



ACCESS
ADVOCACY &
ACTIVE INCLUSION

Pathways to Increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field

SUPPLEMENT TO AAA RESOURCES

- *AAA Guide to Active Inclusion*
- *AAA Diversity Training Module Blueprint*
- *AAA Mentorship Programme Blueprint*



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In this supplementary material, we focus on the findings of research and survey data gathered primarily in Finland between 2020 and 2025. These insights are drawn from national surveys, institutional evaluations, and policy reports. They are further enriched by firsthand observations from study visits conducted in 2023 and 2024 by delegations from IMMART, Globe Art Point, and Fresh Arts Coalition Europe to a wide variety of arts and cultural institutions in Copenhagen, Paris, and Helsinki. These visits provided valuable perspective on both the good practices and persistent gaps in the active inclusion of artists and cultural professionals with migratory backgrounds— across the full value chain from access to information and employment to participation and representation.

Key themes include language access, recognition of international qualifications, institutional hiring practices, cultural safety, and the role of leadership in driving systemic change. The material also draws on the first AAA Blueprint Survey (February 2025), which is referenced throughout the document. A second follow-up survey, conducted in April 2025 to test the checklist prototype, received limited responses and is therefore not discussed in depth.

Emmi Lahtinen, Marjo Mäenpää, Sirene Karri, and Ari Kurlin Niiniaho, in their 2020 study *Opening: The Status of Foreign-Born Arts and Culture Professionals in Finland* (Cupore Webpublications 63), highlight that artists with migration backgrounds continue to face systemic barriers in the arts and culture sector, including limited access to funding, employment, career development, and professional networks. These challenges are rooted in language barriers, unrecognized foreign qualifications, and exclusion from established artistic circles (Lahtinen et al., 2023, p. 28–29; Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM), 2021, p. 15). Institutions frequently rely on familiar networks and ingrained hiring practices, which often exclude migrant artists, particularly when international education or experience is undervalued

(Lahtinen et al., 2020, pp. 10–11, 113, 59–61, 109–110; AAA Guide, 2025, p.13). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland (OKM) (2021, p. 15), language proficiency—especially in the local languages—is another key barrier, affecting access to long-term employment and leadership roles (Lahtinen et al., 2020, pp. 4–5, 59–60, 109, 112, 114–116). These systemic obstacles, when unaddressed, become embedded in institutional structures, reinforcing inequities and limiting artistic diversity. Long-term change requires sustained commitment to anti-racist policies, intercultural learning, and the dismantling of exclusionary practices (AAA Guide, 2025, p. 9; Lahtinen et al., 2020, pp. 44, 83, 109–110).

Cultural leaders have a critical role in driving systemic change. By advocating for structural change—whether through policy reforms, equitable funding programs, or international collaboration—they can create lasting impact beyond their own organizations (AAA Guide, 2025, p. 30). One emerging approach that supports this transformative role is inclusive leadership—a leadership style that embraces the uniqueness of individuals while fostering a collective sense of belonging. Inclusive leaders demonstrate key behaviors such as openness, empathy, and active engagement, which have been shown to boost morale, performance, and trust within organizations (Hughes-Rease, 2020). This leadership style is particularly impactful in the arts and culture sector, where embracing diverse perspectives is fundamental to innovation and equity. Engaging in political advocacy, such as lobbying for funding programs specifically aimed at artists with migratory backgrounds or pushing for policy reforms that recognize foreign artistic credentials, is essential to achieving meaningful change.

True inclusivity goes beyond token representation; it requires valuing diverse perspectives, fostering open dialogue, and building an environment where all artists can thrive. Simply hiring individuals based on a single characteristic can lead to tokenism rather than real inclusion. Instead, leaders must commit to flexibility, compassion, and openness to self-assessment, recognizing that progress happens at different paces (AAA Guide, 2025, p. 16-17; OKM, 2021, p. 15). Encouraging open discussions about discrimination and bias within organizations fosters trust and collaboration, both internally and across the broader arts sector.

