diversity of our audience.

Success will be manifest in how we have added value to, and through, our audience. For instance, at Open House Dublin, do they stay longer, visit more sites, watch more videos, ultimately join as a member of IAF, or go on to be an advocate or champion for architecture? Do more diverse communities apply to participate in Placemaking programmes?

These outcomes all help to drive forward IAF's mission.

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

We have already agreed that audience development is an organisation-wide activity and in that way everyone in IAF will be involved in the work. The implementation of this plan will be overseen by the Board and the Chair, and will be managed day-to-day by the Director. Access, inclusion, and diversity will be a regular agenda item for the Board to discuss and report on.

Individual activities, campaigns, and programmes will be led variously by the Marketing team, the Programming team, the Outreach team, and so forth.

3. Identify specialist expertise required

This *Audience Development Strategy* is written in partnership with Blue Line Consulting, with the support of specialist accessibility consultancy Tilting the Lens. With their partnership and support we have had and will continue to seek contributions from representatives of communities who have lived experience of the barriers to inclusion in the arts and cultural experiences in Ireland.

We will continue to engage with multiply marginalised communities who will help inform our thinking and support our learning, supporting us to develop ideas for programming that is relevant to their communities.

Alongside this, and to support our work towards a more accessible programme, we will work with technology experts in the field of inclusion, and suppliers who have a shared understanding of the barriers to participation and a drive to address them. In 2021, for instance, we began a partnership with Aira Tech Corp, a US-based app using the latest technology and highly trained teams to provide real-time information to people who are Blind or have low vision.

“To not have the conversations because they make you uncomfortable, is the definition of privilege. Your comfort is not at the centre of this discussion.”

Brené Brown, Researcher and Writer
– Netflix Special ‘The Call to Courage’

4. Assess our current audience – moving from assumptions and guesswork to knowledge

We began to develop our *Audience Development Strategy* by seeking to understand who our audience was and set a benchmark for its diversity, so that we could measure any positive or negative change over the course of our implementation work.

That understanding crucially included the accessibility needs of both existing and potential audience members. By moving to meet those needs, we can and should deepen our relationship with our current audience and their interest in us. We will also grow our audience by being accessible to more people, and broaden the diversity of our audience by removing as many barriers to access as possible.

Survey

Working with our consultants, we prepared a broader and more in-depth version of our Audience Survey, which sought to understand what identities they hold, and what, if any, supports or accommodations they need to attend our events, either online or in person.

The questions in this survey had to be more personal and identity-led than audience members had been asked before, so we were careful to be clear why we were asking and to ensure GDPR compliance:

1. The survey audience was invited to respond, rather than any indication that the survey was mandatory. Each question included the option to respond 'I prefer not to say'.
2. It was an anonymous survey.
3. We did not ask respondents for any identifying details that would come under GDPR legislation, such as name, email, bank details, street address, etc.
4. Potentially identifying details were collected only via a multiple. For example, age was asked within a group range; address/location was only by county; employment was via their industry or type of work.
5. We were clear in the invitation to respond why we were asking, and how we were going to use the information (i.e., to understand the diversity of our audience, their needs, and to design accessible and inclusive programming).
6. The data was not published in any sort of granular way and was processed and seen by a very limited group of approved people on the team.

We were encouraged that 420 people responded, giving us wide-ranging quantitative and qualitative data that will inform our planning for activities and events, and providing a base-line for future surveys to measure the development of our audience's diversity.

The survey asked respondents to give details of the accommodations they need for accessibility for both in-person and online events, and invited them to select the identities they have to allow us to benchmark our audience.

Community workshop

Alongside and as a follow up to the Audience Survey, we programmed a workshop with representatives of communities we would value as part of our audience, but who were not identifying themselves as part of our current audience via our survey data.

Crucially, the individuals have lived experience of barriers to inclusion. The discussion allowed space to mine that experience and consider alignments that came to light in terms of shared needs. Our participants' contributions, expertise, and time was honoured and valued, as would the contribution of any expert, via an honorarium.

