Disrupt The Narrative

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Executive Summary

The British Film Institute (BFI) is the cornerstone public funder within the UK film industry. They have publicly acknowledged the need to improve their efforts towards diversity & inclusion (Kanter, 2023) and are considered a leader in shaping inclusion with their protocols that are typically adopted by the wider industry. The role the BFI plays in equality, diversity and inclusion can not be overstated as they build and shape the talent pipeline that flows out towards the wider industry - the failure to be inclusive at this level is only amplified later.

This study examines BFI data, taken from 2019-2020 specifically, as a recent and typical year pre-pandemic, observing across the characteristics of gender, race, disability and class. It is well documented that most research focuses on funding awards and this study aims to address the deficit of research in understanding the make-up of applicants who *submit* to the film fund as well as the make-up of applicants who are *awarded*. Subsequently this study is able to make an assessment on the success rates of different diversity characteristics.

The concept of intersectionality is a framework for understanding how individuals' multiple social and political identities result in a unique combination of discrimination and privilege. The existing research highlighted the need to address inequality in the film industry from an intersectional perspective. While an intersectional analysis did not end up being possible, our research was able to perform a granular analysis of the results, and our findings highlight the issues of the continued use of 'catch all' terms such as B.A.M.E which homogenise the experience of diverse communities.

Our analysis shows the following key findings for the development and production funding distributed by the BFI National Lottery Filmmaking Fund:

- 64%-68% of awards were made to female identifying filmmakers

- People with a disability, despite making up 1 in 5 of the UK population, saw less than 1 in 16 applicants awarded BFI funding.

- The success rate of producers who attended non-selective state schools (17.6%) was less than half that of producers who attended independent or fee paying schools without a bursary (38.1%).

- Our analysis of ethnicity outlines a complex picture, highlighting under-representation of Asians and East Asians and exposes a limited perception of racial diversity held by the BFI.

A large number of characteristics had little or no impact that was statistically significant. Analysis of data relating to age, religion, sexuality, caring responsibilities and returnships found no significant correlations.

This research also highlights the inconsistent nature of progress, underscoring the need for continuous pressure and rigorous monitoring to sustain progress towards equitable funding. Moreover, our study emphasises the necessity of analysing data intersectionality, recognizing that individuals possess multiple layers of identity and often face multiple systemic barriers simultaneously.

The last decade has seen the launch and discussion of a range of schemes designed to improve diversity in the industry. Our findings support Nwonka's (2020b) view that rather than improving diversity in the sense of reducing exclusion on the basis of racial characteristics, these schemes and their accompanying rhetoric enable inclusion of a tiny minority of individuals who are allowed behind the curtain. This hypothesis would indicate not improved equity but rather selective inclusion, or 'tokenism', that exposes the narrow and dangerous perception of diversity held by industry power holders.

The study's key recommendations include:

- The publishing of annual intersectional analysis, including applications, awards by count, and value of awards. This aligns with best practices of grant-giving foundations for transparency and accountability.

- Urgent large-scale intervention to create transformative inclusion in the industry for people with disability.

- Abolition of homogenisation of ethnicity using catch-all terms and vocabulary; levelling up the BFI executives to fully understand racial diversity and the complexity of diaspora and setting targets for different ethnicity groups.

In 2023, as part of their new ten year strategy, the BFI opened applications for their reformulated development and production funds, along with a restructure of the BFI Filmmaking Funding team who manage the funds. The fund reprioritises equity, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, talent development and progression, creative risk taking, and a UK wide reach. Diversity, equity and inclusion has been explicitly spoken about as a priority of the BFI since at least their 2012-2017 'Film Forever' strategy, and was focus of their 'BFI2022' strategy from 2017-2022, but in our assessment, by 2019 the BFI funding was still struggling to distribute equitably. It will take some time to assess whether the BFI's new 2023 strategy will be successful in delivering on their priorities around diversity, equity and inclusion in their latest strategy.

Introduction

About the BFI Film Fund

The BFI is a cornerstone public funder in the UK. They have defined their role as a champion of *"new talent and unfamiliar stories from unfamiliar voices"* (BFI, 2023b). For many emerging filmmakers, the BFI is their first stop to developing their talent and projects; where many access their first breaks.

Historically the typical BFI Film Fund annual budget is £25M. By comparison, BBC Films has an annual budget of £11m and Film4 £25m (Tabbara, 2022). Those attracting BFI funding are more likely to be awarded funding from BBC Films or Film4, and vice versa.

To further support emerging talent, the BFI also operates BFI Network which specialises in new and very early career filmmakers and funds the production of short films. The commissioning of short films is managed by a team distinct from the BFI Film Fund.

Outside of public funds, film funding is conventionally sought through commercial sources (distribution finance, sales advances, etc). Commercial funds tend to be more risk averse and put a premium on track record, which means emerging and marginalised filmmakers are unlikely to gain financial support and are heavily reliant on public funds when starting out. The BFI and other public funders therefore have a key role in shaping the talent pipeline that eventually flows out towards the bigger commercial market. One can assume if the talent pipeline is not diverse at the earlier emerging stage, it is unlikely to become more diverse at midpoint or later stage. Consequently, the work that the BFI and other public funders do is vital to the diversity, inclusion and equality of the wider industry.

(In the wider context of the screen economy, annual spend for film and high end television production is £5.64bn - this spend underlines the UK's global reputation as world leading centre; of which £1.33bn, or 28% of the spend is attributed to feature film production.)

How the BFI Film Fund Works

Teams who wish to apply for the BFI Film Fund must fill in an application covering key details of their project and team. After basic eligibility checks, the BFI Film Fund team firstly assess an application on the following criteria:

1. Does the application respond to one or more of our core objectives for the fund?

2. How compelling and feasible are the filmmakers' creative and strategic statements?

3. Has the application engaged meaningfully with the BFI Diversity Standards?

4. Do the ambitions of the project feel realistic for the experience of the team?

5. oes the application make a compelling argument for National Lottery support?

6. Would the project be a distinctive addition to a balanced slate of projects?

Projects which are successful in the first stage will then go under a more thorough review:

If your application progresses to Stage II, we will undertake a more detailed review of information supplied with the application - with a view to making a decision on whether to either offer support for the project in principle or decline the application. The information we review is likely to include the script along with any filmmaker mood boards, showreels, examples of previous work and the preliminary production package. we may use external readers to provide us with coverage of scripts.

As part of this detailed assessment stage, projects which we consider have responded most successfully to our core objectives, and have also garnered initial support based on the assessment of the script and support materials, will progress to consideration at a monthly Team Read discussion. We only expect to read and discuss a limited number of projects per month, which means we will not be able to progress a significant number of projects beyond this point.

As part of our assessment, and typically following the monthly Team Read discussion, you might be invited to a meeting to discuss the project further, where all members of the team making the application should try to attend. Please note that applicants who are invited to a meeting with the BFI Film Fund, but may need assistance with the financial costs of travel or childcare in order to attend the meeting, may apply for a bursary. More details can be found here.

It is important to understand that having a meeting does not mean that we have made a commitment to funding your project. The meeting is an opportunity for us to discuss the project with you in more detail, to ask any outstanding relevant and practical questions we might have about your approach, and it will give your team the opportunity to outline your ideas in more detail. You may need to supply further information after the meeting and we will need to review this before we can make a final decision.

(Extracted from the BFI Film Fund Production Funding Application Guidelines, 2018)

If successful, a Letter of Intent to fund will be issued in order that the team can raise supplementary funds, and the final decision will be made ultimately by the BFI Lottery Finance Committee.

As part of this report we also asked the BFI the following questions, here are their statements on those questions; the BFI also provided a document that provided information that can be accessed in the appendix.

- **Are there committees that applications go to?**

    Yes, there are several internal committees in which applications are discussed, prior to any funding being approved. I have summarised below what these were for the Film Fund (the attached document has more detail)

    Production funding applications
    Applications which pass initial eligibility for Production funding go to the wider editorial team for assessment (see attached process document for more detail). If progressed, applications then go to a weekly Business Affairs and Production Finance meeting to be interrogated further by the relevant team members. Once the teams are confident that the project is in good editorial, production and financial shape the projects is formally presented to the Lottery Finance Committee, for final consideration and approval

There was a similar process for Development funding applications Applications which pass initial eligibility checks for Development go to the wider Development meeting for assessment, then to a finance meeting where the budget is interrogated and then to Lottery Finance Committee for final consideration and approval.

- **Is there an internal cycle of meetings which it passes through?**

  Yes, as referenced above, there are several internal meetings that applications are reviewed and discussed in, which again I have detailed further below for both Production and Development:

  Production

  Weekly Production & Editorial meeting to review applications at initial assessment phase, Business Affairs and Production Finance meetings in which budgets, finance plans and project feasibilities are interrogated. Once through those stages, projects are presented to the Lottery Finance Committee in which awards are reviewed and, if successful, granted final approved at a senior executive level

  Development

  Regular development meeting in which projects are assessed and discussed, Development Investment meeting in which development budgets are integrated and approved by our business affairs and production finance teams. Once through those stages, projects are presented to the Lottery Finance Committee in which awards are reviewed and, if successful, final approval at a senior executive level.

- **Is the decision-making process uniform for all applicants, including those funded before or who have had prior contact?**

  Yes, the assessment and decision-making process to all applications was uniform in both production and development for the time period your enquiry spans, and it still is.

