

SEMLEP Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Our Role

The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) was set up in May 2011 and is one of 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England to enhance and support economic growth.

SEMLEP is a locally owned public private partnership and therefore involves many stakeholders including 6 local authorities, local businesses, education providers, business organisations and many other private, public and third sector organisations.

Steered by a business-led Board, we work to build a stronger economy by tackling barriers to sustainable growth and supporting job creation for the future prosperity of communities across the South East Midlands.

We achieve this by bringing together those partners to secure infrastructure investment, develop a skilled workforce that meets employers' needs, and provide business growth advice and access to finance to support our key sectors.

SEMLEP is responsible for Local Growth Fund and other public monies to support growth projects. We make decisions on these funds within stated criteria and the rules of public accounts.

2. Why Equality, Diversity & Inclusion matters to SEMLEP

Advancing equality in participation in the economic growth of our region is crucial to our role and to achieving our overall objectives of growing businesses, growing people and growing places. We believe that our work supports this, not only by facilitating more equitable business growth but also by helping local employers in their drive to be more inclusive.

Equality, diversity and inclusion underpins how we work as an organisation and how we treat our staff, customers and the wider public. Our 2021/22 Assurance Framework explicitly states that equality, diversity and inclusion underpins our approach to engagement, governance and decision-making. Our aim is to embed consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do.

As an employer and as a service provider we are bound by the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which provides a framework for tackling disadvantage and discrimination. In addition, under the Act, as a public body SEMLEP has a legal duty to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

We recognise that disadvantage and less favourable treatment can also occur because of factors not protected by discrimination law, for example, caring responsibilities and working patterns and we extend our commitment to equality to these factors.

3. SEMLEP Equality Objectives 2021-2022

SEMLEP has developed some clear and focused equality objectives which will support us on our journey in relation to paying due regard to equality and ensuring that the work of our organisation benefits from this.

These objectives are that:

1. We will work towards increasing the diversity of our governance structures so that they are more representative of the SEM area. In particular, we seek to improve the gender balance of our board through a target of 50% women at the end of March 2023.
2. In developing our key strategies, we have a firm and relevant evidence base which we will utilise to inform these strategies and ensure that there is a focus on the role that these can play in advancing equality.
3. In relation to funding and implementation of SEMLEP strategies we will aim to ensure that we know who is benefiting from our work, meet the requirements of our funders and provide tangible outcomes in relation to advancing equality.
4. We will seek to attract applications from the widest candidate pool by using a range of media channels to advertise our vacancies and working with organisations who support groups currently underrepresented in our workforce
5. We will advance our commitment to be an inclusive employer by reviewing our employment policies and procedures to ensure they are robust, up to date and bias free. We will then ensure that all managers and staff are aware of the policies and feel confident in using them.

4. Delivering Equality

In working towards achieving these objectives we will use a range of tools, support and advice. This will include an evidence framework, bespoke guidance, strategic equality reviews/impact assessments and staff and Board training where appropriate.

Underlying the objectives will be an implementation/delivery plan which will be populated by key officers with responsibility for those objectives within their areas and which will be governed by SMART principles.

5. Accountability

The SEMLEP Board and Chief Executive are responsible for monitoring SEMLEP's performance against the commitments set out in this Policy and implementation plan and for ensuring legal compliance.

1. Training

Annual staff training will be arranged for all SEMLEP staff as well as sessions for Board members as a group and as part of the induction of new board members.

2. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee and refreshed on an annual basis. This will ensure that it remains aligned with the strategic objectives of the organisation and any Government recommendations. The outcome of this review will be presented to the Board along with an assessment of the progress that we have made.

For details on the implementation or queries on this topic please contact the Director.

Board approval date: 26 May 2021