Our participants represented

- the Muslim Community
- the Traveller Community
- the Neurodiverse and Autistic Community
- the Disabled Community
- the d/Deaf Community
- the Transgender Community
- the Black Irish/POC Community

The workshop was thoughtfully facilitated by Sinéad Burke of Tilting the Lens. We gained valuable experience in programming and managing accessible events by including a live captioner and two ISL interpreters within the range of accommodations that were provided for the workshop.

We learned an enormous amount from both the workshop outputs and the survey data. We recognised that it wasn't just our physical and online spaces that we needed to consider in terms of accessibility, but also our programmes, in terms of their relevance to multiply marginalised communities. We are guilty of programming what we know, and what we believe our audience would be interested in knowing. Our workshop participants challenged our thinking in this, allowing us to see that we had unconscious biases and were making assumptions as to what they would be interested in. This ensured we were even more ambitious to engage in more conversations around programming and consider whose voices we hadn't invited into the room.

Implement access accommodations with a specific invitation to participate

Using the data from the survey and the crowdsourced qualitative data from our Community Workshop, we worked with our access consultants to develop a model inclusive festival in Open House Dublin 2021, with a view to applying the learning to the curated events, learning and placemaking strands of IAF's work. Initially thinking we would develop elements of the Festival that were targeted for an accessible approach, we knew that this would not be appropriate, and

accessibility would have to be our ambition for the entire event because 14.4% of respondents to the survey identified as having a disability or requiring additional support.

We worked with our designers to redesign the website for accessibility. We need to work on this further to include more information and intuitive search functions. We have learned that access to relevant and accurate information is the most cost effective and useful way to give people agency to know if they can access events. It also communicates implicitly that we've thought of different kinds of audiences, which infers a welcome for all. We need to go farther into the future than just indicating wheelchair accessibility - to identify if there is step-free access and lifts, to note the distance from transport and parking, and how long walking tours are.

A brief was to architects to commission the creation of online tours of buildings, to ensure what was created was as accessible as possible. We also launched an open call for ISL interpreters for the Open House Dublin event. We sought to allocate interpreters to events we knew members of the d/Deaf Community were attending. This will be a challenge in future years as this audience grows. We were keen to make Open House Dublin accessible also to volunteers from diverse backgrounds and created a broader registration form that would allow us to understand if any accommodations were required. It also allowed for disabled people to volunteer alongside a support worker or friend, and identified where would be convenient for them to travel to.

Aira is the world's fastest growing service provider amongst the blind and low-vision (BLV) community. Appendix 6 on page 34 gives details of the Aira app. Aira has agreed to partner on the 2022 festival also to provide access to those who need it.

Recruit a focus group with lived experience to test and give feedback

Ahead of the Open House Dublin Festival, we recruited a focus group of seven disabled people who could road-test the festival experience, from searching the website, booking tickets online, attending an in-person or online event, or testing the Aira app.

The focus group included representatives from the d/Deaf Community, the Blind Community, the Autistic and Neurodiverse Community, wheelchair users and users of other mobility aids, and people who suffer chronic pain and so have limited energy levels. Participants also represented intersectional identities ranging across age, the Trans and Non-Binary Community, the Traveller Community, and others.

The group met online in the weeks after the Festival to give feedback on their experiences and collectively identify ways to improve access in the future across all IAF strands.

5. Consider what we didn't know

We learned so many unexpected things through the generosity and candour of the participants in both our workshop and focus group, and our survey respondents. For instance, we understood for the first time how problematic seemingly simple things like access to toilets can be for multiple communities, and what facilities they need within them. We learned that access to quiet spaces are important for many communities including the Autistic and Neurodiverse Community if they become over-stimulated, the Muslim Community to have private space for prayer, parents of young children for time-out, and people who are nursing babies for privacy, etc.