To move toward true inclusion, organizations must begin by assessing who in their communities is not being served and why. In their 2013 Diversity Toolkit, the Mississippi Arts Commission emphasized that such reflection requires organizations to examine their internal attitudes and practices and engage in community-informed planning and outreach (Mississippi Arts Commission, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, multilingualism and diverse cultural competencies should be recognized as assets—not deficits—within the cultural workforce. These qualities are vital for fostering innovation and responsiveness in creative communities and should be systematically integrated into leadership, programming, and communications practices (OKM, 2021, p. 7–8).

Diversity encompasses more than migration status—its dimensions include race, ethnicity, language, gender, religion, class, and disability, among others (Mississippi Arts Commission, 2013, p. 2). The way institutions respond to this diversity is shaped by internal values and beliefs, making intentional reflection essential. Cultural diversity should not only be reflected in the demographic makeup of institutions but also in how they support diverse forms of artistic expression, production, and dissemination (OKM, 2021, p. 12). This includes recognizing that cultural diversity is shaped both by broader societal structures and by the actions of individuals and communities.

True inclusion cannot exist without safety. The next section explores how institutions can translate their diversity commitments into everyday practices that actively challenge discrimination and promote a culture of equity.

Cultural Safety and Anti- Discrimination Practices

Ensuring that diversity efforts translate into real, everyday inclusion requires us to look closely at how safety, equity, and accountability are built—or missing—within institutions. Many artists with migration backgrounds report subtle exclusionary behaviors, such as being overlooked for leadership roles, or experiencing cultural stereotyping (Lahtinen, E. et al., 2020, p. 5-6, 10 and 88-91). Creating a safe cultural environment goes beyond policy

changes; it requires ongoing efforts to educate staff, address discriminatory behavior effectively, and integrate anti-discrimination measures into everyday practices. However, many institutions continue to struggle with fully embedding these principles across their organizations (Lahtinen, E. et al., 2020, p. 5-6, 88-91, 114-115; The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

Continuing with Lahtinen, E. et al. (2020, pp. 88–91), effective anti-discrimination practices demand more than internal policies—they require continuous external feedback from diverse communities to identify blind spots and inform improvements. Strong communication networks within and beyond the organization ensure transparency, support accountability, and foster a culture of openness. Cultural leaders must actively foster an environment that prioritizes diversity, inclusion, and the creation of safer spaces at all levels of the organization.

To achieve meaningful cultural safety, organizations must implement comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, grievance mechanisms, and training programs that go beyond surface-level diversity initiatives. Although many institutions acknowledge the importance of equity, only about 25% have actually created formal equality plans. Even among those that are legally required to do so, less than half have complied. This reveals a major implementation gap and limits the capacity for sustained anti-discrimination work (OKM, 2021, p. 8; Lahtinen et

al., 2020, p. 6, 35, 59-60, 74, 117–118, and 122). Key components of these efforts should include:

- Training on bias awareness, intercultural communication, and power dynamics in decision-making.
- Establish formal reporting structures for discrimination and discriminatory behaviors.
- Ensuring diverse voices are involved in leadership and programming decisions.

Survey data highlights a significant implementation gap. While all of the respondents acknowledge the importance of anti-discrimination and inclusion measures, only 20% have implemented anonymous feedback systems or inclusive hiring practices, none have formal diversity plans in place and many institutions are still considering actions like DEI training or formal complaint processes (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025). These findings reveal that basic anti-discrimination structures are often missing and underscore the need for both policy development and a cultural shift. Lasting change will require not just policies but a commitment to deep cultural and linguistic transformation.

Overall, research underscores the importance of self-assessment and adaptability. And according to Lahtinen et al. (2023, p. 39), organizations that engage in regular reflection, implement anti-discrimination policies, and provide ongoing cultural competency training are better equipped to support diverse artistic communities.

Ultimately, fostering cultural safety is not only about recognizing discrimination—it is about committing to lasting structural change. When organizations embed anti-discrimination practices into their daily operations and take responsibility for honest reflection, they lay the groundwork for a truly inclusive cultural environment. Yet principles alone are not enough. Inclusion also depends on access: to resources, opportunities, and support systems that enable all artists to thrive. This brings us to the next key area— Capacity-Building and Resource Development.

Capacity Building and Resource Development

Supporting inclusion in the arts means more than opening doors—it requires actively strengthening the conditions that allow diverse artists to grow, connect, and thrive.

