

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction from our Chair

Our region is a diverse one, in every sense - geographically, economically, socially, demographically. We regard this as a major asset. When we bring people together, and work inclusively to make the most of their potential, we achieve our best.

The business case for equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is overwhelming and evidence shows that diversity brings many advantages to an organisation including increased profitability and creativity, stronger governance and better problem-solving abilities.

We believe that having a more diverse Board and workforce will bring new experience, skills and knowledge which will benefit both us as an organisation and the businesses we support. It will also impact positively on the programmes, initiatives and projects we deliver across the Coast to Capital and ultimately drive greater economic growth. It is not just the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense.

For Coast to Capital:

- **Equality** is enabling opportunity, access, participation and contribution on a fair and equal footing and ensuring that different groups do not experience barriers when accessing our services, programmes, funding and employment.
- **Diversity** is about the individual, understanding that each of us is different and making sure we respect and celebrate the variety of backgrounds, perspectives, values, and beliefs.
- **Inclusion** is about embracing those differences and leveraging the power of difference.

We recognise that diversity is already all around us and so we want to place emphasis on inclusion first. Where there is an authentic and inclusive culture, diversity and equity will follow.

I am proud of the work we are leading around gender diversity – particularly working with the Rose Review of female entrepreneurship where we piloted the ‘Expert in Residence’ programme which has subsequently been rolled out across the LEP network. We are now leading the way in looking at disaggregating data around business ownership to ensure our programmes and business support are more inclusive. This trailblazing project utilising Artificial Intelligence and data is now being rolled out across the Catalyst South groups of LEPs.

I am keen that we share our work and challenges across the LEP Network, Government and with business communities so that we can collectively make change for the better. We are using our work in relation to gender as a template to make progress in relation to other protected characteristic groups as we are committed to diversity beyond gender. We acknowledge that representation of all characteristics and experiences will foster a greater sense of active inclusion. We

are committed to continual learning and we are looking to progress our approach even further to anticipate where we can take action rather than being reactive.

For Coast to Capital equality, diversity and inclusion is not a one-time campaign or a one-off initiative. This policy reflects the journey that Coast to Capital is on to help drive the transformational change we want to see.

Julie Kapsalis
Chair
Equality and Diversity Champion

2. Our principles

In delivering our equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy we will:

- Integrate EDI into everything we do and the work that everyone does on behalf of Coast to Capital;
- Reinforce our commitment to being an anti-racist Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Recognise, acknowledge and celebrate different characteristics and that these are multiple and complex rather than focusing on one characteristic (intersectionality);
- Adopt an evidence and needs based approach where we seek and proactively use disaggregated data and quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform our work and investments;
- Assess the impact on equality as we develop our strategies, policies and programmes, and consider what actions, if any, may be appropriate to improve any identified adverse impacts;
- Monitor where possible our social, environmental and economic impact and the impact on equality as we implement our strategies, policies and programmes;
- Challenge ourselves and our partners and stakeholders to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Be open and transparent and publish all information regarding our equality and diversity within data protection constraints;
- Work in partnership with the range of local, regional, and national organisations to create new and better actions;
- Make consultation and engagement with diverse stakeholders a cornerstone of developing new equality and diversity actions;
- Provide excellent customer care by ensuring that services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who understand the needs of all communities; and
- Promote, share and seek out best practice.

3. The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is essential in creating an equitable and inclusive society. The message of The Equality Act 2010 and the related Public Sector Equality Duty is that everyone has the right to be treated fairly. We aim not only to comply with our legal duties but proactively do all we can to ensure needs are anticipated, barriers

removed, and a culture of inclusion and anti-discrimination is advanced.

The Equality Act places legislation around nine protected characteristics:

- Age.
- Disability (including mental ill health).
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

We also take account of caring and parenting responsibilities.