- **Do individual team members have assessment relationships over multiple applications from the same companies/individuals?**

  All production and development applications were assessed by at least two executives and could also be assessed by an external reader and a BFI NETWORK Talent Executive. (NB in the current strategy period, this has been updated and all production applications are assessed by an external reader). It is inevitably the case when people had applied multiple times and had worked with the executives on previous projects, that individuals might be known to the Fund, but projects were allocated randomly and execs had to always declare a conflict of interest if there was a personal relationship with an applicant they were assessing.

- **When making assessments what did the BFI Film Fund prioritise?**

   Our priorities are always listed on our website and for the period you are enquiring about these were :

   1. *Equity, diversity and inclusion*
      Addressing under-representation in perspective and representation, talent and recruitment, agency and opportunities, widening the range of voices and audiences served.

   2. *Impact and audience*
      Supporting projects with a strong cultural or progressive impact for audiences.

   3. *Talent development and progression*
      Supporting early career filmmakers (producers, writers and directors) and projects with a reasonable proportion of early career cast and crew.

   4. *Risk*
      Supporting projects that take creative risks.

   5. *UK-wide*
      Increasing the number of projects and filmmakers outside London and the South East, looking at location and representation.

Literature Review

Whilst the amount of research around diversity both on and off screen in British film has increased rapidly in the past 5-10 years, much of the work has been limited in its scope, and there is a lack of coordination across the sector. The current research to date generally covers workforce surveys, the diversity of on-screen content and its relationship to diverse audiences, and more recently, an evaluation of existing diversity standards and schemes within the industry.

Barriers to Diversity in Film (2007) is an early example of research in this area, commissioned by the UK Film Council. It asserted that women, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities are under-represented in the film sector, compared to their proportions in the UK workforce, and tend to occupy lower paid and lower level positions. The report highlighted both the business and ethical and legal case for greater diversity within the industry, and recommended the setting of diversity standards.

The UK Film Council was later abolished in 2011, and it has been suggested that their work in fact had a negative effect on diversity in the film industry, with levels of representation across ethnic minorities and disability in the sector lower in 2011 then they had been in Creative Skillset's first ever workforce survey in 2003 (Moody, 2017). Creative Skillset (2019) surveys still function as the most reliable and referenced method of measuring diversity in the screen industry, and their 2019 report made the following findings:

> 💡 *62% of the screen workforce is male, versus 53% of the total UK workforce*
>
> 💡 *20% of the screen workforce is 50 years old or over, versus 31% of the total UK workforce*
>
> 💡 *90% of the screen workforce is white, versus 88% of the total UK workforce*
>
> 💡 *10% of the screen workforce has a disability, versus 14% of the total UK workforce*

Further to this, the BFI's yearly *Statistical Yearbook* (2021) also reports on employment within the UK film industry, and in 2021 the report highlighted the significant changes in the representation of women as writers and directors of British film. 26.3% of UK films released in 2020 were from a female writer, and 23.1% were directed by women. This represents a record high in the 10 years since 2011, although the percentages do not always show a year on year increase, highlighting that sustaining diversity and representation within the UK industry is an on-going challenge.

The British TV industry also provides a wider context and point of comparison, given that many British film talent either start out employed in TV roles, and more recently, often switch between work in feature films and high end TV shows. The BBC published their own *UK Pay Gap Report* (2021), detailing the pay gap in their workforce amongst different genders, ethnicities, sexualities and for those with disabilities. Specific reports have examined some of these protected characteristics in more detail, such as Creative Diversity Network's (2022) report, *Diamond at 5: A deep dive into the representation of disabled people in UK Television*, which details 5 years worth of data collected around representation of disability on and off-screen. Likewise, Directors UK's (2018) report *Adjusting The Colour Balance* addressed both the vast under-representation of Black and ethnic minority directors in UK TV, but also the slow progress and inconsistency of improvement demonstrated by the very minor increase of the number of these directors in TV between 2013 - 2016.

One area often not covered in these workforce surveys, but now present within the BFI's Diversity standards is class. This is an area that hasn't been studied in much depth in relation to the film industry. However, the report *Getting in and getting on: Class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries* (Carey, Florisson, O'Brien and Lee, 2020) presented the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to reflect on the accessibility of the creative industries thus far, and re-build them as more accessible going forwards. For those specifically in the Film, TV, radio & photography industries, average representation of those from working class backgrounds across the five year period studied (2014-2019) was the lowest of all business sectors, and figures for 2018/19 showed a decline compared to the two previous years. The report goes beyond the pay gap analysis that has been used previously as a way to evaluate the quality of jobs, and presents data that shows those from working class backgrounds have less autonomy and flexibility around timing and location of their work than their privileged counterparts. Those from the working class are also noted to be far less likely to hold managerial or supervisory positions.

The report *Social Mobility and 'Openness' in Creative Occupations since the 1970s* (Brook, Miles, O'Brien, Taylor, 2022) is another recent study of trends within social mobility in relation to the creative industries, supported by data from the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study, which corroborates much of what is discussed in *Getting in and Getting On* (Carey et al., 2020). The report takes on a far more significant time period, demonstrating that as far back as the 1970s, the creative industries have consistently not been open to all classes, and furthermore that this can intersect with gender, ethnicity and other characteristics to restrict access to jobs within the industry. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Screen Industries* (Ozimek, 2020, pg.5) further supports the findings of both reports, noting that *"marginalised workers are often segregated*

or ghettoised in specific occupations, genres or sub-sectors, and the segregation of these workers raises questions about structural logic and organisational practices within the screen industries."

Others have also highlighted some of the shortcomings of using workforce surveys to track representation within the sector, often acknowledging the restrictions of the categories used, or the lack of intersectionality between these categories. This will be discussed further in our report when reflecting on research methods, and the areas of research not yet covered within the topic of diversity and inclusion in the industry as a whole.

In CAMEo Research Institute's (2018, pg.6) Workforce Diversity in the Screen Sector: Evidence Review, it is acknowledged that to date *"research has predominantly focused upon issues surrounding gender workforce representation, and to a lesser extent ethnicity and disability. Comparatively little is known about other key characteristics such as social class, sexual orientation, location and religion."* The report goes on to address the issue of intersectionality, stating *"many workers have to overcome more than one barrier to workforce participation, e.g. women from working class backgrounds or disabled workers who also have caring responsibilities."* The report also backs the previously addressed concerns about social class and its effect on industry diversity, citing (pg.7) *"powerful obstacles"* such as *"reliance on personal networks for allocating work and business opportunities; a 'white, male, middle class' dominated industry culture; working conditions characterised by long working hours, flexible and mobile working and income insecurities; and an underlying acceptance of these conditions as diversity-unfriendly but necessary and unchangeable."*

Other work around diversity and inclusion in film has focussed more heavily on audiences themselves and their need to see themselves represented in the on-screen content they consume. In the US, the University of California (UCLA) produces an annual *Hollywood Diversity Report* (2023, pg.4) which presents a clear case for the financial benefits of more diversity on and off screen when it comes to success at the box office. They discovered that *"theatrical films with casts that were from 31 percent to 40 percent minority enjoyed the highest median global box office receipts"*, and that *"people of colour accounted for the majority of opening weekend, domestic ticket sales for six of the top 10 films released in theatres in 2022 (ranked by global box office)."* Likewise, another early piece of research by the UK Film Council, *Portrayal V Betrayal: an investigation of diverse and mainstream UK film audiences* (2011) noted that at the time little research had been done into how to reach audiences that were rapidly diversifying. It identified that Eastern European, Black, Asian and LGBT audiences were all above the national average in terms of their frequency of cinema going.

The *BFI Statistical Yearbook* (2021) can also be used as a reference point for measuring audience trends within the UK in relation to social class. It notes that cinema audiences generally consist of higher socio-economic grades (ABC1) compared to the UK population as a whole, however, in the year studied (2020-2021) C2DE cinema-goers aged 15-24 over indexed at 49%, compared to their relevant percentage of the overall population. This suggests a potential shift amongst younger working class audiences, who feel that cinema is accessible to them.

Further work has concentrated more on measuring on-screen portrayals in Film and TV, with little research into how to actually engage with audiences, although most research makes the case that equality and authenticity within on-screen representation would lead to improved audience engagement. In the US, University of Southern California's (USC) Annenberg's Inclusion Initiative has annually tracked diversity and inclusion across lead roles in the top 100 grossing films at the US box office since 2007. However, progress in the UK in terms of on-screen representation can be harder to track, with no central study such as the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative's currently available. Most reports tend to focus on one specific characteristic, for example *The Exclusion Act* (Thai, Lievens, 2021) which specifically examined the inclusion of British East and South East Asians both in front of and behind the camera in British films. Other research articles have looked specifically at the role of Black talent on screen, such as *The True Picture for Black Actors in the UK film industry* (Hoyes, 2016), or *British, Black and On-screen* (Nwonka, 2021b) which goes beyond the simple issues of Black actors presence on our screens, to look at the harmful nature of stereotypical representation that comes with the Black British "gang" film.

The third and final style of research that has emerged more recently is reports that seek to evaluate the ways in which the UK industry has worked to address issues of diversity and inclusion. Of the work predominantly produced in the past five years, many are in agreement that whilst the implementation of diversity schemes, such as the BFI's Diversity Standards, are a step in the right direction, they do not address the long standing structural issues of discrimination that exist throughout the UK film industry, and society as a whole (Nwonka, 2020a), (Hennekam and Syed, 2018).

Nwonka and Malik (2021, pg.5) acknowledge in their report *Racial Diversity Initiatives in UK Film & TV*, that evaluates diversity schemes over the past 20 years that there is a *"knowledge deficit"* in the sector, with many institutions responsible for diversity funding showing a reluctance to be open and transparent about the success and impact of their schemes. They also note the prevalence of quantitative approaches over qualitative in the research work done so far, but that the quality of quantitative data is let down by the terminology and categorisation used, as well as the lack of standardisation.