The first AAA Blueprint Survey (2025) shows that while many cultural institutions recognize the need for more inclusive practices, a lack of expertise and resources remains a major obstacle to implementation. To enhance capacity-building and support

long-term inclusion, organizations must invest in measures that strengthen both institutional infrastructure and the professional development of migrant artists. These include access to studio spaces, grants, equipment, and targeted networking opportunities. Encouragingly, 60% of surveyed organizations have already begun developing mentorship and networking programs to help migrant artists build essential connections within the local art scene.

However, many institutions still struggle with embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles across the organization. The First AAA Blueprint Survey (2025) highlights that more resources are needed to increase visibility for migrant artists and to improve communication around these efforts. It also emphasizes that institutions must adopt a more proactive approach, with decisions on DEI practices made at higher organizational levels and monitored for effectiveness.

To support migrant artists effectively, organizations should implement strategies such as:

- Mentorship programs that connect artists with industry leaders and provide guidance on professional development.
- Workshops on funding applications and grant writing to ensure artists with migration backgrounds can access financial resources equitably.

- Collaborative training initiatives with international organizations to exchange best practices on inclusion and diversity in the arts.

Building institutional capacity is key to sustaining inclusion efforts. Instead of relying on short-term diversity projects, organizations must invest in long-term strategies that integrate equity into their core organizational frameworks. Importantly, research highlights a disconnect between how institutions perceive cultural diversity and the experiences of foreign-born professionals. While many museum and theatre directors in Finland report receiving very few applications from migrant artists, these artists describe needing to work “twice as hard” to gain recognition and access opportunities. This disparity suggests deeper systemic issues that go beyond recruitment outreach (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 117–118).

Ultimately, inclusive infrastructure alone is not enough—lasting impact depends on how institutions collaborate, share responsibility, and co-create solutions beyond their own walls. This brings us to the next critical pillar: strengthening partnerships across sectors to ensure that diversity efforts are not siloed, but part of a broader, connected ecosystem of change.

Cross-Sector Collaboration and Networking

Systemic change cannot happen in isolation. The survey results emphasized the importance of partnerships between cultural institutions, policymakers, and community organizations in supporting artists with migration backgrounds (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

Strengthening cross-sector collaboration is essential for fostering an ecosystem where inclusion is actively practiced rather than treated as an afterthought. Key areas for strengthening collaboration include:

- Facilitating networking opportunities that bring together artists, institutions, and funding bodies to create stronger professional connections. However, research shows gender disparities in the use of professional networks: 84% of men report using their networks actively, compared to only 48% of women. This suggests unequal access to informal opportunities and calls for intentional efforts to ensure all artists can build social capital (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 57).
- Developing cross-sector alliances that integrate cultural organizations, education institutions, and municipal decision-makers into the inclusion process.
- Promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives that allow organizations to learn from successful inclusion models in other sectors (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 6).

Collaboration between cultural institutions, government bodies, and artist-led initiatives can amplify impact and lead to lasting policy change. By strengthening peer-learning networks and cross-sector partnerships, organizations can collectively dismantle exclusionary structures and create sustainable pathways for diverse artists.

This diversity training module draws from multiple sources, including research reports, case studies, and firsthand experiences shared through surveys. It aims to provide cultural professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to build a more equitable arts ecosystem—one that reflects demographic realities, strengthens community connections, and amplifies the voices of underrepresented artists.

The first survey conducted in February 2025 highlights both the challenges and the commitment of leaders in Finland's cultural sector to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many recognize the systemic barriers that artists and cultural professionals with migratory backgrounds face, including difficulties in networking, lack of recognition, and challenges in accessing opportunities. There is a strong willingness to create support systems, improve representation, and implement policy changes to promote meaningful inclusion. However, respondents also acknowledge the need for further action in areas such as creating an equality plan, peer review processes,

institutional policies, cultural safety training, and data collection to track progress effectively (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 4–6; 32; 34).

Moving forward, a long-term commitment to cultural safety, capacity- building, and cross-sector collaboration will be essential in transforming the European arts sector into an inclusive space where all artists can thrive.

