

An Equality Proofing Template

For the City and County Development Boards



THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY
AN tÚDARÁS COMHIONANNAIS

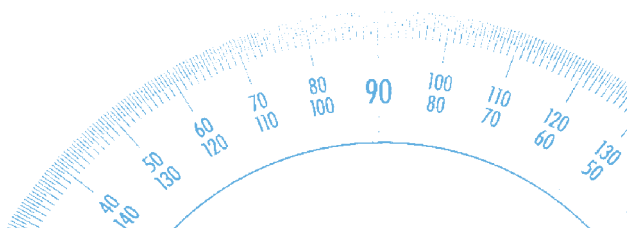
Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide the City and County Development Boards (CDBs) with a practical template to support them and their constituent partners to equality proof their plans. This document has been prepared as a joint venture between the Equality Authority, the Directors of Community and Enterprise, and Planet (the network of Area Based Partnerships).

The ultimate objective and potential of equality proofing is to promote the development of a more equal society by assisting the CDBs and their partners to thread the equality agenda through their entire county development strategy and planning process.

The template can be regarded as a lens through which these plans and strategies can take equality interests and issues across the nine grounds of the equality legislation into account.

The template has been tailored primarily for the CDBs as they are currently preparing their 10 year strategy plans and the Equality Authority is committed to providing assistance in this regard. However it is envisaged that the template could be further evolved to support other planning processes at local level including Area Based Partnerships.



The Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000 prohibit discrimination on nine grounds. These are:

Gender
Marital Status
Family Status
Sexual Orientation
Religious Belief
Age
Disability
Race
Membership of the Traveller community



The above nine grounds provide us with a context in which to promote the equality agenda. Both pieces of legislation are relevant to the City and County Development Boards (CDBs). The Equal Status Act - which moves the concept of the prohibition against discrimination beyond the workplace into the public arena, where people buy goods, use services, obtain accommodation and participate in educational establishments - is particularly important for the development of your strategy plans.

This template seeks to provide you with guidelines to support the equality proofing of your strategy plans. It should be noted that this document does not seek to provide the definitive equality proofing template but instead to capture the specific planning process and time frame that the CDBs

are working to. It is merely an initial attempt to provide you with a set of guidelines, questions and actions that might support you in fulfilling your commitment to equality proof your plans.

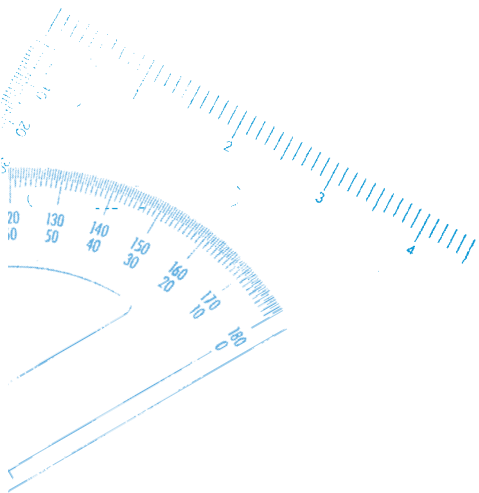
The template consists of three linked stages:

- Pre-proofing
- The Proofing moment
- Post-proofing.

The focus of the template and the proofing process is the 'Proofing moment'.

Each stage is associated with a number of considerations and actions, examples of which are identified in the text.

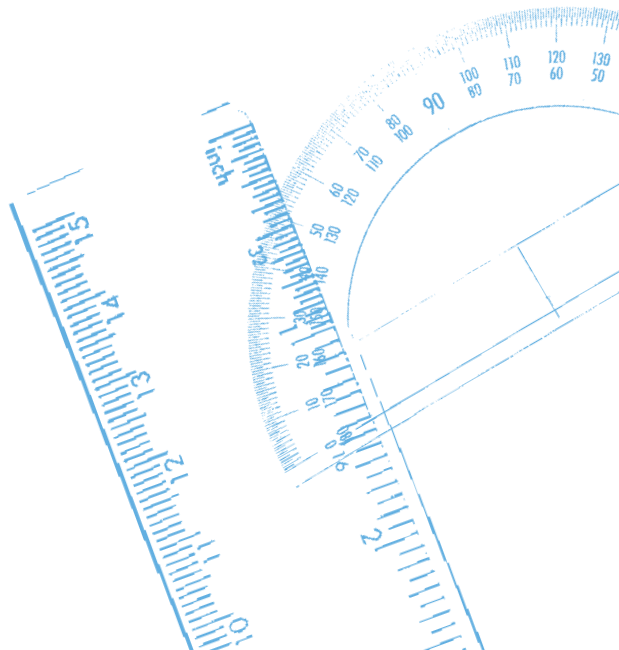
The Equality Authority will be available to provide further support and advice to the CDBs in implementing the template and furthering the equality agenda.



