



BFI PUBLISHES INITIAL FINDINGS ON DIVERSITY STANDARDS

Insights into how productions used the Standards from June 2016 – March 2019

London, Tuesday 21 January 2020: The BFI today publishes [initial findings](#) on how film productions in the UK have used the [Diversity Standards](#), a framework designed to address underrepresentation in the screen sectors, since their launch in June 2016 until end of March 2019. Drawing on analysis of **235** films that completed an application in that period, the report identifies trends in applications as well as outlining how the Standards can be further improved. The report can be found: www.bfi.org.uk/DiversityStandardsInitialFindings.

Ben Roberts, BFI Deputy Chief Executive, said: “From this report, and what we hear from industry, we can see the Standards are having a positive impact on representation both on screen and behind the camera, particularly when they are used early in pre-production. However, it also shows us where change is too slow and that there is more work to be done. As well as identifying some key immediate next steps, these findings form the basis of our review in 2020 to see what targeted action we can take to see broader adoption of the Standards across the full breadth of the industry.”

Encouraging all producers working in the UK to voluntarily adopt the Standards by 2022 is outlined in BFI2022, the BFI’s five year strategy, as the most effective way to see real and meaningful changes around inclusion. This new report is the first part of a review of the Standards the BFI is undertaking in 2020 to assess progress on that commitment.

The report shows that since they were introduced – initially for BFI funded films, and subsequently adopted by Film4, BBC Films, BAFTA, BIFA and Paramount Studios – the Standards have helped to drive inclusion in terms of on-screen content and recruitment practices. It also highlights areas where more work needs to be done, particularly in providing opportunities for roles behind the camera, especially in leadership positions.

Productions using the Standards are largely portraying diverse stories and characters on screen, and they are encouraging more women in a range of roles behind the camera. However, looking at this in more detail, while over half of applications cast underrepresented ethnicities as ‘other and/or supporting characters’, only a third were cast as lead characters, which speaks to the need for more lead roles and ownership of narrative if film is to be properly representative. Also, a number of areas of underrepresentation – such as disability – still need urgent improvement and support, especially behind the camera.

Findings show better results the earlier in the production process that projects engage with the Standards, and across the report, low levels of data around protected characteristics of crew highlights a problem with the process of capturing accurate data.

In response to the findings, the BFI is taking a number of steps to improve industry engagement with the Diversity Standards. This includes:

- exploring how to support the industry to better engage with Standard B (creative leadership and off-screen roles);
- supporting BAFTA and BIFA to make Standard C (industry access and opportunities) compulsory across all awards applications, bringing them in line with other applications;
- expanding the BFI Step Up programme to enable more people to move from mid-career to more senior positions;
- developing a new, more user-friendly application system which will provide more detailed analysis; and
- addressing low levels of data collected by continuing to consult with industry on capturing consistent workforce diversity data for all cast and crew working in the film industry.

To meet the Diversity Standards, projects must demonstrate commitment to inclusion and achieve the criteria in at least two of four areas (A: on-screen, B: creative leadership, C: training and D: audience development). The Standards encourage projects to address underrepresentation focusing on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, sexual orientation), as well as people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those with caring responsibilities and people based outside of London and the South East of England.

In the time period covered by the report, 90% of applications fulfilled at least the minimum criteria for at least two of the Standards, with the average applicant meeting 2.5 of the four. When assessing how applicants approached the categories:

- 86% met A
- 67% met B
- 74% met C
- 25% met D

Low engagement in Standard D is due to most of projects applying before the film is completed and therefore distribution strategies are not yet planned.

The data highlights a number of specific areas of underrepresentation that still need significant improvement. For instance:

- apart from gender, there is a comparatively low proportion of applicants engaging with Standards B and C from underrepresented backgrounds;
- of the applicants that achieved the minimum criteria on Standard B, the vast majority – 71% – referred to gender, employing females as heads of department and other key roles;
- leadership roles for underrepresented ethnic groups were highlighted in 40% of applications for Standard B;
- senior roles for LGBTQ+ crew cited in 25% of the applications' data;



- 54% of applications for Standard C featured gender;
- 27% applications for Standard C addressed race and ethnicity; and
- percentages of films – ranging from 0-7% – engaging with Standard B and C in terms of socioeconomic background, disability and gender identity are particularly low.