Barriers Faced by Artists with Migration Backgrounds

In this section, we explore in more detail the structural barriers that artists and cultural professionals with migratory backgrounds face in pursuing sustainable careers in the arts and culture sector.

Artists with migration backgrounds face structural barriers that limit their professional opportunities, artistic development, and access to funding. Studies show that exclusion from professional networks is a recurring challenge, often preventing artists

from securing grants, exhibitions, and employment opportunities (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 10–11, 60–61, 113–114; Lahtinen et. al, 2023, p. 28–29; OKM, 2021, p. 15).

Many institutions rely on informal networks and established gatekeepers, intentionally or unintentionally sidelining artists who do not have existing local connections (Karhunen, 2013, Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 10–11, 39, 60–61; OKM, 2021, p. 13).

Language barriers further deepen exclusion, making it difficult to navigate application processes and institutional structures (Roiha, 2016, Lahtinen et al., 2020, p.4–5, 59–60, 62, 63, 73–74,122; OKM, 2021, p. 13). Additionally, qualifications and experience gained outside Finland are frequently unrecognized, forcing artists to restart their careers or accept work below their skill level. One significant challenge is that the process of inclusion in grant schemes remains

too dependent on the commitment of individual people, rather than being embedded within the structures of cultural institutions. As a result, this leads to inconsistencies in inclusion practices. For example, language barriers, particularly the requirement for fluency in the local language(s), can create additional obstacles for both cultural professionals and artists with migration backgrounds who may not speak the language proficiently (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 60–61, 74; The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; OKM, 2021, p. 6, 8).

Many artists also report feeling that they must “prove themselves” constantly, describing the experience as exhausting and demoralizing. This emotional labor is compounded by cultural gatekeeping and inconsistent institutional support, which can make career sustainability difficult even for highly skilled practitioners (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 28–29, 57, 60, 62, 114–115, 122; OKM, 2021, p. 6).

These challenges persist across different artistic fields, although the specific obstacles vary depending on the discipline. Without intentional intervention, these barriers reinforce systemic inequalities and limit the diversity of voices in Finland’s cultural landscape. The first survey results further illustrate these barriers, with 60% of Finnish cultural leaders acknowledging that their organizations have not taken specific steps to ensure equal access to job opportunities for artists and cultural professionals with migratory backgrounds. While 40% have implemented measures such as blind recruitment, inclusive hiring practices, and mentorship programs, a majority recognize that structured efforts are still needed (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025). These findings suggest that while some progress is being made, there is a clear need for more consistent and comprehensive strategies to overcome these entrenched barriers.

These barriers are not isolated incidents—they reflect broader systemic patterns that must be actively addressed. Artists with migration backgrounds are often required to navigate additional layers of scrutiny, exclusion, and emotional labor, which can erode both professional and personal resilience over time. Recognizing these challenges is only the first step. The next, and more urgent task, is to transform institutional structures so that equity and inclusion are not exceptions but the norm. With that in mind, the following chapter turns to actionable

strategies and structural changes that organizations can implement to build a more inclusive and equitable arts sector.

Building Inclusive Structures

Inclusive structures require intentional, ongoing effort across all levels of an organization. According to OKM (2021, p. 8), to create a more inclusive arts sector, organizations must take proactive steps to improve accessibility, equity, and representation. And, the first blueprint survey (2025) results highlight how cultural institutions can enhance inclusion

by providing equal access to resources, such as studio spaces, equipment, grants, and funding for all artists, regardless of their background (60% of respondents). Other actions include implementing anti-discrimination policies, providing transparent decision-making for opportunities like exhibitions and grants, and ensuring equitable access (60%). Additionally, networking and mentorship opportunities are essential for connecting local and international artists and supporting career growth (60%) (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; OKM, 2021, p. 15)

Moreover, the survey showed that 40% of respondents are offering career development workshops and professional seminars to ensure artists, especially those from diverse backgrounds, have equal opportunities for growth and skill-building. Further, diverse representation in hiring and decision-making processes, with a focus on inclusive leadership roles and actively promoting recognition and visibility of diverse artists through exhibitions and public art projects, is a priority for 40% of organizations (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

Implementing transparent recruitment and selection processes, such as blind evaluations for funding and job applications, can reduce biases that disadvantage artists from migratory backgrounds. Providing key institutional information—such as funding applications, policies, and job postings – in multiple languages ensures that language is not a barrier to participation.