In *The New Babel*, Nwonka (2020b, pg.26) expands on this in other work, asserting that *"many statistical studies of diversity suffer from too narrow a concentration on numbers and neglect to undertake a conceptual analysis of diversity itself in terms of its social, political and cultural underpinnings."* Furthermore, CAMEo (2018, pg.7) notes that *"understanding the effects of different kinds of interventions designed to increase workforce diversity is hampered by a lack of robust, independent evaluation."* Alongside this, Ozmiek (2020, pg. 6) acknowledges that *"data about the screen industries is often hard to compare over time and between places"*, and that change is needed if we wish to accurately evaluate the progress being made. Newsinger and Eikhof (2020, pg.7) also highlight the lack of evaluation available, stating that *"anecdotal evidence suggests that, certainly for some individual cases, these interventions have been effective and have helped individuals who were talented... It is notable, however, that for the UK we could not find any publicly available systematic evaluations of empowering interventions."*

There is also a concern that research carried out so far has not been able to address the intersectionality of different protected characteristics, within the scope of diversity and inclusion. CAMEo (2018, pg.5) states that *"what is missing from the research currently is an understanding of the cross-cutting themes and multiple effects of lack of diversity and inclusivity in the screen sector, and how these impact individuals with protected characteristics working in the industry"*, and that *"many workers have to overcome more than one barrier to workforce participation."* These concerns around intersectionality are present within the film industry itself too, corroborated by a survey respondent in BFI's commissioned Review of the BFI Diversity Standards (2022, pg.16) who states *"Intersectionality needs to be taken into account. When gender and race are separate, it is easier to pass with a white woman than it is a person of colour. Women of colour are so absent from the industry they ought to be able to count for both gender and race which the standards do not currently allow."*

There are also reservations around the areas that research has focused on thus far, Nwonka (2021a) observes that inclusion efforts around racial equality are vastly underrepresented compared to those focused on gender balance. In addition, CAMEo (2018, pg. 19) reports that *"Issues related to gender are by far the most extensively covered aspect of workforce diversity characteristics. Race and ethnicity also received significant attention, followed by disability and social class. Location, sexual orientation and religion are under-researched across the screen sector."*

Furthermore, there has been discussion of the sort of terminology used to discuss ethnic minorities in particular when carrying out research on diversity and inclusion. Malik and Ryder (2021, pg.3) in their *BAME: A report on the use of the term and responses to it* suggest that the term *"homogenises culturally distinct social groups'* and that *"if one of the aims of media organisations is to increase diversity and inclusion and improve cultural representation, a homogenising term could have the opposite effect."*

This report will look at the BFI Film Fund, examining diversity data derived from monitoring forms attached to funding applications. These monitoring forms are designed to capture information that form the BFI's Diversity Standards - thus the data from these monitoring forms are critical in assessing diversity information.

Many have noted that despite its flaws, the BFI Diversity Standards are one of the most wide ranging and ambitious (Nwonka & Malik, 2021) efforts towards improving diversity and inclusivity in the UK Film Industry thus far. Nwonka (2021a, pg. 464) also adds elsewhere that by adding specific targets to these standards in 2018, it demonstrates a *"desire for interconnectedness between policy action and reporting on action"*, something which has been lacking from many other efforts at improving or assessing diversity in the UK film industry. Despite this, there is also a note of caution about areas where the Diversity Standards can fall down, claiming that *"the boundaries of these categories remain ambiguous and can be opened and closed at will by the industry when it is to their advantage to do so... the very framework of the Standards offers a plethora of methods of productions to circumvent the spirit (if not the intention) of the scheme."*

Finally, it is worth adding that the inequities uncovered by research specific to the screen industry are consistent with findings in the wider creative industry as shown in *Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities* (Brook, O'Brien & Taylor 2018).

The BFI took over the funding responsibilities of the UK Film Commission at the end of 2011, just before their 2012-2017 'Film Forever' strategy started (BFI, Film Forever 2012). 'Film Forever' and the subsequent 'BFI2022' strategy which ran 2017-2022, both spoke explicitly of the importance of diversity to their strategy (BFI, BFI2022, 2016). While 'Film Forever' talked of 'showcasing the diversity of the UK and its storytellers' and of encouraging applications

which from companies 'promoting diversity'. In its subsequent BFI2022 strategy, they spoke of 'ensuring that the BFI's board and decision making team are representative of the UK population' and a 'commitment to diversity', and increasing the diversity of talent supported across all BFI activities. In 2023, BFI launched their new ten year strategy 'Screen Culture 2023', which, mirroring previous strategies, included a 'commitment to inclusion' and 'making the screen industries more equitable, diverse and inclusive' (BFI, Screen Culture 2023, 2022). Towards this goal, they have restructured the development and production funds, as well as changed some members of staff. The BFI's stated commitment to DEI has been consistent since taking over the funding responsibilities of the UK Film Commission, but whether the new strategy will have a tangible impact on improving the equitability of their funding remains to be seen.

In our report we hope to address two significant areas previously mentioned where there is a shortfall in current research: the need for an evaluation of the BFI's funding practises by an independent entity, and the lack of investigation into diversity characteristics beyond gender and race. In our report, we will focus on Gender, Race, Disability, and Class. With regard to Race we will examine different ethnicities.

Building on previous research such as *Race and Ethnicity in the UK Film Industry: an analysis of the BFI Diversity Standards* (Nwonka, 2020a) which focussed solely on films funded by the BFI Film Fund, we will take into account the diversity characteristics and associated success rate of applications to the fund, not just awards made. This is with the aim of further assessing the structural inequalities and barriers to inclusion which have been identified in the UK film industry. Nwonka (2020a) also notes in *Diversity and Data* that there are disparities between development and production funding, particularly for applicants from a background of colour, and that there are inconsistencies in levels of participation across writers, directors and producers, which is something we aim to investigate further in this report.

However, there are still elements of our analysis that will not address ongoing concerns related to research in this field. For example, as previous analyses of BFI Film Fund data have noted, the methods by which the data was provided does not allow for an interrogation of intersectional factors, and thus we will not be able to address the situations where these can create multiple barriers to access the film industry. Secondly, as noted by Nwonka and Malik (2021, pg.17), given the relatively recent establishment of the Diversity Standards in 2016 as a response to critically low levels of ethnic minority participation in the sector, there is *"an absence of crucial comparative data needed to assess how the Diversity Standards have intervened"*, and thus it is currently difficult to track potential improvement in diversity over a significant period of time. In *The New Babel: The Language and Practice of Institutionalised Diversity in the UK Film Industry,* Nwonka (2020b, pg.26) supports this by discussing how the industry has *"aspirations for inclusion but also demonstrates a reluctance to take responsibility for the existing exclusion."*

Methodology

Data Collection

The BFI holds a rich data set covering the intersectional characteristics of applicants and awards made through their funds. This data is derived from the monitoring forms applicants complete as part of their funding application.

For this study we requested an anonymised dataset of applications, including diversity data and outcomes to enable an intersectional analysis of the data. After agreeing to provide the data, over the course of a year the BFI ultimately reversed their decision due to GDPR concerns, and were only able to provide data aggregated by individual characteristic type.

The data provided covered applications decided in the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, aggregated by answer to each diversity monitoring question for each of the three kinds of applicant - director, writer or producer, all of which are required to make an application for funding. We were provided with statistics covering the number of applications, number of awards, value of applications, and the value of awards expressed as a range. The BFI confirmed that the year was from their perspective 'typical' compared to other years, and can be thus treated as representative of BFI funding. By typical, this is in reference to the levels of applications and funding awards made, and does not refer to patterns of socio-economic characteristics. The data provided was not intersectional, and the aggregation prevented some forms of analysis, but still serves as a rich resource to examine the equitability of the BFI's funding practices.

In this report we focused on examining Disability, Gender, Class and Race. We additionally analysed data relating to age, religion, sexuality, caring responsibilities and returnships, but found no significant correlations.

Data preparation

The BFI noted that they had excluded the sole award made through the Completion Fund as its inclusion could have breached the privacy of applicants. On that basis we excluded all applications for the Completion Fund. The Pre-Production Fund was excluded from the data as it was not an open fund - with all applications being awarded funding.

The descriptive statistics supplied by the BFI noted that diversity data was not available for every applicant. In our analysis we excluded applications/ awards where the diversity data was not available for applicants.

