



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy and Strategy

October 2024

Our Approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

At The Catalyst Collective, our approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not just foundational to our mission—it is the very essence of who we are and what we stand for. As a small team primarily comprised of Black women, we are deeply committed to creating a space that uplifts and empowers our community. Our ethos centres around providing unwavering support and fostering a sense of belonging for Black women and girls. We believe in cultivating an environment where every individual can thrive, grow, and achieve success, with a particular focus on addressing the unique challenges and needs of Black women and girls.

Our DEI Definitions

Diversity: Acknowledging, respecting, and valuing our differences, and recognising that everyone brings unique perspectives and experiences.

Equity: Treating everyone fairly by recognising that people have different needs and providing the support necessary to ensure equal outcomes.

Inclusion: Fostering an environment where everyone is genuinely respected, valued, and heard. At The Catalyst, we strive to make decisions collaboratively, involving our community, so that everyone feels free to be themselves and is empowered to fully participate.

Intersectionality refers to the way different systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and socio-economic inequality, overlap and reinforce each other. At The Catalyst Collective, it helps us understand that Black girls and women face compounded challenges due to the interaction of these systems. By considering how these interlocking forms of disadvantage create unique barriers, we can provide targeted support and work towards fairer outcomes for those affected.

Our Community Definitions

We've taken our time to thoughtfully shape our community definitions of Black and Women and Girls, working closely with mentors, mentees, and the Board. This has been a careful, collaborative process of sense-checking, refining, and seeking feedback from mentors, mentees and the Board to ensure they are inclusive and reflect the lived experiences of those we serve.

Definition of women and girls

At The Catalyst Collective, we understand that conversations about gender identity are personal and complex. Our approach is to embrace a trans-inclusive definition of women and girls—one that recognises and values the experiences and identities that

make us who we are. We understand that being a woman or a girl isn't necessarily solely determined by the sex assigned at birth, but rather by the deeply personal and authentic way each individual lives their life. We recognise and appreciate that everyone is unique, with their own personal sense of identity. At The Catalyst Collective, we respect each young person's individual journey of self-discovery and are committed to supporting them as they learn about themselves and those around them.

So, when we speak of women and girls, we understand that gender identity can transcend the confines of assigned sex and celebrate each unique voice and perspective. Put simply, we embrace all Black girls, women, non-binary young people and adults that are committed to building a community around our values.

Definition of Black

We recognise that 'Black' can encompass a variety of cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds and has a particular history in the UK. When we speak of Black women and girls, we are talking about those whose racial and ethnic identity is of African and/or Caribbean descent, this includes Black mixed race/dual heritage women.

It is important to us that we approach discussions and understandings of Black identity with sensitivity and respect, recognising the diverse experiences, perspectives, and lived realities within the Black community. If you are unsure about whether The Catalyst is for you, please get in touch.

Why DEI matters to us

At The Catalyst Collective, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are crucial to our mission, particularly in addressing the systemic inequities faced by Black girls and women in London and beyond. Our primary initiatives, the Catalyst Mentoring Programme¹, Career Insight Days² and Catalyst Connects³ each play a pivotal role in tackling these disparities by connecting Black girls aged 14-18 and women with positive role models. This mentoring effort aims to bridge educational and professional attainment gaps, providing a critical source of support and aspiration in environments often marked by socio-economic disadvantage.

The need for our DEI commitment is underscored by the significant challenges Black girls and women face. Some examples include the stark lack of positive representation—only 2.2% of teachers are Black women, and just 0.1% of professors

¹ Long term mentoring programmes of 6, 9 or 10 months with Black teenage girls attending one of our partner secondary schools, or our Open Access Mentoring Programme where young people self-refer.

² Our programme of insight days are trips to different businesses and organisations in a range of career fields to give young people on our programmes and in our wider network insights and immersive experiences into the world of work.