Survey results support this need: while 100% of organizations provide event invitations and policies in local languages, only 60% do so for funding applications and job postings. Additionally, 80% offer translations for internal communications, marketing materials, and handbooks. However, institutions also reported that their use of multiple languages is not always consistent— some events and materials are occasionally made available in English, but this varies across departments or projects. This inconsistency can create confusion and unintentionally exclude artists who rely on English or other languages to access opportunities and information (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

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Training staff and leadership in cultural awareness and bias reduction helps shift institutional culture toward greater inclusivity. In particular, staff members in leadership positions often set the tone for inclusion; without personal commitment and accountability at the top, institutional policies may fail to be fully implemented or maintained over time (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 6, 118, 122; OKM, 2021, p. 8, 15). Moreover, organizations should actively diversify leadership and decision-making roles, ensuring that artists and professionals from different backgrounds have a voice in shaping the sector (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 6; Lahtinen et. al, 2023, p. 39). Long-term commitment, rather than temporary diversity projects, is necessary for meaningful change (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 6, 118).

The first AAA blueprint survey reinforces these findings, with cultural leaders supporting partnerships with cultural organizations for integration efforts (100%), organizing networking events (60%), and implementing anti-discrimination policies (60%). However, career development initiatives (40%) and leadership representation (40%) remain areas for improvement (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025). These results underscore the importance of taking comprehensive and sustained action to improve career pathways and leadership diversity, which remain critical areas for growth.

Ultimately, building inclusive structures means embedding equity into every aspect of an institution's operations—from programming and recruitment to leadership and evaluation. But lasting change cannot be achieved through internal measures alone. To fully realize inclusion, institutions must also look outward and engage with the broader systems and policies that shape the sector. The next chapter turns to the role of cultural leaders in advocating for systemic change at both national and international levels.

Advocating for Systemic Change

True inclusion cannot be achieved through institutional change alone—it must be reinforced by broader policy shifts that address structural inequities in the arts and culture sector. Beyond internal policies, achieving lasting inclusivity in the arts requires broader structural change (OKM, 2021, p. 6). Organizations and cultural leaders

can advocate for policy reforms that recognize international qualifications, secure dedicated funding for artists with migration backgrounds, and ensure equitable access to professional opportunities. Engagement at local, national, and international levels is crucial—whether through lobbying for inclusive funding programs, influencing governmental policies, or participating in European-wide initiatives that amplify underrepresented voices (AAA Guide, 2025, p. 30). Advocating for broader systemic change requires not only reforms at the institutional level

but also at the policy level. Changing internal attitudes about language requirements and the assumptions that everyone should be fluent in local languages remains a barrier. Cultural institutions should also advocate for policies that accommodate the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of artists, which would help dismantle barriers to participation and professional advancement (OKM, 2021, p.13; The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

A broader challenge in pushing for systemic change is the disconnect between how institutions view their outreach efforts and how artists with migration backgrounds experience access. While many institutions report that few diverse applicants apply for positions or grants, research shows that these same artists often feel they must work “twice as hard” to be seen, due to existing biases and limited visibility within established networks (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 5, 57,117–118; OKM, 2021, p.15). This misalignment underscores the need for organizations to critically assess not only their policies but also their assumptions and outreach practices.

Findings from the first AAA blueprint survey show that while some organizations are beginning to address these issues, there is still significant room for growth. Only 30% of respondents reported engaging in advocacy for policy changes that support artists with migration backgrounds, while 50% expressed interest but lacked concrete strategies. Respondents highlighted the need for stronger cross-sector collaborations and clearer national policies to promote diversity in the arts sector (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025). This indicates a clear gap in policy engagement, and a call for increased advocacy efforts to create lasting institutional and societal change.

Relevant Finnish Legislation Supporting Cultural Inclusion

Lastly, inclusion and equity in the arts are supported by several national laws in Finland. These include:

- **Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (2010/1386):** Establishes integration as a reciprocal process supporting immigrants’ participation in society while preserving their cultural identity.