Total count of applications/awards with/without data

	Applications		Awards	
	With data	No data	With data	No Data
Writer	841	449	139	13
Director	720	570	113	39
Producer	733	577	123	29
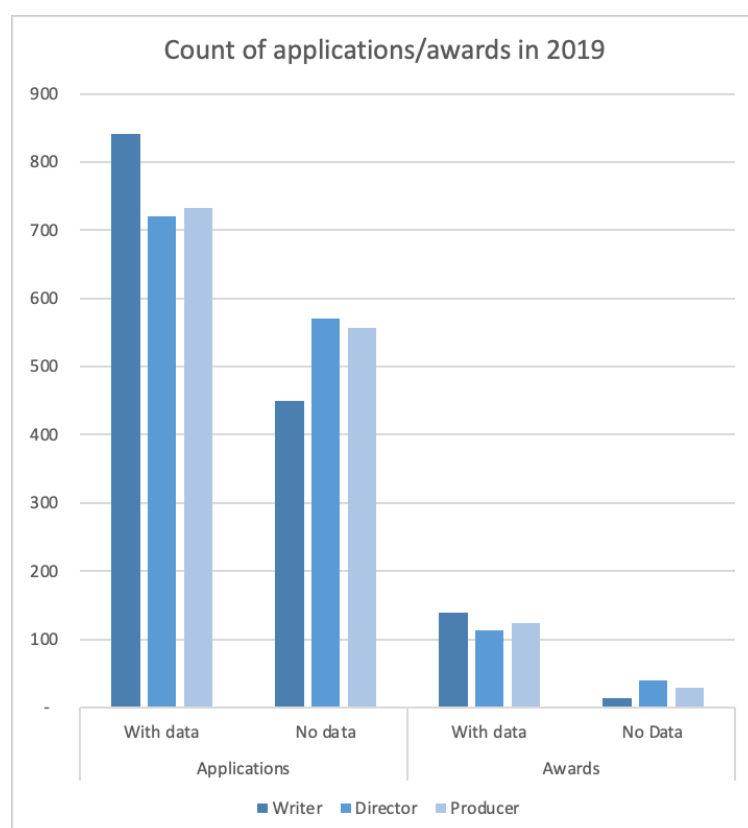
We assumed that the applications and awards with diversity data were a representative sample of all applications and awards, and that there was no consistent reason why applicants with certain characteristics would have been more or less likely to fill out the diversity data.

The diversity questions used across the funds had some small variances in categories, for example some answers regarding age were '25-29' and others '25-30', we combined and adjusted the categorisation in these instances.

Some of the population sizes were less than 5 and so to improve robustness we aggregated the data in order to conduct analysis to ascertain if there was a statistically significant relationship between a particular characteristic and the success rate.

In order to improve population sizes we aggregated four of the funds into two. Set one, 'Main', combined 'Development' and 'Production', which are assessed by the same team - the BFI Film Fund - and set two, 'BFI Network', combined BFI Network Short Film Funding and BFI Network Early Feature Fund, which are assessed separately by the BFI Network team.

Data analysis

We performed statistical analysis to ascertain if there was a statistically significant relationship between a particular characteristic and the success rate. We investigated a number of different statistical methods for achieving this, such as a Chi Squared Test, and eventually opted for Barnard's Test as giving significant results with small population sizes and being more powerful than the alternative Fisher Test (Lyderson et al, 2009).

Barnard's Test is a statistical method used to compare two groups or conditions. It helps researchers determine if there is a significant difference between these groups in terms of a specific characteristic or outcome. This test is particularly useful when we want to see if one group performs better or worse than another.

To perform Barnard's Test, the researcher will count and categorise the data for each group. For example, if we are comparing the success rate for writers with a disability to the BFI Film Fund, you would count how many applicants in each group (writers with a disability, and writers without a disability) were successful. This data is organised in a table, as per the example below:

Example Barnard's Test 2x2 Matrix for BFI Network combined fund for Writers with a Disability.

	Approved	Declined
Has a disability	13	36
Does not have a disability	64	392

Barnard's Test then takes this table and calculates whether the difference between the two groups is statistically significant; it checks if the difference we observe is likely to be a real effect or just due to random chance.

If the test shows a significant difference, it means that the two groups are indeed different, and the difference is not just a fluke. This is important because it helps us make informed decisions about which treatment, in our example, is more effective. If the test does not show a significant difference, it suggests that the observed difference between the groups could have occurred by chance. In other words, there's no strong evidence to say one group is better or worse than the other.

The results of Barnard's Test are expressed as a 'P value', indicating the probability of the variable having an impact on the outcome. Test's with a P value of less than 0.05 are considered to be strong evidence, and less than 0.1 to have some evidence.

For every fund, applicant type (director, producer or writer), characteristic category and individual characteristic, we applied a Barnard's Test. In the analysis we have largely excluded analysis of characteristics where the applicant has opted for 'Prefer not to say', with the exception of the Sexual Orientation analysis.

We ran Barnard's Test on all characteristics and on the different funds. We discarded those tests with a score greater than 0.1.

As a supplementary data set we used the UK 2021 census data to compare the number of awards and applications compared to the general population and the 2019 Annual ScreenSkills Assessment to enable comparison with the screen industries workforce as a whole.

We ultimately decided that the value of awards data, which were expressed as ranges, used too broad ranges and prevented aggregation of categories, and so excluded it from the analysis.

Results

The Barnard's Test analysis indicated certain characteristics that were statistically significant in predicting the outcomes for applications for BFI funding. A large number of characteristics had little or no impact that was statistically significant. Caring responsibility, for example, had little impact, nor did whether the applicant was returning to work after a career break ("Returnships"). Similarly age, for the most part, had very statistically little impact on the outcome of the application. The exception to this that was identified was that producers aged 30-39 were more likely to be successful in applications. Our analysis below focuses solely on the characteristics where we observed a statistically significant correlation.

Complete list of characteristics

Age

Caring Responsibility

Disability

Ethnicity

Gender

Religion

Returnship

Sexual Orientation

Socio-economic status

While not every applicant and awardee provided monitoring data, the sample size is such to allow a confidence level of 95% with a 2% margin of error, more than high enough to be able to perform robust analysis.
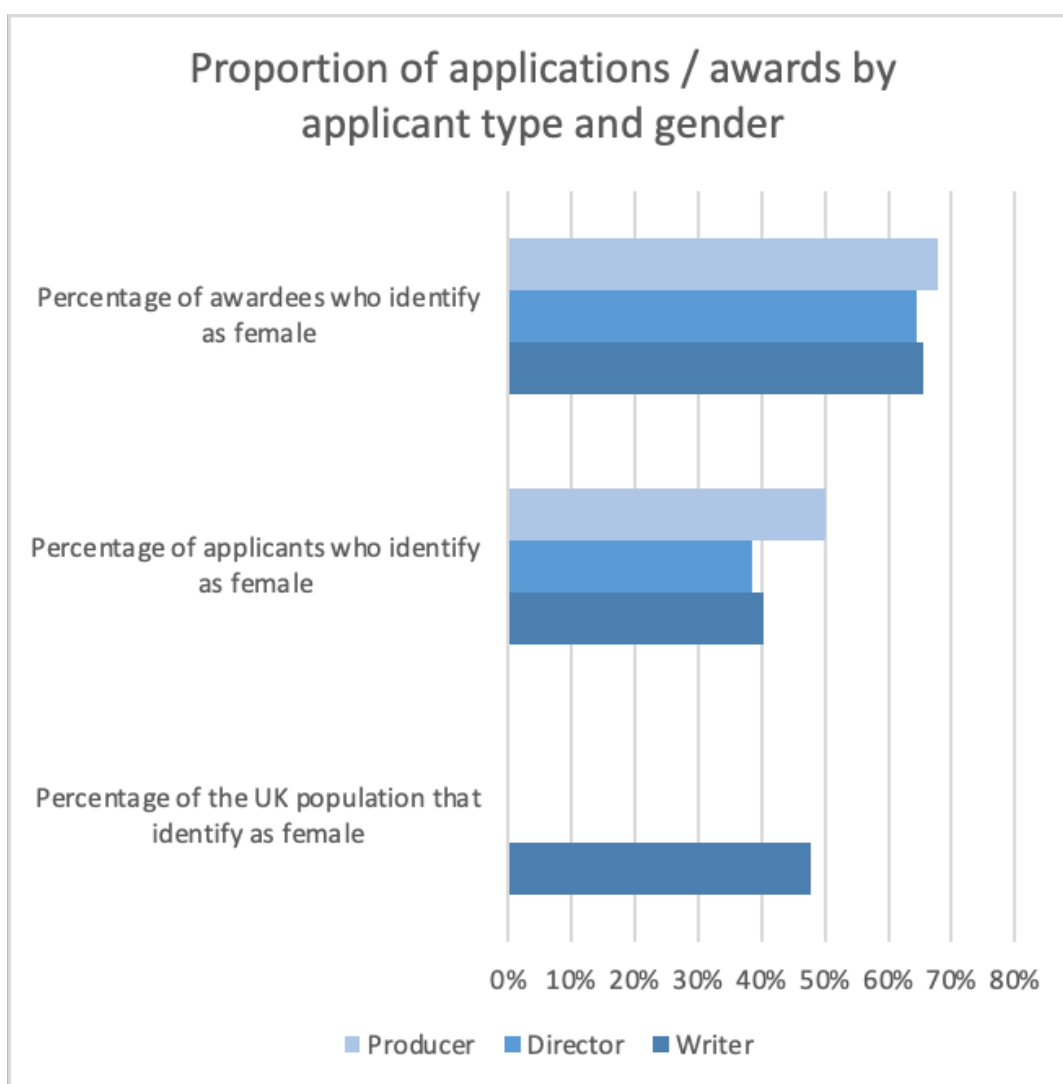
Gender

The marginalisation of women in the film industry, especially in the role of director, has been the subject of a great deal of discussion in recent years (Cobb, 2020) - a conversation that has created much needed pressure for change.

In regard to people who identify as non-binary, in the period we examined, 0.5% of directors, 0.4% of writers and no producers who applied indicated that they were non-binary, compared to 0.1% of the population. At these levels, the sample size was too small to make confident assertions about the impact of their gender identity on the chances of success.

However, the analysis did suggest that the course correction for women was clearly underway with 65.52%, 64.44% and 67.86% of BFI Film Fund awards given to women writers, directors, and producers respectively.

	Percentage of the UK population that identify as female	Percentage of applicants who identify as female	Percentage of awardees who identify as female
Writers		40.3%	65.5%
Directors	47.8%	38.4%	64.4%
Producers		50%	67.8%

Proportion of applications / awards by applicant type and gender

We were also able to assess that the success rate (using the Barnard Exact Test) for directors, writers and producers who identified as female was 38.6%, 38.7% and 31.6% respectively, in comparison to an average success rate of 33%.