Coast to Capital will uphold its public duty to promote equality of opportunity. No member of the public, service user, employee, volunteer, agency worker, contractor or staff working with partner organisations will be unlawfully discriminated against and our services and procedures will be reflective and supportive of the diverse needs of our local communities.

In meeting our obligations under the **Equality Act 2010** we will have due regard to:

- Removing or minimising barriers experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Recognising individuality and supporting individuals by providing specific and personalised adjustments; and
- Creating an organisation which welcomes diversity and creates an anti-discriminatory culture.

4. EDI in our workforce - Employee selection, retention and promotion

We are committed to equity in our approach to employee selection, retention and promotion and removing all barriers to selection and promotion related procedures. We aim to be anticipatory where we can and create a welcoming environment where people can thrive.

All employees will be supported and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

Following a review of our recruitment procedures we now:

- Include a clear statement on our commitment to diversity in our job adverts.
- Review our job adverts against a 'gender decoder' to avoid implicit bias.
- Anonymise all CVs so no identifying information is visible – such as age, race or gender removing the ability to form implicit bias.
- Deliver specific interview training and provide guidance in particular on questions that should not be asked in an interview in relation to Protected Characteristics.

- Provide training including on unconscious bias and refresher training.

When training is provided we will use trainers with lived experience. For example, any Disability Inclusion Training undertaken will be led by disabled people with a particular expertise in disability in the workplace.

5. Equality, diversity and inclusion in our Board and Sub-Committees

We are committed to establishing a Board and governance structure that reflects equality, diversity and inclusion and embraces all the characteristics of our rich culturally diverse business community (including geographies, gender and protected characteristics).

Given the importance of representation at Board level a named Director is appointed as an Equality and Diversity Champion by the Board but this is a shared responsibility of all Board members. Sub-Committees are also encouraged to appoint a Equality and Diversity Champion.

We are proud to have exceeded the Government target that at least one third of our Board members are women by the end of the 2019-2020 financial year. We are committed to equal representation of men and women on our Board by the end of the 2022- 2023 financial year. We are committed to make the same progress with regard to other protected characteristic groups as we embrace all forms of diversity and multiple characteristics and does not just seek to meet targets.

Selection for the Board and any Sub-Committee is in line with the commitments in our Assurance Framework and Articles of Association. Board member vacancies are advertised widely across the whole region and Board members are appointed on the basis of their skills / knowledge and their ability. Sub-Committee member selection is based on the skills required for the relevant role. We are proactively engaging with underrepresented groups to build a pipeline of contacts and talent.

6. Equality, diversity and inclusion in how we commission

We will also meet our obligations under the **Public Services Social Value Act 2012**, which requires people who commission, or buy, public services to consider securing added economic, social, environmental and well-being benefits for their local area. We will support service providers and commissioners to implement the Act and put social value at the heart of what they do.

What this means in practice is that we will:

- Review our Procurement Policy to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of our Procurement Policy.
- Review our Procurement Policy to consider social value and impact.
- Aim to diversify our supply chain.
- Incorporate equality and anti-discrimination requirements in our tenders.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our approach

Coast to Capital is organised around four departments; Strategy and Policy, Services, Investments and Corporate. Each department has different objectives and therefore different opportunities and commitments in relation to delivering this Policy which is specific to the work that they deliver.

Strategy & Policy

In delivering our Recovery Plan and skills strategy work for the region the Strategy and Policy team will:

- Assess the impact on EDI as we develop our strategies, and consider what actions, if any, may be appropriate to improve any identified adverse impacts.
- Review the diversity of the Enterprise Advisers in the network and identify opportunities to ensure the network is fully representative of the young people they are helping to inspire, including targeted recruitment strategies.
- Support equality, diversity and inclusion considerations in relation to the skills strategy through the appointment and embedding of a Skills 360 Board Equality and Diversity Champion.