Why an Equality Proofing Template for the CDBs?

There are a number of reasons why an equality-proofing template is important for the CDBs:

- It provides the opportunity to reflect the provisions of the Equal Status Act, 2000 and to ensure that your strategy plans assist in realising the ambition that informs the equality legislation.
- It enhances a capacity and commitment to realise equality outcomes across the nine grounds.
- The CDBs are required to proof their strategies and plans against developments at national level.



What does 'Proofing' involve?

'Proofing' is not a new concept to members of the CDBs. The Task Force documentation that supports the setting up and modus operandi of the Boards regularly references the requirement to 'proof' strategies.

Equality Proofing involves placing equality at the centre of decision making. This facilitates the establishment of an equality dimension to all objectives. It includes:

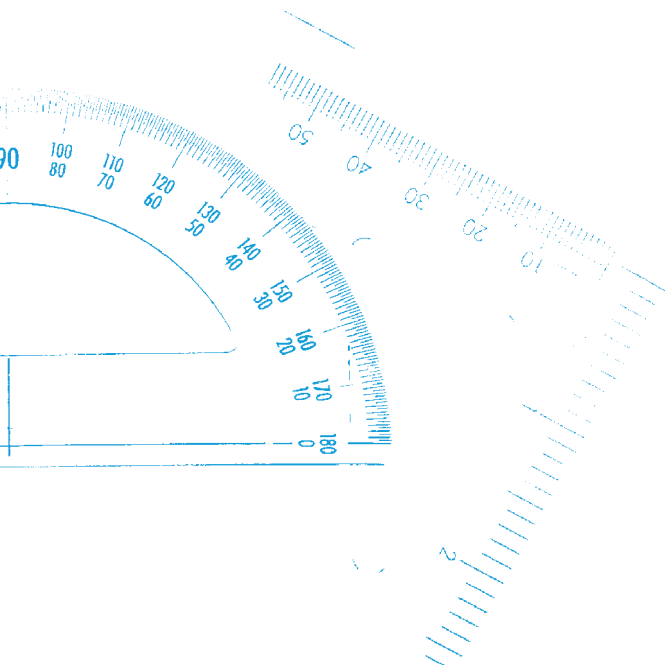
- Assessing the impact of plans on groups experiencing inequality.
- Resourcing participation of those affected by inequality.
- Focussing attention on equality outcomes.

The national agreement, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, contains an important commitment to Equality Proofing. A commitment is made to developing and resourcing a learning phase for Equality Proofing.

The learning phase now being developed is given detailed definition in the Partnership 2000 Equality Proofing Report. The learning phase is based on a longer term vision of an integrated proofing system that brings together current initiatives on poverty proofing and gender mainstreaming with a focus on the wider equality agenda. This is a vision that embraces the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

As part of this learning phase, the report recommends piloting an equality proofing initiative with the County Development Boards with a view to progressing the implementation of equality proofing procedures at local and regional levels.

While the longer term vision of an integrated proofing system is a work in progress, the following is an initial attempt at developing a proofing template for your planning processes. It takes into account the fact that your plans must be ready by 2002 and different Boards are at different stages with regard to equality proofing. It must be noted that the approach to equality proofing is an evolving one. It is an attempt to provide CDBs with a simple, user-friendly template in order to contribute to the building of an equality proofing capacity.



Using the Template

A primary concern in designing the template was to allow a focus across the wide range of economic, social, cultural and political strands that are inherent in the equality agenda. These equality themes are drawn from an extensive consultation process with the equality representative bodies across the nine grounds.

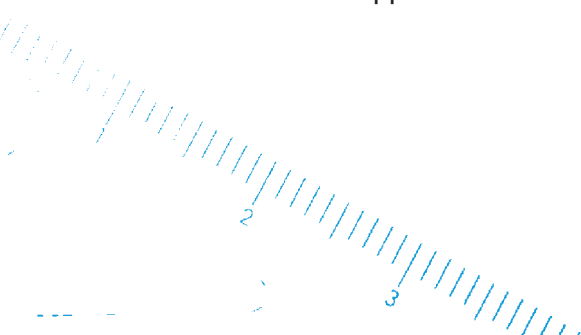
The template consists of three stages (Pre-proofing, Proofing, Post-proofing), within which different equality dimensions are addressed. It has a number of important features, which are worth highlighting:

- It keeps faith with the concerns and priorities of the equality representative groups, in the sense that all of the criteria listed below emerged from a consultative process.
- It is practical in the sense that the necessary preparatory and action stages are made explicit in order to maximise the effectiveness and the eventual impact of the proofing procedure and process.