	Directors who identify as female	Writers who identify as female	Producers who identify as female
Census	47.8%		
Applications	38.4%	40.3%	50%
Awards	64.4%	65.5%	67.8%
Success rate	38.6%	38.7%	31.6%

Female identifying applicants/awards
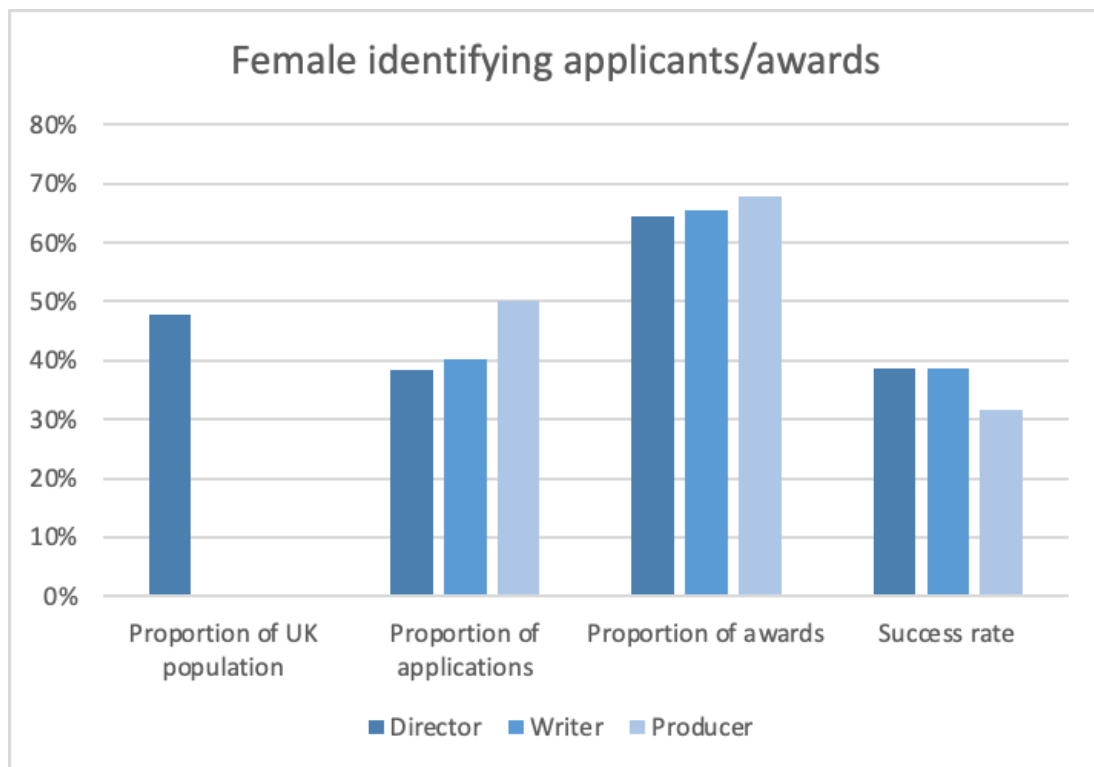
This course for parity needs to be maintained, and close observation on the films' global distribution, box office results, and inclusion in film festivals needs to be given careful consideration to ensure this momentum is maintained and sustained across the entire film value chain.

There has been ample evidence of the systemic underfunding of women in the screen sector, and the difficulties that they have (and continue) to face as a result of structural barriers and discrimination at all levels, leading to continually shocking statistic (Screen Skills, 2019) that only 38% of the screen workforce are women, versus 47% of the total workforce. Our findings that the BFI are significantly correcting for decades of marginalisation is an indication that there are shifts in the industry, reinforced by the appointment of Mia Bays, a long term campaigner on gender equality in film, as Head of the BFI Film Fund (BFI, 2021b).
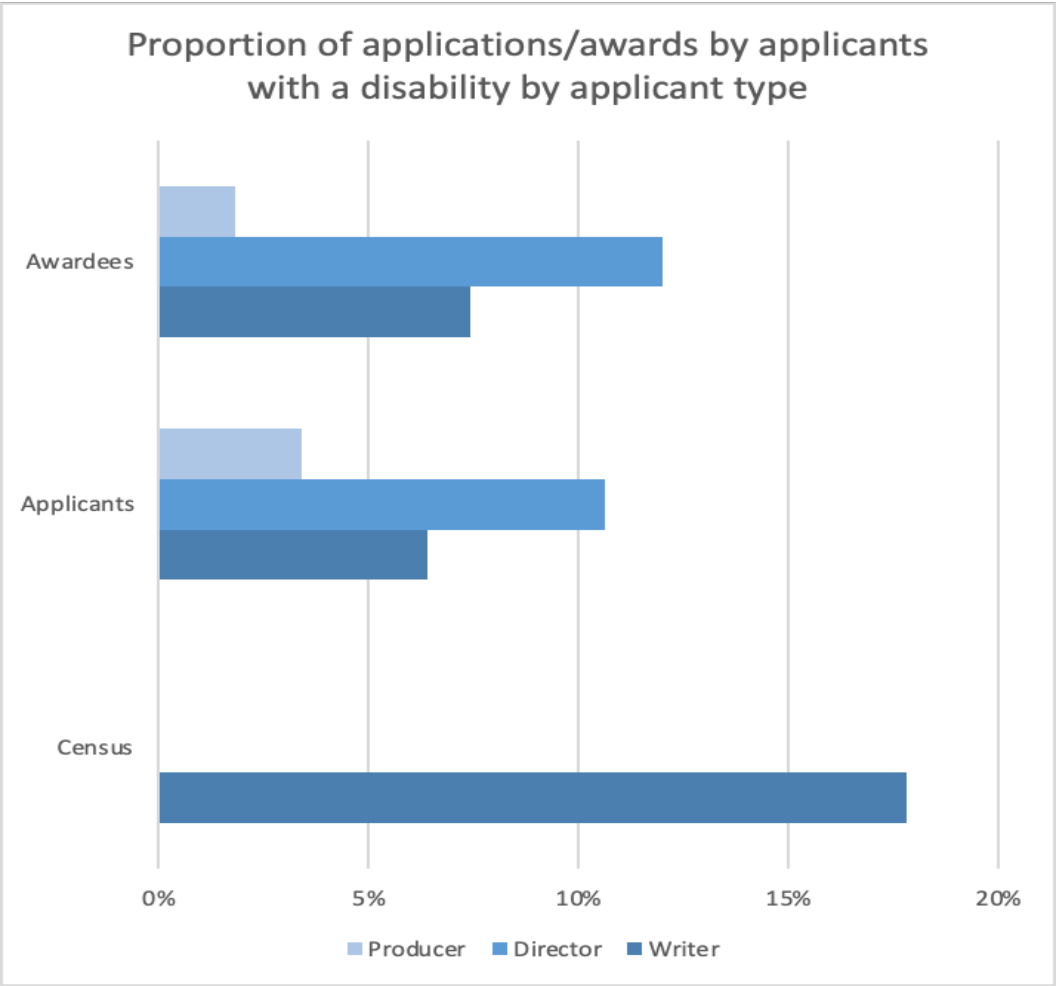
Disability

According to the last UK census, 17.8% of the population indicated having a disability. This is over 10 million people, or approximately 1 in 5 people. As significant as this community is in the population, historically it remains largely underrepresented and unauthentically depicted (Creative Diversity Network, 2022).

In our analysis, we found a deficit of writers and directors from a background of disability making applications to, and awarded from the BFI Film Fund. In comparison to the census, of all applications to the BFI Film Fund, 6.4% came from writers with a disability, 3.4% from producers with a disability, and 10.64% came from directors who indicated a disability.

Percentage of applicants and awards and disability:

Disability	Census	Applicants	Awardees
Writer		6.4%	7.4%
Director	17.8%	10.6%	12%
Producer		3.4%	1.8%

Proportion of applications/awards by applicants with a disability by applicant type

We analysed the impact of different characteristics of individual applicants on their success rate using the Barnard Exact Test.

Directors and writers with a disability averaged a success rate of 20% and 26% respectively; both lower than the average success rates of 33%. The Barnard's Test result for the significance of disability to the success rate of Producers with a disability was poor due to low population size, and was disregarded for the purposes of this analysis - this speaks clearly to the exclusion of producers with a disability in the film industry.