³ Our networking and careers programme for young women aged 18 to 25, starting and growing in their careers.

are Black women, despite the growing diversity in student populations. Black Caribbean girls are twice as likely to be excluded from school compared to their peers, and Black women face the highest barriers to senior positions in the workplace. Financial disparities are also stark, with Black Caribbean households holding around 20p for every £1 of white British wealth, and Black female graduates experiencing a 9% pay penalty compared to their white counterparts.

Our DEI strategy is designed to address these issues directly. By embedding DEI principles into our operations, we ensure that our programmes not only provide role models but also create environments where Black girls can flourish despite these systemic barriers. Our focus is not just about meeting immediate needs but about fostering long-term, meaningful change that aligns with our mission and amplifies the impact of our mentoring programme.

DEI In Practice at The Catalyst Collective

Commitment to Authentic Matching:

Our dedication to DEI begins with how we connect our mentors and mentees. We recognise that meaningful relationships are built on mutual understanding and respect. Therefore, we take great care in matching mentees with mentors who not only align with their professional goals but also consider their unique backgrounds and circumstances. We believe that a thoughtful, individualised matching process enhances the effectiveness of our mentoring relationships and enriches the overall experience for everyone involved.

Creating an Inclusive Environment:

We understand that our collective success is rooted in the ability to bring our most authentic selves to the table. To this end, we are committed to continuously creating and refining an inclusive environment where every team member, mentor, and mentee feels valued and heard. We actively seek consistent feedback and input on how we can further enhance our DEI efforts through, one-to-one discussions and focus groups for mentors and mentees. We truly see the value in fostering a culture of humility, where we acknowledge our blind spots and are continually open to suggestions for creating an inclusive space where diverse perspectives are celebrated, and everyone can thrive.

As we grow, our commitment to DEI remains unwavering. We strive to be proactive in addressing any challenges and ensuring that our practices evolve to meet the needs of our community. We are dedicated to learning, adapting, and growing alongside our staff, mentors, and mentees to ensure that we all benefit from a culture of inclusion and respect.

At The Catalyst Collective, we believe that embracing diversity and promoting equity and inclusion enriches our community and drives our collective success. We are excited to continue this journey and are grateful to everyone who contributes to making our approach meaningful and impactful.

Our Vision, Values, Strategic Aims, and Commitment

At The Catalyst Collective, our vision is to cultivate a community where diversity is celebrated, equity is ensured, and inclusion is actively practiced. We are committed to embedding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles into every aspect of our work, so that every staff member, mentor, and mentee can bring their fullest selves to our community.

Our DEI journey has been deeply rooted in our mission to serve Black women and girls. We co-created our values with our mentors and mentees to ensure that their voices and needs are at the heart of everything we do:

- **Celebration:** We celebrate Black girls and Black women unapologetically.
- **Authenticity:** We see you, and you can bring all of yourself to this space.
- **Support:** We are the bridge - supporting you on the journey between where you are and where you are going.
- **Community:** We are a community - we have each other's backs, and we learn from each other's experiences.
- **Joy:** We are joyful - like sunflowers, we turn towards the light and each other.

This collaborative approach underscores our commitment to centering those we serve in our ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable environment.

Our Strategic Aims

Our approach is framed by six Strategic Aims:

1. **Inclusivity and Transparency:** We endeavour to be as inclusive as possible and will be open and transparent about our approach to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
2. **Continuous Improvement:** We commit to improve as we grow and will be listening to our mentors and mentees, inviting regular feedback via surveys and listening forums.
3. **Representation and Equity:** We aim to be a representative organisation, reflecting the communities we serve through our staff and volunteers. In line with the occupational requirements detailed in the Equality Act 2010, TCC requires

that mentee facing roles (i.e. mentors, mentoring coordinators, and programme staff) be restricted to Black women.