The focus of the model is Proofing at the Point of Decision Making. We envisage that the questions/criteria laid out under this stage will be used as decision making reference points by the CDBs to inform and shape the planning and policy making process across the major service areas. This decision making stage is supported by the equality preparedness stage, (Pre-proofing) which introduces the necessary prerequisites to equality proofing at the point of decision. It is also supported by post proofing considerations, which provides a context for further development of the equality agenda and the equality proofing process itself.

This template is a basic tool. In designing the template, it has been recognised that equality proofing is a relatively new process. The Equal Status legislation which provides us with the equality agenda is a new piece of legislation. In recognition of this, this template will be an evolving tool. This template provides the foundation for further development.

The template is relatively simple to work, although it clearly requires time and commitment to work through and also requires you to make decisions that ultimately have implications in terms of targets, indicators, activities, monitoring and evaluation. This encourages a strategic rather than a tick-box approach.



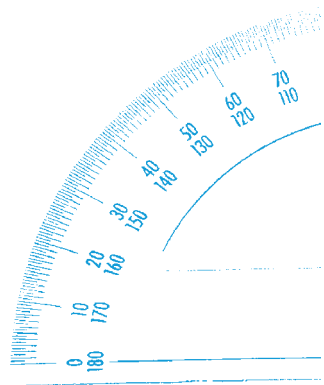
Step 1

Pre-proofing considerations

There are a number of actions that need to be carried out in order to set the context for equality proofing.

- The participation of groups experiencing inequality needs to be facilitated in the planning process. Resources are required to ensure their effective participation. Innovative or effective actions to involve representatives of the different grounds and to address the different mobility and accessibility requirements of those represented across the nine grounds may need to be developed. These could include advertisements on local radio and press, contacts through Partnership Companies or other local development organisations and linkages with local and where necessary national representative organisations. Where there is no organised representation a survey could be conducted to assess needs.
- It is important that capacity building activities in relation to equality issues and strategies is provided for the CDBs and working group members. Equality/diversity sensitivity training of officials and service providers could be provided. It would support the exploration of how service provision can best reflect the different political, cultural, social and economic needs and identities of different groups represented under the nine grounds. Where possible training should be designed and delivered in conjunction with equality interests.

- The identification of any existing data across the nine grounds at this Pre-proofing stage is necessary to inform the planning processes. Although it is recognised that there will be data deficits across some of the grounds, it is important that CDBs begin building the picture. Strategies could be developed to address these data deficits. These strategies should include the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.
- It is important to check proposed actions with other relevant developments to ensure consistency across policy developments and commitments nationally and locally. These would include the recommendations of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, the recommendations contained in the report from the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities, and the new National Plan for Women and the work of the Equality Authority advisory committee on the equality agendas for older people and gays, lesbians and bisexuals.



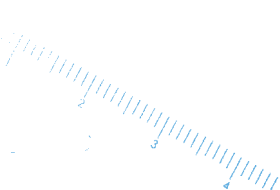
Step 2

The Proofing Moment

This stage involves proofing at the point of decision-making. This is the core focus of the Proofing Template.

The process of how to proof the decision-making must be agreed between all stakeholders. It is important to agree how this will happen in advance of taking decisions. It is important that this exercise is conducted in a participative manner. Those groups experiencing inequalities need to be resourced to facilitate participation. There are a number of options available.

- First the drafters of the strategy might conduct the proofing exercise by applying the questions set out below to their work. The results of this process could then be presented to equality interests.
- The proofing exercise could be organised when the draft chapters or recommendations for County Development Board strategies become available. A specific meeting could be organised to apply the questions set out below to the recommendations. Representatives of local equality interests could participate in this meeting.
- The proofing exercise could be incorporated into the general consultation processes already in place. A meeting with a specific focus on equality, which



includes equality interests in your area, could be convened. If there are no local representative bodies or spokespersons for some of the grounds, national representative organisations could be invited. This meeting would consider the questions set out below and how they have been addressed in the strategy.

- A small working group of the CDB could be convened including representatives of the nine grounds to carry out the proofing exercise.
- When the strategy document is drawn up, the questions set out below could be applied by an independent proofing team, that had not been involved in the design of the strategy.

Whichever option or set of options is chosen, the process involved is the same. The questions set out below are applied to the plan, a chapter and/or recommendations. The answers are considered and a further development of the plan/chapter or recommendations is made on foot of the work done in answering the questions.