We also learned and understood that to engage and encourage participation in our work or attendance by multiply marginalised communities, such as the Traveller Community or the Asylum Seeker Community, we need to develop, plan, and make programmes and projects with them rather than for or about them. This is likely a fundamental shift in how many organisations do parts of their work, and even how many artists approach their creative process. The old adage that 'if we build it, they will come' is simply not borne out by what we have learned and experienced in our explorations. Both of these communities also identified occasional challenges in gaining access to some cultural events, citing door policies, staffing, and proof of identity or address requirements as significantly problematic in their communities. This knowledge was very impactful to the team.

The disabled participants in our workshop events also helped us understand that we need to work harder when programming events such as Open House Dublin to ensure our communications materials support us as we strive to be accessible. We need to make it clear at every point in our marketing plan implementation, which spaces and buildings included in the programme are accessible, and in what way. That clarity in our communications goes an enormous distance to show intent and to communicate ambition for inclusion to many communities and people with a lived experience of exclusion, in whatever form.

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. Including an open invitation to contact us to let us know their accommodation needs, is an implicit indication that we have thought about them and are ready to include them in what we do.

Although the Open House Dublin 2021 website included information about accessibility of buildings, feedback from participants indicated that more specific information is vital, such as how far a tour progresses in terms of walking ; if it involves hills/steps, etc. This allows people with limited mobility to understand how independent they can be on our tour experience.

Some of the top-line quantitative data that came from our audience survey, which we found useful to understand, includes the following needs for people attending events in person:

- 32.5% requested advanced receipt of the agenda
- 10% need information in advance on access to the event space
- 14.4% need information on transport and disabled parking
- 11% need access to an accessible bathroom
- 16% need somewhere to sit down or a space to rest quite regularly
- 2% use screen readers – and so need Alt Text or clear descriptions of images
- 5% need large or magnified text in handouts
- 2% need captions on videos
- 1.4% need audio descriptions for in-person events

We were concerned that making our events and programmes more accessible would be a costly and unachievable endeavour. However, the accommodations sought are all things that can be easily provided at no or very little cost, depending on where we choose to hold our events.

For online events, we found that

- 42% of our audience need the agenda in advance
- 14.5% need regular breaks to assimilate information
- 5% would like audio descriptions for speakers, slides, or images

These, too, have little or no cost, and with planning can be easily provided.

However, some accommodations for online events do add an extra cost, such as provision of live captioning (though, there are developing artificial intelligence technology solutions available that are growing in quality and cost-effectiveness) and ISL translation.

- 0.6% need ISL interpretation
- 8% need captioning or transcription

These numbers are indicative of the audience now. If we don't provide ISL interpretation or live transcription, we won't ever have the Deaf Community in the room. We need to create a space where practices around accessibility become the norm, so that our communications centre a widespread invitation through the relevant representative groups or channels, rather than a request of a disabled person to fit in, or ask 'can I attend?'

Open House Dublin 2021 employed 'ISL Interpreters At Large' who were available to attend in-person tours where we were aware an ISL user would be in attendance. The feedback from participants who used this service was invaluable to ensure the experience is even more beneficial in future years. This includes ensuring the tour guides were aware in advance that ISL interpretation may be provided, and to ensure their delivery was paced appropriately to allow for simultaneous translation.

In terms of the diversity of the current IAF audience, based on survey responses

- 60% are female
- 2.2% identify as non-binary or prefer not to respond
- 10% are LGBTQ+
- 14.7% identified as having a disability
- 4.4% are black or POC

- The qualitative feedback in the survey included individuals identifying that they
- need bathroom access for our outdoor events (the largest number of requests).
 - have limited mobility, and can only walk short distances.
 - need access to seating at outdoor walking events.
 - require larger text in the design of notice boards and explanatory texts.
 - need either louder speakers or access to headphones to ensure they can hear
 - require clear communication one-on-one due to neurodiversity

The qualitative feedback also included wide-ranging needs such as quiet spaces | rest spaces | soft lighting | low noise | higher chairs | bigger pavement spaces | something safe and comfortable to hold for walking or standing. Information on expected walking distances is of great benefit, as well as accurate information on the distances from parking and transport for all future activities and clear notification of when breaks will happen in presented programmes.

