



Request for Proposals: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The brief: an overview

The Architects Registration Board has a number of statutory obligations in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), not least the requirement to uphold our public sector equality duty.

However, we want to go further than compliance with legislative requirements. We want to make a positive difference to our staff, to those we regulate and the public in whose interests we operate.

We wish to appoint a consultant or organisation who can advise us how we can better meet our statutory requirements, but also how we can become an exemplar organisation.

About us

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is an independent professional regulator, established by Parliament as a statutory body, through the Architects Act 1997. We are accountable to government.

The law gives us a number of core functions:

- To ensure only those who are suitably competent are allowed to practise as architects. We do this by approving the qualifications required to join the UK Register of Architects.
- We maintain a publicly available Register of Architects so anyone using the services of an architect can be confident that they are suitably qualified and are fit to practise.
- We set the standards of conduct and practice the profession must meet and take action when any architect falls below the required standards of conduct or competence.
- We protect the legally restricted title 'architect'.

Our organisation is small compared to the size of the population we regulate. There are c42,000 architects on our register. Our annual income (derived primarily from statutory the annual retention fee) was c.£8.5m in 2023 and our permanent headcount is c.55 staff.

We are governed by a Board of eleven non-executive members (five lay, five architects and a lay chair) who are appointed by the Privy Council on recommendation of the Secretary of State. The organisation is run by the Chief Executive and Registrar who has a Senior Leadership Group of five directors.

Equality & Diversity Statement

Our Equality and Diversity Statement, agreed some time ago, summarises our commitment.

The Architects Registration Board (ARB) is an inclusive organisation and we operate in line with the Government's public sector equality duty. We actively promote equality of opportunity for everybody who has dealings with us, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, religion, belief system, sexual orientation, age or socio-economic background, with the primary aims of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people of different groups.

Our Corporate Strategy

The ARB is an organisation going through and leading very considerable change. In 2021 our Board agreed a new Corporate Strategy 2022-26 which committed us to a very different and ambitious strategy. Our strategy is centred around five key strategic priorities.

Our work on equality, diversity and inclusion

While we are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty, we know we need to do more to embed the core requirements:

- put an end to unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010, including discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not

While we are committed to these requirements, we think there is more that could be done, with expert advice and evidence based interventions.

In our [corporate strategy](#) we acknowledged that the profession is deeply unrepresentative of the society we serve. Although there have been some improvements in the diversity of students training to become architects, the gap is still unacceptable.

We committed to doing more than just shining a light on the problem; we need to take positive action to help bring about change. Specific 'action areas' referred to in the strategy included:

- Ensuring EDI was a focus of our new standards for institutions (regulatory requirements on providers of the initial education and training of architects);
- Reflecting EDI in our review of the Code of Conduct and Practice for architects (the core regulatory document for all architects registered in the UK);
- Updating our own systems, processes and recruitment policies at ARB; and finally,
- Considering how best we can demonstrate sector leadership, recognising that while ARB must take action, we can also ensure we work with other stakeholders to encourage change across the sector.

In our most recent [business plan](#) we committed to the following actions to continually improve our regulatory services with a focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- analyse Registrant data and publish a report on the makeup of the profession, and develop changes we can make to gather better data to help to make the profession more reflective of society¹;
- review our appointment process for both staff and non-executives and consider recommended changes that will help us reach the widest and most diverse talent pool possible;
- establish a new staff equality and diversity forum to explore active steps we can take to address any structural or cultural risks at ARB;
- review our remuneration and expenses policy and consider recommended changes that will help us ensure that they are not a barrier to non-executives working for ARB.

¹ <https://arb.org.uk/architects-today/>
<https://arb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ARB-EDI-Report-April-2023.pdf>]

We're also undertaking other actions not explicitly mentioned in our Business Plan, because they relate more to 'business as usual'. These include:

- Implementation of Equality Impact Analysis/Assessments in policy development
- Training on EDI for staff and Board (an online course for staff and a one-off workshop with the Board and senior staff in 2022)
- Participation in the Board Apprentice scheme ²

Our requirements

We have two spheres of responsibility in relation to EDI. One directly relates to the carrying out of our regulatory functions (as set out in the Architects Act) and reflects our Public Sector Equality Duty. The second sphere is as a corporate body, ensuring we provide fair access to our services and operate as an employer free from discrimination.

As a relatively small organisation (we currently employ c. 55 staff) we do not have a staff team member solely focused on EDI. We have policy and communications staff who are accountable for ensuring we consider EDI appropriately in all our policy development and engagement activities. Our registration team is responsible for collecting EDI data and supporting its analysis. Our HR team is responsible for ensuring our people policies are aligned to our EDI commitments. The Chief Executive is responsible for, and leads, our overall People Strategy commitments.

We want to appoint an individual or agency who can help us to benchmark our current EDI performance, support us to refresh and develop our strategy and to work with us to develop a workplan we can deliver which will lead to meaningful and positive change.

We have set out a provisional framework below, but we would expect an individual or agency tendering to test and challenge this framework and advise accordingly.

Workstream area	Narrative
Embedding and improving EDI within our governance	We are confident that we are compliant with legislative requirements including Equality Act and the public sector equality duty. However, there are opportunities to better embed good practice both within our internal formal governance and HR policies as well as policy development work to promote equality in the profession of architects.
Performance and progress monitoring	We want to consider some bold metrics of success and look to develop innovation which helps to tackle some of the more intractable issues within EDI. This might be internally in relation to targets for progression within ARB, or reach in relation to diversity of applicants. Having better and systematic data internally can help us track progress but we need to consider what success will look like and what we should track.
Best practice advice / Options for innovation	So much work around EDI feels 'tick-boxy' or tokenistic. We want to adopt best practice where it is evidence based and avoid 'vanity' or PR projects. Where there is no evidence, we want advice on where we might take some risks, measure impact and then adapt or stop.

² [Boardroom Apprentice | Get On Board](#)

Assessment and selection criteria

- The bids will be assessed on how many of our outcomes are likely to be delivered, this could be demonstrated using the framework above or an alternative approach.
- We welcome challenge to our assumptions as well as suggestions about any gaps in our requirements.
- We plan to issue this request for proposals on Friday 2 February. Anyone wishing to submit a proposal should do so by 5pm on Wednesday 21 February 2024.
- Written proposals should be no more than 10 pages (excluding any annexes).
- Shortlisted organisations will be invited to give a short five-minute presentation, followed by discussion and Q&A on their proposal on Wednesday 6 March 2024. This will take place in person at the ARB office.

Criteria

Proposals will be assessed using the following criteria:

1. Understanding of our brief
2. Understanding of our role and our duties
3. Quality of proposals against proposed workstreams (by quality, we mean likelihood of delivering positive and sustainable outcomes, with a clear evidence based and a realistic timeline)
4. Value for money (proposals will be assessed as to the quality and quantity against budget). In particular, we are open to proposals which ties fee payments to the delivery of outcomes as well as outputs. We recognise that recommendations coming out of any work from suppliers may have future budget implications.

Timeline and budget

- We recognise that change and improvement takes time and would expect any successful bidder to work with us over a twelve-month period.
- The overall budget for this work is £50,000 (inclusive of VAT). If you recommend further ongoing action, please do specify whether this could be done internally, or where you recommend additional budget consideration.
- We welcome innovation and being challenged, particularly where there is a commitment to evaluation and review.

Ends.