

Workforce insights summary

Why this research programme is needed

The equestrian workforce is vital to the sustainability of our sport, yet we lack accurate data on who makes up this workforce, how many people are involved, the competency, confidence and capability of the workforce as well as the specific skills, behaviours and qualifications they have and the barriers they face.

Furthermore, we also need to standardise terminology of roles to help make a clear career map to support those already in the sector and those coming into the sector. We are aware that issues such as low pay, mental health, retention, and limited progression have been reported. However, solutions cannot be effectively developed without robust evidence and clear guidance on the source and scale of these problems.

Failing to act now risks worsening recruitment and retention, closures of riding schools, and missed opportunities to deliver on inclusion, safeguarding, and social impact.

Strategic objectives

This project supports British Equestrian's strategic priority goals:

- To enable and support a vibrant and healthy equestrian sector
- To support sustainable growth at all levels to ensure a thriving, accessible, diverse and inclusive sport.

The programme will inform major decisions about the wider workforce including training, recruitment, wellbeing support, workforce development investment, and inclusive practice.

Research objectives

- Map who is in the workforce - employers, employees, freelance and volunteers with a focus on the four priority areas identified in our people plan; federation staff, centres and yards, volunteers and coaches/educators.
 - Standardise role names to improve clarity and comparability across the sector and for those new to the sector
 - Identify the knowledge, skills, behaviours and/or qualifications required/expected for each role
- Identify the challenges faced by our workforce with a focus on yard staff, coaches and volunteers.
 - Including demographics

- o Identify enablers and barriers to recruitment, retention, progression and inclusion
- o Time in roles
- Understand where the gaps are in our workforce
- Engage underrepresented groups and co-create solutions
- Develop a roadmap for sustainable workforce development

Research audience

To include employers, freelancers, paid staff and volunteers such as grooms, coaches, yard staff, riding school workers, across all disciplines and levels. We aim to include diverse demographics (age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background), to also capture underrepresented voices.

Project phases

1. Map roles in the equestrian sector based on how they are currently and standardise these roles into clear coherent groups/terms (months 1-3)
2. Understand the expected knowledge, skills, behaviours, and qualification for each role (months 2-3)
3. Develop a draft workforce pathway map (finalise at end of project) (months 3-4)
4. Design survey with stakeholder input (month 3-5)
5. Collect data via online platforms/networks (month 6)
6. Analyse insights and group respondents for focus groups (month 7)
7. Host focus groups (months 8-9)
8. Audit of current MB resources/training/support and co-design solutions with the workforce (months 10–12)
9. Embed long-term change via advisory groups and KPIs (Year 2+)

Partnerships

Led by British Equestrian with support from the federation People Steering group. With the collaboration of member bodies, riding schools, employers, freelancers, volunteers and potentially FE/HE education institutions.

Key deliverables

- National workforce survey
- Career pathway road map
- Co-designed solutions & action plan
- Workforce development roadmap (1–3 years)