4. **Attracting Diverse Talent:** *As we grow, we will develop our Human Resources (HR), Volunteering and Trustee Recruitment processes to attract and retain diverse talent.*
5. **Building DEI Capacity:** We will equip our staff, volunteers and Board with the skills and support to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
6. **Creating a Joyful and Supportive Environment:** We aim to create a joyful, supportive environment where mentors and mentees feel valued and celebrated to be themselves, and in turn contribute to the development of the Catalyist community and recommend the programme to others.

Our Strategy

Immediate Actions (0-3 months):

1. **Draft and Review Definitions:** Define and review the terms "Black" and "women and girls" to ensure clarity and confidence among the team, mentors and mentees. This process will include discussions to ensure everyone understands and agrees on these definitions.
2. **Develop Communication Guidelines:** Collaborate with the team to embed guidelines for respectful and inclusive communication through our Mentoring Agreement, ensuring that all interactions within the organisation reflect our DEI values.

Short-Term Actions (3-6months):

3. **Conduct a DEI Audit:** Review the website and other public-facing materials to identify areas for improvement in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion representation.
4. **Assess Knowledge Gaps:** Conduct a DEI survey for the internal team to identify gaps in knowledge and areas for development. Additionally, incorporate DEI-related questions into surveys for mentors and mentees, and hold focus groups or informal discussions with the internal team to further assess needs.
5. **Identify DEI Goals:** Based on the findings from the audit and knowledge gap assessments, establish specific DEI goals. This may involve conducting a training needs analysis to address identified gaps.

Medium-Term Actions (6-12 months):

5. **Review Recruitment Processes:** Gather feedback on current recruitment processes from previous staff and mentor/mentee cohorts. This feedback will help identify areas where the processes can be improved.
6. **Implement Bias Reduction Techniques:** Based on the feedback from recruitment reviews, introduce and implement bias reduction techniques in recruitment, selection, and retention practices to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

Long-Term Actions (12 months and beyond):

7. **Ensure Diversity in Marketing:** Review and update marketing and promotional materials to accurately reflect the diversity within the communities we serve, including Black girls, women, and non-binary people.
8. **Ongoing Goal Review:** Regularly review and refine DEI goals as The Catalyst Collective grows. This will include gathering insights on company culture from the internal team and adapting strategies to align with the organisation's development.

By following this implementation plan, The Catalyst Collective aims to ensure that our DEI efforts are comprehensive, actionable, and continuously evolving to meet the needs of our community. We also understand that in order to reach this aim we need to hold ourselves accountable and track our progress.

Evaluation and Accountability

Metrics and Monitoring:

- **Track Progress:** Establish clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of DEI initiatives, including the completion of the DEI audit, the clarity and adoption of new definitions, and the implementation of bias reduction techniques in recruitment and retention.
- **Survey and Feedback Mechanisms:** Regularly gather feedback from staff, mentors, and mentees through surveys, focus groups, and informal discussions. This feedback will inform the ongoing assessment of our DEI practices and help identify areas for further improvement.
- **Audit and Review:** Conduct periodic audits of internal processes, recruitment practices, and communication guidelines to ensure they align with our DEI goals.

Regular Reporting:

- **Annual DEI Review:** Provide an annual report on DEI progress, detailing key achievements, areas for improvement, and how feedback from the community has been integrated into our practices. This report will also outline progress toward the goals identified in the DEI strategy timeline.

- **Website and Social Media Transparency:** Ensure that updates on DEI efforts, including audit results and progress on identified goals, are reflected on the website and social media channels for transparency with the broader community.

Accountability:

- **Leadership:** Hold leadership (including the Advisory Board) accountable for driving the implementation of DEI goals. This includes ensuring timelines are met, feedback is acted upon, and communication remains open and inclusive.
- **Ongoing Goal Adjustment:** As The Catalyst Collective grows, regularly review and adjust DEI goals based on the evolving needs of the organisation and the insights gained from staff and community feedback. This will include a yearly review of company culture and the effectiveness of our DEI initiatives.