“This festival is something I’ve been aware of for a while. But I never felt like I could attend it before. So, getting an email from Sinéad saying, ‘we’re doing this thing’, I was like, ‘Oh yeah, absolutely count me in and no questions asked!’...So, one of the positive things was just knowing that accessibility was something that was being considered. That was huge to me, knowing that, you know, I could go along... I never did anything about it (my interest in Open House Dublin) because there are so many other battles. And it was...it felt like, you know, there were so many other battles accessing employment or education or health care or, you know, things that were actually necessary in life. This was more for my own personal interest rather than a necessity, and therefore, it wasn’t a battle I felt I had the energy or the spoons, for want of a better term, to take it on. I just assumed there would be a battle.”

Participant in the Open House Dublin focus group

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 and with generosity and openness, 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 across our four strands in a way that feels welcoming and is relevant; produce communications and marketing messages that speak to audiences in a way that connects; and identify spaces for our events that previously marginalised people can access, but also, crucially, want to access.

This will mark and make the change in our audiences – by increasing engagement and participation, growing numbers, and broadening diversity. We received incredibly valuable feedback from our focus group of disabled audience members who participated in the Open House Dublin Festival 2021 in different ways to test the accessibility accommodations that we had provided. Each gave generous and constructive feedback on their experiences, identifying ways to improve, and offering ideas for engaging their community for future events.

“As disabled people, often we enter into spaces, or sometimes we choose not to, but most likely we enter into spaces with low expectations and assuming that the burden for access lives with us as individuals. And I love that idea that you shared of how surprised you were that there was an ISL interpreter. I wish I was there to witness that moment and only wish that that moment is part of your cultural experience in the city every day.”

Sinéad Burke, Tilting the Lens,
facilitating Open House Dublin focus group of disabled visitors 2021

7. Identify strategies

This *Audience Development Strategy* structures processes to help us think about and engage with the desired audience before we programme, and before we design our marketing and communications to connect who they are, what they are interested in, and what they need to experience it equitably.

We will consider the venues, the platforms, and the accommodations needed to ensure (as close as possible to) universal access, and a friendly welcome for each event. We will carefully plan the marketing to ensure our language, tone, and message are clear, welcoming, and inclusive. We will ask our audience afterwards what they thought, and listen to what we can make better.

Alongside the programming strategies discussed, we will also continue to crowdsource relevant and innovative audience development activities and strategies through ongoing public engagement. Our Outreach team and Communications team already have a dialogue with current and potential audiences and so, with more purposeful engagement, can ask people to identify how best to communicate with them, so as to understand their needs.

Our Outreach team will also develop a dialogue with organisations that support or work with some of the new audiences we hope to engage with and encourage to participate. Our invitations will be explicit.

Our key learning to date has been that in engaging audience members as individuals, we cannot apply a policy of one-size-fits-all. We are designing a diversity of ways to engage and be involved, in the hope of reaching almost everyone.

Programming strategies

Open House Dublin: In 2021, the Open House Dublin Festival comprised Building Tours, as usual, but with lower capacity; many were walking tours of the grounds, rather than inside the buildings. The building selection didn't include residential properties for COVID safety. For 2022, the buildings selected will have some levels of accessibility, as they will be public spaces. However, all buildings that are in the programme will be subject to very specific and rigorous information provided on our website and in Open House Dublin Debate programme materials that makes it clear how accessible the space is, how far it is from public transport and accessible parking, and what toilet accessibility, entrance ways, etc., are like. We have worked with Tilting the Lens to create a taxonomy for how we should describe and communicate accessibility, which will carry forward into subsequent events.

Residential Tours currently manifest as self-made videos by the architects. Although we cannot control the quality of what is made, we have provided accessibility guidance (a rider) for the architects, to ensure they make films that are as user-friendly and accessible as possible. This includes giving image descriptions for themselves and each new space they enter on the tour, avoiding jerky camera movements, adding captioning, checking lighting, etc., and including information in the video piece of any accessibility accommodations built into the house design. Any films provided that have not been captioned, will be captioned by IAF before uploading on our site.