Success rate of applicants and awards by disability

As a proportion of total	Directors with a disability	Writers with a disability	Producers with a disability
Applications	10.6%	6.4%	3.4%
Awards	12%	7.4%	1.8%
Success rate	20%	26.6%	12.5%
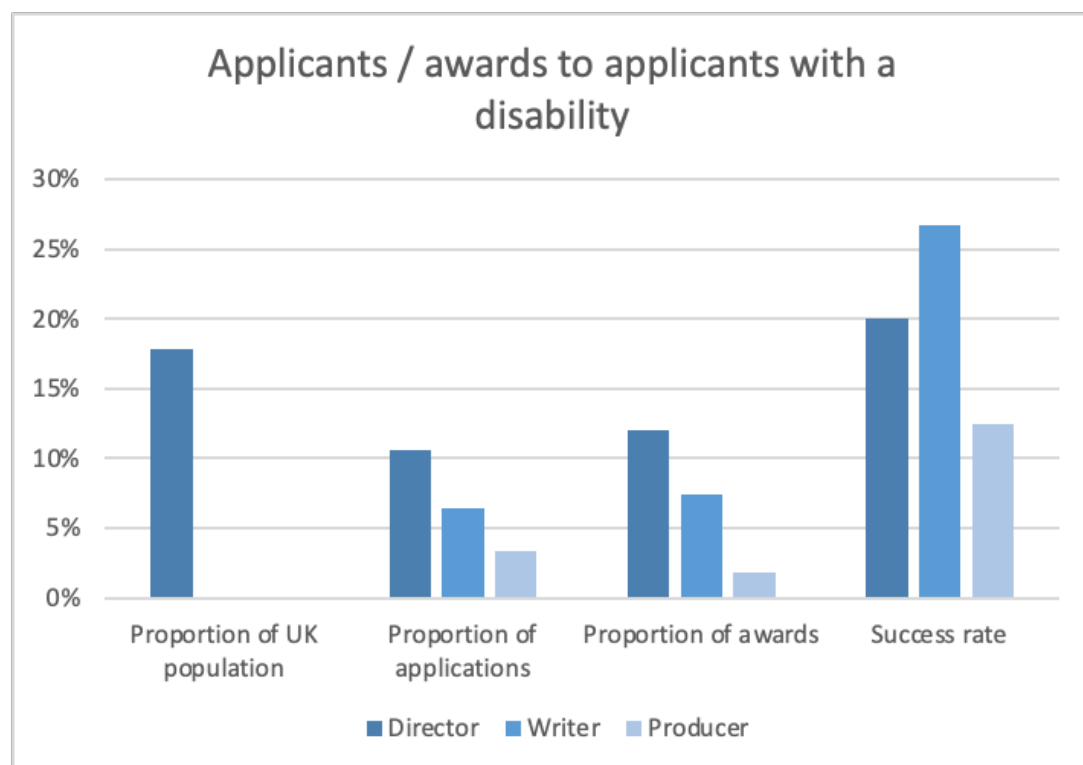
The combination of the low application rate combined with a low success rate are part of, and contribute to sustaining an underrepresentation and inauthentic portrayal of the disability community.

A number of studies and reports in recent years have indicated that while the industry is improving in creating entry level training opportunities for people with a disability, that basic issues around accessibility still remain (Creative Diversity Network, 2022). Furthermore, people with a disability are less likely to be able to subsidise and fund their own work than those without a disability (Disability Arts Online, 2021). Lack of accessibility can perpetuate a hostile environment where very few disabled filmmakers are able to succeed in the industry. There are also few disabled individuals working in the key institutions, particularly holding editorial positions, commissioning and decision making power. The BFI, which has consistently failed to meet its employment target for those with a disability of 18%, and has achieved barely half that (BFI, 2023a).

Our findings clearly indicate that filmmakers with a disability are continuing to face structural discrimination to accessing BFI funding through both the proportionally low application rates, and the significantly lower than average success rates. The scale of exclusion is huge and needs large scale intervention and transformation. As stated in Disability Deep Dive (2022, pg.7) *"if we want to reflect the UK workforce (17%) and population (18%) then our evidence suggests we need over 13,000 more disabled people to enter and be retained in the industry."*

Class

There are two questions that assess class within the BFI monitoring system - these are:

> 💡 What type of school did you mainly attend between the ages of 11 and 16?
>
> 💡 When you were 14, what did the main income earner in your household do for a living?

While imperfect, the Parental Occupation at age 14 question is considered the most accurate measure of socio-economic background. This question typically gets the highest response rates of all socio-economic questions, and is accessible to all nationalities (Social Mobility Commission, 2020).

We found that for most applying writers, directors and producers the main income earner in the household when they were 14 came from modern professional occupations. In contrast, the percentage of applicants whose main income earner came from a background of routine or semi-routine manual occupations was notably lower.

Percentage of applicants and awards by socio economic background:

Socioeconomic income	Writer		Director		Producer	
	Applicants	Awardees	Applicants	Awardees	Applicants	Awardees
Clerical and intermediate occupations	9.0%	2.7%	6.7%	0.0%	4.9%	2.2%
Middle or junior managers	8.4%	2.7%	8.2%	6.1%	9.2%	2.2%
Modern professional occupations	35.3%	51.3%	30.6%	36.4%	26.6%	44.4%
Routine manual and service occupations	4.8%	5.4%	3.7%	6.1%	6.0%	6.7%
Semi-routine manual and service occupations	6.5%	5.4%	8.2%	3.0%	6.0%	0.0%
Senior managers and administrators	11.4%	10.8%	12.7%	15.1%	15.2%	8.9%
Technical and craft occupations	6.0%	5.4%	9.0%	6.1%	10.3%	6.7%
Traditional professional occupations	10.8%	8.1%	14.9%	15.1%	14.7%	22.2%
Unemployed/ never worked	1.2%	0.0%	1.5%	6.1%	2.2%	0.0%

Percentage of applicants and awards by school background:

	Writers % of app.	Writers % of awards	Directors % of app.	Directors % of awards	Producers % of app.	Producers % of awards
Attended school outside the UK	14.1%	6.6%	22.2%	0%	23.2%	21.2%
Independent or fee-paying school - bursary	4.3%	6.6%	4.8%	6.4%	9.7%	8.5%
Independent or fee-paying school - no bursary	11.4%	11.1%	11.8%	12.9%	10.8%	17.2%
State-run or state-funded school - non-selective	55.9%	51.1%	51.3%	61.2%	43.8%	31.9%
State-run or state-funded school - selective (includes faith schools)	13.0%	22.2%	9.0%	19.0%	11.8%	21.2%
Other	0.5%	2.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.52%	0.0%

When looking at responses to the type of school attended, especially in combination with success rates, the data suggests that producers who attended state school (non selective) had a significantly lower success rate.

Success rate of applicant by school:

	Success rate for writers	Success rate for directors	Success rate for producers
Independent or fee-paying school - bursary	37.5%	28.5%	21%
Independent or fee-paying school - no bursary	23.8%	23.5%	38.1%
State-run or state-funded school - non-selective	22.3%	25.6%	17.6%
State-run or state-funded school – selective (includes faith schools)	41.6%	46.1%	43.4%
Other	50%	0%	0%

Success rate of applicant by school background:

School type	Writer	Director	Producer
Independent or fee paying school – with a bursary	37.5%	28.5%	21.05%
Independent or fee paying school – with no bursary	23.8%	23.5%	38.1%
State funded school – selective (includes faith schools)	41.6%	46/1%	43.8%
State funded school – non selective	22.3%	25.6	17.6%
Other	50%	0%	0%

The significant impact of both education and family wealth to later outcomes is well documented. The glaringly high success rate for producers who went to independent or fee paying schools is particularly notable - indicating that it is specifically familial wealth which has a significant impact, not just the quality of education. The significantly higher success rate of applicants who went to selective state run/ state funded schools is also supporting evidence for this, when the demographics of the intakes of selective state schools (including faith schools) are taken into account, as pupils attending those schools are also more likely to come from the highest wealth bracket (*Poor Grammar*, 2023, Cribb, Jesson, Sibieta et al) . We see this as an indication of the two key dimensions of particular import to the role of producing - access to finance and access to networks. In *Getting in and getting on: Class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries* (Carey, Florisson, O'Brien & Lee, 2020, pg. 10) it was reported that *"those from privileged backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to end up in creative occupations than their working-class peers."*

Furthermore, the *UK Producers Roundtable survey* (2020) in which 149 independent UK producers participated in, also reflects these findings. The top two perceived barriers to entry of the industry were lack of money and lack of contacts, at 71% and 49% respectively.

In addition, the same survey reported over the past two years:

- 💡 30% of producer earned less than £1k for their producing work

- 💡 69% earned less than £15k

- 💡 7% earned more than £50k

- 💡 95% of producers who have produced 3-5 feature films earned less than £25k a year from their producing work over the last two years (12.5k a year)

Films take a long time to develop and produce. For producers, the development stage is typically unpaid and fees only materialise when a film has started principal photography. And even then, they can be deferred or used to be invested into the film for cash flowing purposes, to cover a funding gap or to finance the film if the film goes over budget, so on and so forth. The same survey reported that over 78% of producers had to cashflow their projects and 77% had to defer their fee. (It's worth adding that typically only the producer's fee is at risk, and conventionally directors and writers are not expected to defer their fee to cash flow production or cover a budget overage.)

A producer from the survey stated (pg.5): *"Films take too long to develop, development finance is very difficult... Producer fees are too low and often deferred and net profits are often unachievable. Time taken to develop and produce is never compensated nearly well enough when a film is finally produced."* Similarly *"There are very few other professions where the project leader, who carries all the responsibility, takes so much personal risk with so little support."* In the survey, when asked what might force producers to give up producing film 80% responded by stating lack of money.

The runway to a regular and sustainable livelihood for a producer is extremely challenging - as such - producers without means and from working class backgrounds by their nature have shorter runways for survival, which creates a bias in the industry to work in the favour for those who have access to independent wealth - those who can survive until payday, which sometimes will never arrive. It is of no surprise then, that the producers who do survive, who do succeed will more often than not come from a background of economic privilege.

The report *Getting in and getting on: Class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries (2020)* estimated that 53% of those working in the screen industries were from privileged backgrounds, versus 38% of those working in any role. 61% of producers, directors and arts officers were found to be from a privileged background making it one of the most 'elite' occupations in the entire economy. Indeed, the same report demonstrated that working class people were similarly disadvantaged, with just 25% of the workforce being from working class backgrounds, as opposed to 38% of the total workforce.