The levels of data also suggest low declaration rates, with some protected characteristics being consistently low, which is often a result of lack of trust and fear of discrimination among crew. This report underlines what we hear from industry that many lack the systems or capacity to collect data, so the BFI is exploring how to effectively collect self-declared diversity data for cast and crew on all UK film productions.

A number of films did not meet the minimum criteria for the Standards. These films were assessed retrospectively as finished projects seeking awards nominations, demonstrating the importance of engaging with the Standards from the earliest stages of pre-production.

Following two years of the wider industry applying for the Standards for awards eligibility, we are working with BAFTA and BIFA to make achievement of Standard C mandatory for awards applications – which will require a production to engage with the Standards at recruitment stage – bringing them in line with all other productions which use the Standards.

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BFI DIVERSITY STANDARDS KEY FINDINGS JUNE 2016 – MARCH 2019

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This interim report gives an overview of how productions use the BFI Diversity Standards. It will inform the review of the Standards underway this year.

The report draws on independent analysis of 235 films that completed an application to the Standards between their inception in June 2016 and March 2019, conducted by Bigger Picture Research. This analysis helps to identify trends in applications as well as how the Standards can be improved in future. Films analysed include:

- 65 features awarded production funding by the BFI
- 170 other features, including:
 - Films financed by Film4 since June 2016 and BBC Films since March 2018, when they respectively adopted the Diversity Standards
 - Films applying for BAFTA's Outstanding British Film and Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer awards in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons
 - Films applying for BIFA's Best British Independent Film in the 2018/19 season

The sample includes a number of films that applied to the Standards retrospectively, entering production before June 2016. This report does not look at how applicants approach the Standards when applying for other BFI funding, such as Audience Fund, Development and BFI NETWORK.

Further analysis of the source data in this report will be completed by the London School of Economics' Dr Clive Nwonka, a specialist on diversity in film, in order to provide independent insight on the Standards.

The difficulty of collecting personal data from crew about their protected characteristics means that the level of insight on how productions met the Standards varies between productions, while also limiting our ability to track changes in workforce diversity over time. This report identifies ways to improve collection of this data, allowing for more detailed analysis of the how productions are meeting the Standards in future, as well as a proposed system for tracking whether the workforce is becoming more representative.

KEY FINDINGS

How applicants are approaching the four Standards

Analysis of data considered which of the four Standards productions were applying for in order to meet the Diversity Standards' minimum criteria. It demonstrated the following.

Number of applications meeting each Standard

	Proportion meeting the standards
Standard A - On-screen representation, themes and narratives	86%
Standard B - Creative leadership and project team	67%
Standard C - Industry access and opportunities	74%
Standard D - Audience development	25%

- Most applicants (90%) fulfil the Standards' minimum criteria, with the average applicant meeting 2.5 of the four Standards
- Most productions apply for Standards A and C. Overall applications tended to focus on Standards A (86%) and C (74%)
- All applications that did not meet the required two Standards were films that applied to qualify for BIFA and BAFTA awards within the first year of the Standards' begin part of the award's criteria. These were all finished films which were applying for the awards after they had been made, as opposed to engaging with the process from the beginning of production

Insights

- In general, the data shows commitment to increasing diversity and representation in front of and behind the camera via the Standards
- But it has pulled into focus a number of areas of underrepresentation that still need support and improvement. The next steps detailed below are designed to address these issues.
- The comparatively low proportion of films engaging with Standards B and C in terms of underrepresented backgrounds other than gender (sex) may be a problem with the data available – declaration rates for these protected characteristics are consistently low, mainly due to a lack of trust and fear of discrimination. This often means the production company is unable to provide this information, and many lack the systems or capacity to collect it. We will work with the unions to help normalise the process of data capture on protected characteristics, while also consulting on how industry-wide self-declaration workforce monitoring will help to provide a deeper understanding of film's workforce. This is further explored in 'Next Steps'.
- The fact that all films which did not meet the minimum criteria for the Standards were assessed retrospectively as finished projects seeking awards nominations demonstrates the importance of engaging with the Standards from the earliest stages of pre-production. We encourage projects to begin working with the Standards as early as possible.
- While the Standards' existing application system has allowed for top-level data analysis, we recognise the need to increase this capacity in order to inform policy and action going forward. The inception of a new BFI Diversity Standards application system from early 2020 will allow for a more user-friendly interface

and provide detailed analysis giving us a richer resource for reporting in future, including around how productions promote inclusion in an intersectional manner.

