

Developing Equity Policies

THE EQUITY STANDARD FOR SPORT

This factsheet is intended to assist governing bodies and sports organisations writing/amending an equity policy as part of their general equity work. A policy is required to be in place and communicated to all staff and senior volunteers for the Foundation level of the generic Equity Standard for Sport.

Why have a policy?

A policy is a commitment by your organisation to work to a set of principles. All organisations will have policies that cover a wide range of issues. These will guide and inform the work of everyone in the organisation. Having an equity policy means that you have made a commitment to act in ways that prevent/tackle unfair treatment or discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, and that you openly promote equity. The policy will spell out your understanding of the issues, how they affect your organisation, and what commitments you intend to make. By having an equity policy that covers all sectors of society, you are making a powerful statement of intent, and committing your organisation to further action. A good policy will show your members and staff that you expect them to be serious about preventing/tackling inequity. The policy will also show your commitment to potential participants, staff, volunteers and funding agencies.

Communicate the policy

Writing a policy is only the first step. If people don't know about the policy then it becomes another set of papers left on a shelf in your office. Any policy you write should be formally approved through your organisation's decision-making process. The policy should then be communicated to everyone involved in your organisation and publicised as widely as possible. Make sure the policy is in the members' handbook, for example, or posted on your website or in your newsletter. If you are a Governing Body of sport, ensure the policy is communicated throughout the organisation, including regional networks, clubs, officials and coaches.

Use the policy

Any policy you approve must be used to inform every aspect of your work. Staff and volunteers need to be trained to integrate it into their activities; recruitment and selection should be guided by the policy; the policy should be linked to your complaints and disciplinary procedures; and the policy should be used to write an action plan.

Write an action plan

A policy is only a public commitment to act in a certain way, a set of principles to which you expect people involved in your organisation to adhere. You must ensure that the policy is used to draw up an equity action plan, with clear objectives and targets, based on the principles laid out in your policy. The equity action plan can either be a stand alone document, or a section in the organisation's wider delivery plan.

Legislation

Any equity policy should refer to the current equality and human rights legislation and the way in which that legislation affects and informs the working practices of your organisation.

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A framework for a practical policy

Any policy you write must be clear, easy to follow and unambiguous. Consult the relevant equity organisations for advice on terminology and phrasing. For example, the CRE and Sporting Equals use the term 'people from ethnic minority communities' or 'ethnic minorities', but some organisations prefer 'black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.' A good policy will be split into these sections:

1. A statement of intent: spell out your commitment to equity in terms of opportunity and access, and your commitment to prevent/tackle discrimination.
2. A purpose: explain why you are writing and adopting the policy. You may wish to refer to and recognise issues of discrimination in sport in general or refer to any specific research related to your organisation.
3. A commitment to action: you need to list what steps you will take to ensure that your intentions and purpose are reflected in the way your organisation plans action, makes decisions, recruits staff, delivers services and supports members. You should make a statement about positive action to tackle under-representation in this section.
4. A review of the legal requirements: all organisations are affected by specific equality legislation, and the Human Rights Act cuts across all equity issues. You need to describe how this legislation relates to your work and what steps you intend to take to ensure you meet the appropriate legal requirements.
5. Discrimination, harassment and victimisation: your policy needs to define direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation, all of which need to be tackled in your policy through statements committing the organization to action. These statements should refer unambiguously to sanctions in your complaints and disciplinary procedure.
6. Responsibility, Implementation and communication: you need to show who is responsible for the policy as a whole and each individual element within it. You need to explain how the policy will be implemented at a corporate level, and how it will be communicated to all staff, members, volunteers, participants and clubs, as appropriate.
7. Monitoring and evaluation: you need to describe how the policy will be monitored and evaluated, and who will be responsible for that work. You need to state how long the policy will be in existence and when it will be subject to review.
8. Grievance and disciplinary procedures: this section will draw together elements of the other sections and relate them directly to your grievance and disciplinary procedures. You need to make clear how grievances and disciplinary action can be triggered by actions contrary to the policy, how appeals can be made, who is responsible, and how matters are resolved.
9. An action plan: finally, you need to write an action plan. Include objectives with clear targets, stating who is responsible for each objective, what resources are in place, when each target will be met and what evidence you can provide to show the targets have been met.

Where to go for more advice

- Many organisations that support the voluntary sector will be able to provide you with examples of good practice or more detailed guidance. Your local library or council information point will be able to provide you with details of such support organisations in your area.
- Many Governing Bodies have already written equity policies. It may be worthwhile looking at some of these to help you get a broader understanding of how policies relate to the work of an organisation.

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- The Vaga Web site, on the Equity Standard/Foundation page, has an example policy. Please note though that this is just an example and you should not simply use this, replacing your own details where appropriate.
- The “resources and support” page of the Vaga web site has links to information on disability, gender and race and organisation contacts that can provide more specific advice.

Guidance for Employers

The following is a ten point plan to help employers promote equality of opportunity in their organisations. These are guidance points only, and we strongly advise employers to seek further details about each of the areas listed below.

1. Develop an equal opportunities policy, covering all aspects relating to human resources including: recruitment and selection, promotion, training, grievance and disciplinary.
2. Set an action plan with targets, so that you and your staff have a clear idea of what is to be achieved and by when.
3. Provide training for all people, including managers, throughout your organisation, to ensure they understand the importance of equal opportunities. Provide additional training for staff who recruit, select and train your employees.
4. Assess the present position to establish your starting point, and monitor progress in achieving your objectives.
5. Review all human resources procedures regularly to ensure that you are delivering on your policy.
6. Draw up clear and justifiable job criteria, which are demonstrably objective and job-related.
7. Consider where and in what format vacancies are advertised and whether they are likely to be accessible to sectors of society that are underrepresented in your workforce.
8. Consider your organisation's image: do you feature women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities in recruitment literature, or could you be seen as an employer who is indifferent to these groups?
9. Consider flexible working, career breaks, providing childcare facilities, and so on, to help women in particular meet domestic responsibilities and pursue their occupations; and consider providing special equipment and assistance to help people with disabilities.
10. Develop links with local community groups, organisations and schools, in order to reach a wider pool of potential applicants.

For further information about this fact sheet, or the Equity Standard for Sport, please contact Vaga Associates.