Our findings echo that of this report as well as the work of others (Randle et al 2015, Eikhof and Warhurst 2013,) in finding that those of a lower socio-economic background are at a profound disadvantage in progressing within the screen industries. The report *Screened out: Tackling class inequality in the UK Screen Industries* (2021) highlights 12 key life-points of class-related disadvantage, five of which occur within the sphere of the screen industries. These include informal recruitment practices, cultural matching and unconscious bias, internships, organisational culture and 'fit', pathways to professional development and leadership role models.

Given the highlighted issue points around cultural matching and fit, and the tendency for film commissioners to come from 'elite' backgrounds, it is unsurprising that a funding bias is evident that favours those from an elite background and creates barriers for those from working class backgrounds, layering another challenge to their careers.

Race

Most research undertaken in the film sector has traditionally examined race under a single banner referred to as "B.A.M.E" - Black and other Minority Ethnic Groups, a term which has recently experienced significant criticism, termed as homogenisation by Malik and Ryder (2021).

The BFI's published targets on diversity set a target for the diversity of its applicants using another homogenising term: 'ethnically diverse' to aggregate all non-white applicants. In this report, the BFI shared the following information about the ethnic diversity of their funded productions which shows for the most part, the BFI exceeding their targets (BFI, 2022).

	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019
Ethnically diverse	26%	21%	28%	16%

The problems of using a catch-all term to collect all non-white applicants and awardees masks a more complex picture, reflecting the different barriers faced by different communities who have experienced racial inequity. In our report, we have examined the data of the five groupings used by the BFI to understand more deeply the experience of communities from different backgrounds of colour. The categories used by the BFI to collect data on ethnicity groups together a range of communities who have radically different experiences, but begins to provide a more nuanced understanding of funding to applicants from a range of ethnicities.

The Barnard's Test to test for the impact of ethnicity on success rates was largely inconclusive. The small sample sizes, outside of the population who responded 'White', limited the robustness of the test. While the success rates for those who responded 'White' were between 22-26%, higher than the overall age success rate (17%), the Barnard's Test did not indicate that this was statistically significant. The analysis indicated that the only statistically significant relationship in terms of success rate was for directors and writers who applied for production funding, and self-identified as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British, who were more likely to be awarded funding. However, the sample size for these categories were extremely small, limiting the robustness of the test.

The success rate for ethnicities other than White, were however highly variable. For example, Producers who self-identified as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British had a success rate of just 13%, whereas Producers who identified as Asian / Asian British had a success rate of 22%. The application and award numbers for the period are not high, and as such we are reluctant to draw hard conclusions about the impact of ethnicity on success rates, but the preliminary results indicate that further research, over a wide data range, would be beneficial.

Success rate by applicant type and ethnicity

	Writer	Director	Producer
Unknown	14.3%	23.1%	14.3%
Asian/Asian British	16.7%	10.0%	22.2%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	27.8%	41.7%	12.5%
East Asian / East Asian British*	33.3%	50.0%	(zero applications)
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	20.0%	23.1%	16.7%
Other	9.1%	20.0%	25.0%
White	25.10%	21.6%	25.5%

*application and award figures for East Asian / East Asian British were particularly low, with zero applications made by Producers who self-identified as East Asian / East Asian British, and just two applications from directors, and three from writers.

Proportion of applications / awards by applicant type and ethnicity

Ethnicity	Census	Writer Applications (% of total)	Writer Awards (% of total)	Director Applications (% of total)	Director Awards (% of total)	Producer Applications (% of total)	Producer Awards (% of total)
Asian/Asian British	6.87%	5%	3.5%	5.8%	2.38%	3.8%	3.5%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	4%	7.5%	8.7%	6.4%	11.9%	6.8%	3.5%
East Asian / East Asian British	2.3%	1.2%	1.7%	1%	2.3%	0%	0%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	2.8%	8.3%	1.7%	6.9%	7.1%	7.6%	5.3%
White	81.7%	73.3%	77.1%	74.7%	71.4%	78.3%	83.9%
Other	2.1%	4.5%	1.7%	5.3%	4.7%	3.4%	3.5%
Unknown		2.9%	1.7%	13.9%	14.2%	2.9%	1.7%

Proportion of applicants/awardees by applicant type/ethnicity
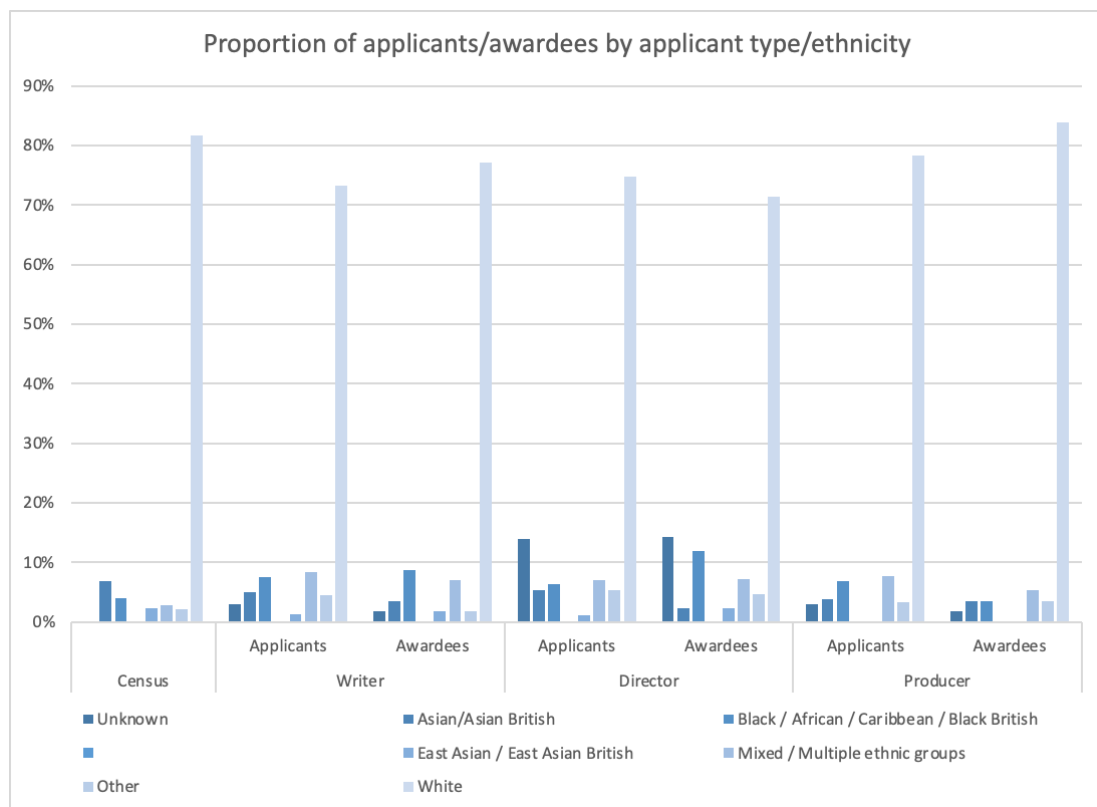
Disaggregating all non-white people from the catch-all 'ethnically diverse', a different picture begins to emerge. The under-representation of Asians and East Asians demonstrates clearly the limitations of aggregate terms and its impact on the ethnic diversity of films funded by the BFI. In 2019 there were no applications to the BFI Film Funds from producers of East Asian / British East Asian heritage (and therefore no awards made).

Homogenisation also presents a barrier to fully assessing the impact of racial diversity initiatives as they cannot be tracked across different ethnicities. This is supported by Nwonka and Malik (2021), who state that *'there is fluid terminology and data categorisation that can make it difficult to clearly discern the targets and outcomes of diversity initiatives. This is particularly the case with the common policy usage of the term 'BAME' because it does not make visible the nuanced experiences of different ethnic and cultural groups that are included in the broad category."*

Additionally, CAMEo (2018, pg. 39) call for a more modern approach to assessing ethnicity in relation to diversity objectives, arguing that *"It is notable that current research on ethnicity and race equates to analyses of 'White-British' versus 'Black-Caribbean' and 'Asian'.... such narrow perspectives are likely to be limited in how accurately they capture the contemporary ethnic make-up of British society."* Some work is emerging that attempts to combat this need for analysis on a more nuanced scale, such as the previously referenced The Exclusion Act (Thai and Lievens, 2021).

However, caution should be taken when comparing the success rates of different minority ethnicities when applying for BFI funding. Although more work needs to be done to encourage an increased level of applications from certain minority groups, this should not be done at the expense of others. All ethnic minority groups are in need of continued inclusion support, and as one survey respondent in the Review of the BFI Diversity Standards (New Inclusion, 2022, pg. 33) *"the Diversity Standards (should) be more of a floor rather than a ceiling", acting as a baseline to aim for and then go beyond by reaching higher levels of diversity and inclusion."*

Similar to the disability community, the East Asian / British East Asian or Asian / British Asian communities show disproportionately low rates of application and awards received. As noted in The Exclusion Act (Thai and Lievens, 2021), the combined East Asian / British East Asian and Asian / British Asian community make up the largest minority group in the UK, but often have less visibility and power in the race equality debate.

The last decade has seen the launch and discussion of a range of schemes designed to improve diversity in the industry. Our findings support Nwonka's (2020b) view that rather than improving diversity in the sense of reducing exclusion on the basis of racial characteristics, these schemes and their accompanying rhetoric enable inclusion of a tiny minority of individuals who are allowed behind the curtain. This hypothesis would indicate not improved equity but rather selective inclusion, or 'tokenism', that exposes the narrow and dangerous perception of diversity held by industry power holders.