- The introduction of a system of data capture and monitoring on workforce diversity for wider industry would also allow for more detailed analysis of how the Standards are helping to make the sector more inclusive. The proposed model would involve using the application system for the UK cultural test as an opportunity to collect data through self-declaration. The BFI is consulting with industry on how this might be introduced.

NEXT STEPS

The key findings of this report demonstrate that the BFI Diversity Standards are helping to drive inclusion in terms of creative content and recruitment practices. However, it also shows that there needs to be a dramatic increase in the proportion of productions using the Standards, engaging across all Standards (including B) from the earliest stages of production. In order to make the Standards as effective as possible, we will do the following.

- Launch a new online application system for the Standards in early 2020. This will not only make the process of application simpler and easier for all applicants, but will allow us to collect more detailed data on how they are being met.
- Interrogate the challenges presented by Standard B, to gain a better understanding of where the gaps are, why they are occurring and what interventions could support productions find senior crew from underrepresented groups, and consult with industry and unions on whether Standard B could be made compulsory for all projects applying to the Standards.
- Support BAFTA and BIFA to make fulfilment of Standard C, alongside one other Standard, a mandatory criterion for all films applying for its film awards. While C is currently mandatory for productions funded through the BFI Film Fund, BBC Films, Film4 and Paramount, its introduction as compulsory for all nominees was delayed in order to cater for those films which had already completed production by the time the Standards were introduced as an eligibility requirement.
- Encourage uptake of the Standards across industry, helping them effect change across a greater proportion of productions. While we currently advocate for voluntary adoption of the Standards, which we believe is the most effective way to see productions make real and meaningful changes around inclusion, the 2020 Standards review will also take into account measures proposed to link diversity requirements to the film tax relief – one of the Government’s creative sector tax reliefs.
- Consult with industry on capturing workforce diversity data for cast and crew working in the film industry more broadly. The proposed system would be based on self-declaration, using the application system for the UK cultural test as an opportunity to collect data. It would build on previous research undertaken on diversity and inclusion in the screen sectors by the BFI, including a 2018 workforce evidence review completed in collaboration with Dr Doris Eikhof. We believe that greater understanding of the make-up of UK crews could help to improve the extremely low percentage of applicants currently meeting the minimum criteria for the Standards via off-screen talent.
- Expand the BFI’s ‘Step Up’ programme, which has successfully enabled people in key departments working on BFI Film Fund titles to move from mid-career into more senior positions. We will work to ensure that Government understands the need to properly fund this programme in order to deliver real change for the industry. Expanding the programme will help more productions to approach Standard B.
- Support ScreenSkills in working with industry to deliver the Future Film Skills Plan and to understand and address key skills gaps in the industry. The BFI will also continue to deliver interventions including the BFI Film Academy and BFI NETWORK in order to help bring diverse talent into industry
- Continue to promote a professional working environment through the BFI Guidance and Principles on tackling bullying and harassment. These work in tandem with the Standards to foster an inclusive work environment. More than 40 organisations have committed to working to these principles and training is contractual for BFI-funded projects. The BFI continues to offer training and other resources tackling bullying and harassment to wider industry too.
- Make targeted interventions where gaps in provision are identified through data and evidence. For example, BFI NETWORK is investing in mentoring for D/deaf and disabled talent from across the UK to move from making shorts to feature films, helping to address the lack of mentoring opportunities as demonstrated by data around Standard C.



- Continue to respond to share our work on the BFI Diversity Standards internationally, engaging relevant stakeholders in Europe and the USA in 2020. We aim to share our learnings and build global partnerships that enable us to elevate the Standards and the inclusion agenda more widely.

About the BFI Diversity Standards

The BFI Diversity Standards are an industry wide initiative for adoption by the film and television. Alongside all BFI funded activity and funded partners, BBC Films and Film4 funded productions have to meet the Standards, and Paramount Pictures is the first studio to sign up to the Standards for its UK-based productions. They are also eligibility requirement for the British film categories within the BAFTA Film Awards and for all British features competing in any category at the British Independent Film Awards (BIFAs). The Standards focus on disability, gender, race, age and sexual orientation (as they pertain to the Equality Act 2010) and also seek to ensure that people from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds and those from outside London and the South East are better represented. In addition, the BFI Diversity Standards guide both its own activities and the projects it funds. www.bfi.org.uk/diversitystandards

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a distributor of National Lottery funding and a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of world cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.