The focus group has suggested that best practice in the future would provide for options for the user to select closed captions/no captions/visual descriptions as a voice over/on-screen ISL interpretation.

The **Open House Debate** is a cornerstone event that took place as a hybrid in-person and online event in 2021. Given the growth in the online audience for this from other geographies, this delivery model may continue in 2022. Either way, it will include the useful accommodations and supports that were requested in our survey, such as captioning, ISL interpretation, visual descriptions for speakers and slides, information in advance of the schedule, and timing of breaks, etc. We will seek additional resources and begin a dialogue with the Irish Deaf Society to employ deaf interpreters for our pillar events, such as the Open House Dublin Debate and New Now Next talks. Using deaf interpreters is best practice when presenting content to the Deaf Community, where possible. This year's debate is on the subject of Housing, and our Outreach team will work with relevant organisations in advance to build interest and establish points of view on how this impacts particular communities, such as the Disabled Community, the Traveller Community, and so forth.

Our **Site Specific** programme comprises six films commissioned from Dyehouse, which were premiered online and run in the cinema. The films were captioned, but the focus group suggested that image descriptions be an option to switch on for the audio track. Closed loop was activated for the cinema screenings. The subject matter of these films and the themes of the Open House Debate are programming opportunities that can be broached with new communities over the coming years as we develop new relationships.

Future **Open House Dublin** programmes will be developed with a focus on inclusion via the triple target of relevant content, accessible spaces, and comprehensive information to ensure we address as many barriers to inclusion as possible.

Architects in Schools: Our Architects in Schools programme, which has run for a number of years, will have an inclusion focus brought to bear. We will research the potential benefit to the preparation of materials in broader formats, such as large format text, Braille, etc., allowing us to develop relationships with new communities, such as schools for the blind. Open conversations with potential new participants might broaden our subject matter. Sensitivity training will be provided for architects to allow them to engage new cultures. We will ensure artists and facilitators are supported with appropriate training to ensure excellent levels of duty of care are available for participants and the accommodations they require and that those activities are tailored for everyone's needs.

The dynamics of a programme can be affected positively by the diversity of participants, leaders, and audience members. We understand, however, that it cannot be a case of 'We've programmed this, you should come.' We need to co-create and co-curate programmatic elements with the community.

Developing deeper engagement with minority communities already participating in existing programmes, for instance older people or people with faiths

that are a minority in Ireland and so forth, would allow us to have really exciting conversations about subject matter that is relevant to them and could be interrogated through our New Now Next programme. We could also develop vital intelligence from them on how we can best engage with their wider community.

Placemaking: The Reimagine Café and Placemaking projects will follow a similar model to our more thoughtful and purposeful call for volunteers for Open House Dublin, with a specific invitation from communities who have experienced barriers to inclusion in the past, as well as more flexible application processes to ensure interested communities are not disadvantaged by language barriers, literacy, disability, etc. Resources will be set aside to ensure people in our chosen communities who need supports and accommodations are provided with them.

Curated and Learning Events: With the data from our audience survey we will ensure budget always exists for interpreters, closed captioners and other accommodations for our events. More engagement with the Deaf Society and NCBI will allow our events to be marketed to their communities, ensuring we can grow audiences in their networks. We will conduct our survey again in 12 months to measure the impact of our work.

Exhibitions in our building and in other venues will always include accommodations such as large format captions, footstools or ramps if any material is being displayed in vitrines or at a height, and more considered lighting to ensure work can be seen from a seated position in a wheelchair. We will also more carefully describe the expected experience on our website and invitation to ensure people have enough information to know if they can see or experience the exhibition independently.

Marketing and communications strategies

We will audit our owned, earned, shared, and paid 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: Our website and online platforms will be upgraded to improve accessibility with better colour contrasting, alt-tagging, audio clips, and ease of use for adaptive technologies. We will ensure our signage is accessible and readable.