Conclusion

In reviewing available research and our own data, we have observed progress for female identifying filmmakers in gaining success for funding. However, people with disabilities, people from challenging socio-economic backgrounds and people of colour continue to be marginalised. The industry for these groups is highly exclusionary and subsequently means filmmakers are unable to thrive and sustain livelihoods.

But there is nuance to add - any progress has a habit of being inconsistent, so continual pressure and strict monitoring is key in sustaining any course correction - this is particularly of importance to gender parity. More granular monitoring will also aid better evaluation of diversity and inclusion schemes themselves, which allows for advancements and improvements within the field. For people of colour, the clear takeaway is that homogenisation is dangerous, and consideration and acknowledgement of the full spectrum of diversity in communities of colour is critical and vital in the endeavour to create an inclusive, more accurately representative, and arguably therefore more commercially successful industry.

Finally, through undertaking this research, it became apparent that having access to intersectional data will be increasingly vital in moving forward, and improving the quality of evaluations - humans are layered and multidimensional and consequently will rarely be subjected to just one systemic barrier.

In the wider context of the industry, the exclusion of the East Asian / British East Asian or Asian / British Asian communities from BFI funding means very few filmmakers from these backgrounds are able to make enough gains and build career successes that lead towards working on bigger films and greater successes. The lack of these successes mean that filmmakers from these backgrounds will be considered commercially risky. In an industry beset with systemic barriers, obstacles present themselves through the whole film value chain. As reported in The Exclusion Act (Thai & Lievens 2021) which observed:

"With British East and Southeast helmed films typically occupying the lower end of the budget scale, and also receiving less distribution support, these films are perceived to underperform at the box office - informing and sustaining the viewpoint that British East and Southeast Asian directed films are risky and not commercial. This contributes to an ecosystem in which British East and Southeast Asian helmed films are rarely supported by the industry, thus relegating British East and Southeast Asian filmmakers to the margins of an industry."

The same can be said for people with disabilities, from disadvantaged economic backgrounds and other communities of colour.

The BFI states *"At the BFI we champion new talent and unfamiliar stories from unfamiliar voices"* (BFI, 2023b). As a public funder, the BFI set the mission and the ambition for inclusion through their Diversity Standards. Nwonka (2021a, pg.463) suggests that *"the BFI possesses, at least within the popular cultural imagination, dominion over how the industry performs diversity"* and their Diversity Standards have been adopted by other key players in the industry including BAFTA, Film4 and BBC Films.

The BFI as a public funder has a leading and vital role in shaping the whole UK talent pipeline because they function to invest in new talent. They host and nurture the "nurseries" of our film industry. The filmmakers they support at the early stages of their careers are what the wider industry inherits later. Ultimately, a failure to be inclusive at this level is only amplified later.

We recommend a number of practical steps that the BFI could take that would go someway to reducing the systemic barriers facing many applicants and which has served to maintain the screen industry as an exclusive, homogenous and elitist industry.

- The BFI commits to publish annualised aggregated data at a granular level of applications, awards both by count and by value of awards. This is in line with best practice reporting practices of grant giving foundations.

- The BFI reviews its data collection practices and protocol to improve the quality and consistency of its monitoring data, funding awards can be made conditional on provision of diversity data.

- The BFI tracks and is fully transparent about prior contact with applicants and potential applicants, and publishes aggregated data to that end.

- The BFI works to ensure diversity within the decision makers working in the BFI Film Fund. There has been significant research into the impact of decision maker's characteristics on their biases, through studies into bias in hiring decisions (Park, 1999) and the impact of the diversity of judges on sentencing decisions (Harris, 2023).

- The BFI reviews its approach to talent outreach, and considers how it can reach and support applications from filmmakers whose characteristics are underrepresented in the industry.

- The BFI implements ring fenced budgets for applicants with characteristics which are severely underrepresented in the film industry.

The issues of equitability are not unique to the BFI. There is a substantial body of work which has been undertaken by funding organisations in the UK to improve practises related to equitable funding which the BFI could engage with, including guidance on good practise developed by the Foundation Practise Rating and thinking regarding data collection, taxonomy and transparency developed by the DEI Data Standard. These initiatives are just two examples of funder led initiatives to improve equitable funding practise.

Many of the challenges faced by the BFI in trying to be an equitable funder are also the subject of deep discussion and efforts to correct the failure to be truly inclusive by charitable foundations. There are multiple initiatives, projects and recommendations for best practice that could be adopted by the BFI to improve the equitability of their funding practices.

About the Authors

This study and report was a collaborative process and shared endeavour between industry practitioners of colour who do not come from an academic background.

Josh Cockcroft

Josh Cockcroft is a British-Zanzibari producer and change maker. After a brief stint working in finance, and a longer one producing theatre, he began working in the screen industries, where his first job was on the Oscar nominated documentary, *The Square.* Since then, he has worked for organisations such as the BBC and Entertainment One, and acted as a development consultant for a number of production companies, as well producing a feature film. Josh setup Climate Spring, a non-profit organisation dedicated to developing screen projects about climate change with Lucy Stone and James Durrant in 2020.

Alongside producing, Josh has successfully led fundraising rounds for new businesses, and has most recently been working for the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, where his work focuses on insight and cross-funder collaboration, particularly around DEI and the equity of funding practices. He has a particular interest in the use of research and data in the cultural industries, and has authored a number of research projects. Josh is a Trustee of the Arvon Foundation and the Cultural Philanthropy Foundation.

Delphine Lievens

Delphine Lievens (she/they) is a freelancer in UK independent film distribution and exhibition. She has previously held roles as Head of Distribution at Bohemia Media, a UK distributor with a specific focus on diverse voices, at Gower Street Analytics as a Senior Box Office Analyst, and at Altitude Films as a Theatrical Sales Executive. She has worked on the UK releases of a number of critically acclaimed independent films including *Rebel Dykes, Queen of Glory* and Academy Award winner *Moonlight*. She enjoys discussing current trends in the screen industries and the urgent need for more diversity in film, both on and off screen.

Chi Thai

Chi is a British Vietnamese independent filmmaker who works across features, documentary, animation and immersive. She has been a Cannes Lions finalist three times and a Screen Star of Tomorrow. Her BFI Vision awarded production company, Last Conker aims to tell stories that make our world greener and fairer. She is also the co-founder of MilkTea - an award winning screening label that platforms ESEA cinema and prioritises ESEA audiences. She has a background in diversity and inclusion; and has produced several programs to support the ESEA community. She co-authored with Delphine Lievens, *The Exclusion Act*, published in *Representology*, the journal for media & diversity in collaboration with Cardiff University and the Sir Lenny Henry Centre for Media Diversity. Her latest film, *Raging Grace* (by Paris Zarcilla) is a thrilling examination of race and power premiered at SXSW in 2023 and was awarded the festival's highest honours: Grand Jury Prizes for *Best Film in Competition & Best Debut.*

Appendix

BFI: Production Applications & Editorial Meeting Process – 2019

Editorial Meeting

- Takes places on a weekly basis, typically on a Tuesday morning

- In attendance: full Editorial and Production team

- Generally includes discussion of current applications under consideration, production updates on funded slate, box office updates, festival and distribution updates and Network update

Applications - First features:

- Applications are assigned at random to two Film Fund Executives, taking into consideration if it has been developed internally, workloads and diaries

- If an Exec has been notified of an application coming in, another Film Fund Executive will be assigned to that project

- The application form and script might also be sent to an external reader for coverage which also feeds into editorial meeting for next step decision

Next step: another Film Fund Exec read, a team read or a pass

Applications - Emerging talent:

- Applications are assigned at random to two Film Fund Executives, taking into consideration if it has been developed internally, workloads and diaries

- Execs discuss for next step decision

- The application form and script might also be sent to an external reader for coverage which also feeds into editorial meeting for next step decision

Next step: another Film Fund Exec read, a team read or a pass

All other applications (incl. co-productions):

- Suitability in relation to priorities discussed at editorial and if deemed not suitable can pass at this stage

- If suitable, application is assigned at random to two Film Fund Executives, taking into consideration if it has been developed internally, workloads and diaries

- Execs discuss for next step decision

- The application form and script might also be sent to an external reader for coverage which also feeds into editorial meeting for next step decision

Next step: another Film Fund Exec read, a team read or a pass

General notes:

- Every application must be read by a minimum of two people
- If it's evident from an initial read of the application that the project is a clear pass,
- Another Executive should still look at the application to confirm
- If the applicant wishes to submit a new draft during the assessment process, the decision to accept a new draft is at the editorial team's discretion. Production Coordinator/Opps will request a supporting document outlining changes since the previous draft, and notify the applicant that this might cause a delay to our response.

Team reads

- Discussions take place during an extended editorial meeting on a weekly basis as needed, taking into consideration production dates as well as editorial team's workloads and diaries
- Discussion is chaired by the Head of the Fund or Head of Editorial and includes all creative and production executives.
- Wider more junior Film Fund team are also invited to feed in, and are represented by one spokesperson at the discussion.

Order of discussion:

- Begins with discussion of how the project relates to our funding priorities, our diversity targets and slate/spend to date
- Followed by a 360 discussion including response to script, director's previous work, creative style/visions, priorities and diversity targets, path to production, finance/budget, need for National Lottery support and past support for the team
- Everyone in attendance is given the chance to feed into the discussion

Funding decision:

- Decision to support can be reached by majority consensus in the team read discussion
- If there are outstanding editorial or production concerns from the discussion, proceed to 'meet the team' with minimum two Executives (incl. at least one Senior Exec) and Finance Manager in attendance
- Attendees to report back at next editorial for ratification

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