Services

In addition to meeting our statutory duties, the Services team will:

- Continue to work with our Expert in Residence, as recommended in the Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship, which helps us to ensure that engagement with, and support of, women business leaders and owners is equitable expanding their support to cover all aspects of diversity.
- Actively review introducing additional Experts in Residence.
- Identify and actively work with equality and diversity representative groups to ensure that all our service provision is accessible to all.
- Explore how to gather and analyse evidence on the characteristics of the ownership of businesses in relation to sex, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation to understand the impact of our services and ensure we reach all diverse groups subject to GDPR compliance.
- Undertake an annual EDI review of our engagement with businesses identifying actions to address issues as a result.
- Disaggregate data of ownership of businesses we interact with – initially by gender but with intent to extend to ethnicity. .Extend this trailblazing project to a wider pilot with Catalyst South.
- Devise a proactive marketing and outreach strategy to target diverse business owner groups – driven by data.
- Undertake ongoing training to increase understanding and confidence of client focused staff so they can meet the needs of all communities, also responding to skills and knowledge gaps through our annual review process.
- Establish stronger links with the Third Sector.

Investments

The Investments team will work with our partners, in particular our Delivery Bodies and the Local Growth team to ensure that all project development, commissioning and tendering procedures support the following principles:

- Advancing equality of opportunity between people in our target groups; and
- Ensuring the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization.

In order to achieve this the Investments team will:

- Collect and analyse data on what groups our investment funds and programmes haven't been able to reach and the barriers in order to inform our target groups.
- Review and update our evaluation criteria and business case template.
- Incorporate equality and anti-discrimination requirements in our contracts.
- Ensure any contractual arrangements include clauses and appropriate audit arrangements for action and identification of issues, baselines, monitoring and evaluation.
- Audit and work with partners to ensure barriers to equality are being proactively tackled at delivery level.
- Celebrate and share best practice and success.

Corporate

We recognise the significant number of partner, stakeholder, business and investor organisations that play a part in the economic growth of our area and supporting significant progress towards our objectives. The Corporate team will ensure:

- Our engagement with all stakeholders is inclusive and transparent.
- Our communications strategy is inclusive, representative and targeted where appropriate.
- We use appropriate imagery in our marketing, publications and on our websites media to ensure it is representative and widely engaging.
- The delivery of our corporate services (office and HR function etc) has EDI at its heart.

8. Rights of disabled people

Coast to Capital is committed to the social model which identifies that an individual is not disabled if there are no barriers.

To ensure the recruitment, retention and promotion of disabled staff Coast to Capital will:

- Give full and proper consideration to disabled people who apply for jobs, having regard to making reasonable adjustments;
- Make reasonable adjustment to maintain the services of an employee who becomes disabled, for example, training, provision of special equipment, reduced working hours. (NB: managers are expected to seek advice on the

availability of advice and guidance from external agencies to maintain disabled people in employment); and

- Be inclusive and ensure the accessibility of training/development programmes.

9. Responsibilities

The ultimate responsibility for our policy rests with the Coast to Capital Board of Directors to ensure that there are systems in place to put this policy into practice on a day-to-day basis.

The Coast to Capital Chief Executive is the lead officer and is responsible and accountable for the implementation of this policy and accompanying policies both inside and outside the organisation and for ensuring we fulfil our role in addressing diversity issues by promotion of this policy and delivering equality of opportunity. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Board.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity is led and coordinated by the Head of Corporate Affairs with the support of the Office Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group and Race Equality Network. However, it is the responsibility of all team members to uphold and advocate this policy to ensure greater buy-in and a celebration of diversity across the company.

We will:

- Ensure the Coast to Capital Board and team members are aware of their responsibility to challenge any unfair discrimination for reasons covered by equalities legislation.
- Agree an Annual Management Plan which is considered by the Executive Committee on a quarterly basis.
- Provide an annual report on progress on equality, diversity and inclusion to the Board.
- Report publically on equality, diversity and inclusion in the Annual Report.
- Review this policy every year and any recommendations and changes will be agreed by the Board.

Date Approved: March 2021

Approved by: Board

Next review date: March 2022