- **Act on Cultural Activities in Local Government (166/2019):** Requires municipalities to promote equal access to culture, support diversity, and involve residents in cultural decision-making.
- **Museums Act (314/2019):** Mandates museums to strengthen participation, cultural diversity, and equality in cultural life.
- **Theatres and Orchestras Act (730/1992):** Aims to make artistic services accessible to all population groups, reinforcing regional equality.
- **Act on the Arts Promotion Centre (657/2012) and Artist Grants Act (734/1969):** Support national and international artistic work while encouraging linguistic, regional, and cultural diversity in grant decisions.

These laws provide a foundation for systemic reforms and support cultural institutions in implementing inclusive and equitable practices.

Self-Assessment and Implementation Tools

To move from intention to sustained impact, cultural institutions must build in mechanisms for accountability. One of the most effective ways to do this is through regular self-assessment and structured reflection. It has been noted by the OKM (2021, p. 8), achieving diversity and inclusion in the arts is not a one-time effort but an ongoing process that demands continuous reflection, adaptation, and action. Central to this process is the

consistent use of self-assessment tools, which allow organizations to evaluate their practices, track progress, and make necessary adjustments. These tools provide the framework for organizations to assess where they stand in terms of diversity and inclusion, identify areas

of improvement, and implement actionable steps for long-term change. However, many organizations face challenges in effectively implementing these tools due to the lack of a standardized approach and adequate resources (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; OKM, 2021, p. 9).

A key issue is that many cultural institutions still lack an overarching framework for diversity and inclusion, making it difficult to measure and monitor progress in a structured way. Self-assessment tools—such as diversity audits, inclusion surveys, and feedback systems—are essential for organizations to track their efforts, but without proper support from external experts and networks, institutions often struggle to fully utilize them (OKM, 2021, p. 8). This gap underscores the importance of shared knowledge platforms and peer-learning spaces to facilitate better communication and ensure that organizations are on the right path. By establishing these networks, cultural institutions can collectively evolve their practices and create a more sustainable, inclusive arts ecosystem (OKM, 2021, p. 9; The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; Lahtinen et al., 2023, p. 39).

This highlights that real progress depends not just on intention, but on the ability to implement and measure change. Where supportive structures exist, some institutions are making meaningful strides. The next chapter explores how current practices are being applied and progress tracked across the sector.

Current Practices and Progress Measurement

To understand how cultural institutions are moving from commitment to action, it is essential to examine the concrete steps they are taking to foster diversity and inclusion. Even though many organizations are making efforts, the depth and consistency of these practices vary widely. This section looks at how institutions are currently im-

plementing inclusion initiatives and the ways in which they track—or fail to track—their progress. While 60% of cultural institutions are actively creating clear anti-discrimination policies, ensuring inclusive decision-making processes, and developing systems for networking and mentorship, many of these institutions face significant uncertainty regarding the implementation and evaluation of these tools. This highlights a critical need for more structured and consistent self-assessment efforts. It is not enough to create inclusive policies or mentorship systems; organizations must continuously measure the effectiveness of these initiatives to ensure they are achieving meaningful change (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; OKM, 2021, p. 8).

However, measuring progress remains inconsistent. According to the survey data, 60% of institutions report that they do not measure their progress on diversity and inclusion. Only 40% are actively collecting demographic data on staff, artists, and audiences, while a smaller percentage (20%) adjust their policies based on internal feedback or assessments. This lack of systematic evaluation limits the ability to make data-driven decisions about how to improve and adjust inclusion efforts over time. Without consistent monitoring and review, organizations risk stagnating in their diversity initiatives, undermining the long-term impact of their actions (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025).

These findings reveal a gap between intention and execution. Without regular evaluation, even well-meaning efforts risk falling short. Strengthening data collection and self-assessment is key to driving lasting change. To turn insight into action, institutions need practical tools. The next chapter, Practical Tools for Implementing Change, looks at how self-assessment can help identify gaps and guide meaningful improvements in diversity and inclusion.

Practical Tools for Implementing Change

In addition to tracking progress, self-assessment tools can help organizations identify gaps in their diversity practices and make concrete changes. For example, the use of checklists for inclusive recruitment, anonymous feedback systems, and guidelines for developing anti-discrimination policies can drive immediate, tangible action (OKM, 2021, p. 8).