Earned: We will be more intentional in the crafting of PR messaging to ensure we are not ableist in our phrasing or attitudes. 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 also consider who should deliver the message. Could we use different media and different people across it?

Shared: Our social media posts will be accessible to disabled people in the future by ensuring we add image descriptions to the end of posts using images, use CamelCase in hashtags, caption any film clips, and ensure graphic images with text in them have appropriate colour contrast. We will move towards a plain English approach to writing posts to ensure we don't alienate some audiences.

Owned: Our brochures, posters, information packs, and catalogues will meet best practice guidelines in accessible design while maintaining the standards of design aesthetic for IAF. We will commit to a minimum font size, colour contrasts, etc. Our newsletters and e-shots, similarly will have accessibility features to ensure they reach the desired audiences. We will work harder in planning, commissioning and using images to ensure representation of communities, bodies, or cultures that aren't always visible, to further communicate our welcome and challenge the architectural community to consider everyone in what and how they design.

Tips to ensure clear communications to all types of people:

- We will avoid using euphemistic and ableist phrases like differently abled, special needs, impairments, etc. If we need to make reference to people needing additional support, we will say 'Please let us know if you have any access or other requirements to participate successfully on the day.' We will switch phrasing like 'see' and 'hear' in our communications, to more open phrasing, such as 'this is an opportunity to learn about...'
- When referencing dates for events or other activities, we will always seek to include the day of the week to support Neurodiverse people.
- When giving an email address for making contact, queries, or booking a place, we will also provide a phone number as an added option.
- When linking to a url in a document, we will make the live link a series of words that describe what the link is. For instance, instead of 'click here' the link will say 'Book a place for the GPO tour.'
- We will endeavour to structure sentences to support those with literacy or technology difficulties. For instance, instead of 'contact for more details', we will say 'If you have any queries, or experience any difficulties in completing this form, please contact James by phone at XYZ or email at ABC...'
- When using images in social media, on our website, or in digital communications, we will use descriptive alt-tags and image descriptions that describe the composition of the image.
- As the diversity of our audience grows, we will consider adding preferred pronoun space on name badges if we are using them for events.
- When promoting events we will always include details of local transport links and how far they are from the venue.
- We will endeavour to add audio/sound files to journal articles on our website so that the option exists for blind, low vision, and people with literacy issues to listen to longer-form pieces. Conversely, with sound pieces (and film pieces) we will have a written version (and closed-captioned versions) for deaf audiences.
- We will seek to have more intuitive search features on websites such as Open House Dublin, so that tours are searchable based on wheelchair accessibility, lift/stair-free access, etc.

- Where possible, and when time and resources allow, we will endeavour to employ deaf interpreters to increase accessibility for the Deaf Community.
- We will endeavour to make no assumptions on gender to avoid accidental misgendering of people, such as through the use of pronouns, directing people to toilet facilities, etc.
- We will work with partner venues to make toilets accessible and safe for trans and non-binary audience members.

Outreach strategies

Our community workshops have helped us to learn about particular needs, accommodations, perceptions, and attitudes. We will continue to occasionally convene workshops to engage on topics arounds programming, outreach, and communications.

We will create a community of ambassadors or community representatives to help to increase the credibility and validity of our messages and reach people we haven't previously engaged.

When we create a connection to people, we will keep up the conversation – if we invite people to engage or attend, we will stay engaged, and keep up the information flow.

Accessibility strategies

Much of our programme will continue online in the near future. This will help us continue to engage the geographic spread of our audience over COVID times. However, there are barriers to participating fully online. We will continue to work to understand what they are, and identify ways to tackle them. That work starts with our website, which needs work on colour contrast for web accessibility, etc. We will also include accessibility statements on our website to ensure it is clear that we are purposeful and intentional in this work.

For in-person events, we will seek to use venues that have accessible entrances, accessible bathrooms, unisex bathrooms, or cubicles that have access to water adjacent to the toilet facilities. We will provide more information in advance to audiences, to create more comfort ahead of programmes that the events are accessible to them as individuals, and their needs.