The questions that need to be posed during this process are broken down into three areas: **Taking account of difference; Targeting; Growing the equality agenda.**


The Proofing Moment

2.1 Questions on Taking Account of Difference

These questions are primarily concerned with whether and to what effect we have taken account of difference in terms of:

- **Identity** - the values and norms held by a particular group
- **Experience** - the relationships between the group members and service providers and the wider society
- **Situation** - the status of the group in terms of resources, housing, labour market, education etc.

They are focused on the design of mainstream provision within the strategy plans. When you have identified the elements of difference across the different grounds and its practical relevance to the actions or measures you are planning, the strategy plans should be checked to ensure that difference has been accommodated.

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- Q. Have we considered the relevance of difference, as it applies to each of the nine grounds, to the measures we are planning?
 - Q. Have we involved groups experiencing inequalities in the identification of the practical implications of difference?
 - Q. Have we taken account of difference and its practical implications in the design of the measures we are planning so that they are relevant and accessible to groups within each of the nine grounds?

These questions focus on the issue of targeting. It is important to note that even if mainstream measures are designed and delivered in a manner which accommodates diversity, there may sometimes be a need for targeted initiatives that seek to address:


- The effects of a past history of exclusion.
- The resource needs that are specific to a particular group.
- The creation of conditions for groups to access mainstream measures.

- Q. Have we identified the specific needs of lone parents, Black and minority ethnic groups including Travellers, religious minorities, people with disabilities, women, gay, lesbian and bisexual people, carers and older and younger people in the following areas:
 - Accommodation
 - Education and Training
 - Welfare
 - Health
 - Culture
 - Employment
- Q. Have we allocated adequate resources in targeted measures to meet these needs?
- Q. Have we set targets and indicators relevant to each of these groups?
- Q. Have we agreed how these targets will be measured and outcomes evaluated?

These questions are about continuing to build the equality agenda during the implementation of the plan.

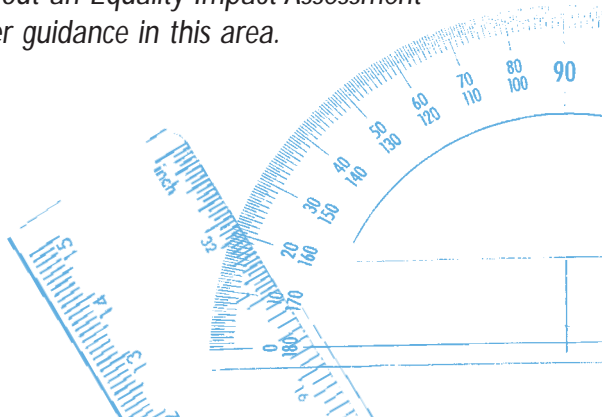
- Do we make commitments to evolve a capacity within implementing organisations to realise equality outcomes?
- Are there commitments to:
 - Developing an equal status policy within organisations?
 - Identifying a driver for equality within implementing organisations?
- Do we make commitments to resourcing participation of equality interests in the implementation of our plan?
- Do we make commitments to conduct equality reviews and action plans with implementing organisations?¹

¹ *Under the Equality legislation the Equality Authority can invite organisations to review the equality situation in their organisations to both their human resource and customer service functions. An action plan to enhance equality outcomes is devised on foot of this review.*

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- Q. Do we identify a number of mainstream measures which will be subject to a detailed Equality Impact Assessment exercise? These could be done on one measure under accommodation, training and education, welfare, employment, culture.²

²An Equality Impact Assessment is an instrument for assessing the impact of policy on agreed equality objectives and on specific groups experiencing inequality. It is an ex-ante evaluation. This means that the impact on agreed equality objectives and on relevant groups from within the nine grounds is assessed before the final decision on a given measure is taken. It is about establishing and applying information (or indicators) to anticipate and establish the effects of the activities and resources committed on the equality agenda.

The Equality Authority is in the process of developing guidelines for carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment and is available to offer guidance in this area.



Step 3

Post-proofing considerations

There is a need for subsequent action after the plan has been completed to further build the equality agenda and the equality proofing process.

1. There is a need to include and involve equality interests in decision-making with reference to implementation and the evaluation of actions. The monitoring and review of equality impacts and outcomes is critical in this regard.
2. The capacity to monitor and review from an equality perspective will be greatly facilitated by further developing data collection across the nine grounds and by further applying an impact assessment at the planning and initial appraisal stages of activity.
3. Capacity at City/County Development Board and individual agency level to implement equality objectives and to equality proof could be further developed. Such activity might include:
 - The identification of models of good practice for mainstreaming purposes.
 - The further development of senior management and staff capacity to address equality issues in relevant organisations through training and networking.
 - The development and dissemination of equality materials and resources by service providers.