When integrated into daily operations, these tools enable organizations to go beyond superficial diversity measures and build genuinely inclusive spaces. Encouraging open dialogue within organizations through these tools fosters a culture of learning, allowing mistakes to be addressed and corrected in real time, which ultimately contributes to the long-term sustainability of diversity efforts (AAA Guide, 2025, p. 16-17).

Despite the recognition of these tools' importance, the first blueprint survey (2025) results indicate a significant gap between awareness and implementation. While 100% of organizations are aware of diversity tools, only 60% have implemented diversity training or safer space guidelines. Furthermore, blind recruitment practices are used by just 20% of organizations, and only 40% include inclusive job postings. Even though some institutions have piloted these practices, they have not become standard procedures. This inconsistency demonstrates that while awareness is high, the institutionalization of these tools is still lacking. Without regular and structured application, these tools cannot lead to the sustained, long-term change that is needed.

The Path Forward: Structured and Regular Use of Self-Assessment Tools

The journey toward greater equity in the arts begins by acknowledging the Barriers Faced by Artists with Migration Backgrounds, where systemic obstacles—such as language proficiency requirements, unrecognized foreign qualifications, and exclusion from professional networks—limit access to opportunities and reinforce institutional biases. In the Building Inclusive Structures section, we delved into the practical steps organizations can take to address these inequities, including implementing

transparent recruitment processes, offering multilingual support, and promoting inclusive leadership. However, as explored in Cultural Safety and Anti-Discrimination Practices, many institutions fall short in fully embedding these values, often lacking the internal accountability mechanisms and cultural awareness training needed to sustain change. The Capacity-Building and Resource Development chapter highlighted the persistent gap in resources and expertise, noting that while many institutions support mentorship and development programs, these efforts remain fragmented and under-resourced. Recognizing that isolated efforts are insufficient, the Cross-Sector Collaboration and Networking section emphasized the importance of partnerships with community organizations, policymakers, and educational institutions to amplify impact and share knowledge. In Advocating for Systemic Change, we turned to the broader policy landscape, calling attention to the need for cultural leaders to push for reforms that recognize diverse qualifications, reduce language barriers, and promote inclusive funding models. Finally, in Current Practices and Progress Measurement, we examined how institutions are currently implementing and evaluating their inclusion strategies, revealing a significant gap between intention and execution. Despite growing awareness, many organizations lack

the tools and systems to measure impact, highlighting the need for structured, ongoing self-assessment to drive lasting transformation.

To achieve lasting diversity and inclusion, institutions must adopt structured self-assessment methods and ensure their regular, institutionalized use. These tools, such as diversity audits, demographic tracking, structured feedback loops, and internal reviews, are critical for monitoring progress and driving sustained change. However, the application of these methods often stalls due to a lack of resources and expertise, leading to sporadic implementation that undermines their effectiveness (The First AAA Blueprint Survey, 2025; OKM, 2021, p. 8). To overcome this, organizations should not only commit to using self-assessment tools consistently but also embed them into their core operations, ensuring they are not seen as optional or temporary.

Additionally, peer learning and cross-sector collaborations can help institutions learn from each other, share best practices, and develop common approaches to diversity and inclusion (Lahtinen et al., 2020, p. 5–6; OKM, 2021, p. 9). These collaborations promote the steady integration of self-assessment tools, linking individual efforts to a broader movement for cultural inclusivity. For diversity and inclusion to become more than a short-term initiative, organizations must adopt a comprehensive, data-driven approach, continually assessing and adjusting strategies based on feedback. The findings from the AAA Blueprint Survey underscore the importance of formalized diversity plans, including the consistent use of anonymous recruitment, inclusive job postings, and diversity audits, to create meaningful, long-term change.

In conclusion, for cultural organizations to transition from symbolic actions to sustainable practices, the ongoing use and integration of self-assessment tools are essential. These tools must become part of the institutional fabric, ensuring a long-term strategy for equity and inclusion. By embedding these practices into everyday operations, organizations can move beyond superficial diversity efforts and create a genuinely inclusive, innovative, and sustainable arts ecosystem. The key to lasting change lies in a continuous commitment to assessing, adapting, and embedding diversity practices into organizational structures.