We will provide more training for our teachers, architects, and education programme teams to support them in working with broader cultures and working with people who may need additional supports or accommodations to participate equitably.

8. Consider and engage potential collaborators

Partnership can be key to achieving success in audience development by opening up routes to target audience groups or to help plan large-scale projects to bring communities into contact with events, services, and opportunities previously not accessible to them, or not experienced before.

However, shared ambitions, understanding, and aims are key. We cannot tackle exclusion on our own; we need to ensure our partners have a shared understanding of the barriers to inclusion and a shared ambition to address them.

We can partner with DPOs (Disabled People's Organisations), community development organisations, government agencies, networks and resource organisations, or other cultural partners.

What organisations can we partner with who already have strong engagement with and the trust of the communities we would like to have in our audience?

We will work together to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) if appropriate, to ensure we have ways to test progress and success. The MoU will include guidance for partners on creating content and events with the accessibility accommodations we expect as a baseline standard, such as captions, alt-text, image descriptions, etc.

Social inclusion activities and partnerships can attract investment from non-arts funding sources, such as regeneration funds, social inclusion, community development, etc., which may bring new resources to the audience development work.

9. Implement audience development activities

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

There should be several team planning meetings to discuss risk assessment. This will look at all potential inclusion, accessibility, cultural, or other challenges that we can anticipate, and ways we could mitigate or terminate those risks. However, we will proceed at all times with clear, comprehensive, concise information, and an open invitation to audiences to engage and let us know what supports they need to experience all our programmes and events equitably, so we can be prepared and ready to support them on the day.

10. Manage campaigns alongside day-to-day marketing

We won't be able to develop the audience we want, if they don't see themselves represented. We know that 'if you can't see it, you can't be it', so we are reflecting and will broaden the diversity of our Board, of our executive, of our volunteers, and of our event programme speakers, artists, architects, and jury panels.

We commit to due diligence when we are hiring venues or booking spaces for our events to ensure that there is no history of racist or anti-Traveller rhetoric or admission policies, whether formal or informal. We will also ensure that venue toilets and access to the toilets are, and live up to, the commitments we have made to our audience for safe space, for transgender audience members, disabled audiences, and so forth. We will also seek to have access to quiet spaces for audiences.

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

“If we don't design public spaces in particular with Disabled people in mind, where do we give them permission to exist? At home? In care centres? This is about giving people access in the same way that everybody else has had for years.”

Sinead Burke, Founder and CEO of Tilting the Lens

11. Establish monitoring procedures and progress meetings

Ambitious outcomes may require significant resources and commitment. However, ongoing monitoring allows for quick reactions and adaptations as necessary to ensure resources are not wasted. Also, 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.

A snapshot of our audience at present:

- 97.5% of our audience present as cisgender
- 21.5% are architects
- 3.5% are studying
- 19% are retired
- 43% are employed, self-employed, or other in the building services
- 78% are aged 25 to 64
- 1.44% are under 25
- 21% are over 64
- 95% live in Ireland
- 1.26% are disabled but 14.41% ticked a box focused around disability in terms of identity
- 92.31% used person-first language

We will also work with our collaborators to develop a process of peer assessment, sharing insights and intelligence that is helpful across projects and partnerships.

We won't just measure our audience; we'll be measuring ourselves, and how well we are doing.

As well as things like measuring attendance and engagement, we will measure how accessible our events and activities are, the requests we get for new accommodations, and how and how quickly we can meet them. We will measure our efforts to reach out and connect with communities, representative organisations, and new partnerships.

12. Revisit the plan, and continue

This *Audience Development Strategy* is a living document, and will evolve as we meet and engage new audiences, as we implement and measure our new policies and campaigns, and as we measure the success and receive feedback on the efficacy of the processes we have developed. Audience development work is not a one-time activity, but rather an ongoing, long-term process that IAF is committed to implementing, and a muscle we hope to develop. We will remind ourselves of our principles at each juncture, namely:

The following appended documents can be used as templates for audience development activities that model inclusive and accessible approaches.



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