

An Impact Report from
10.000 Interns Foundation

The
Future will
look
different.

‘I am really proud of what this organisation has become, I have been part of other organisations with similar goals but with the 10K Foundation I feel better guided and also feel seen in a way I can’t really describe’

— 10,000 Black Intern Alum

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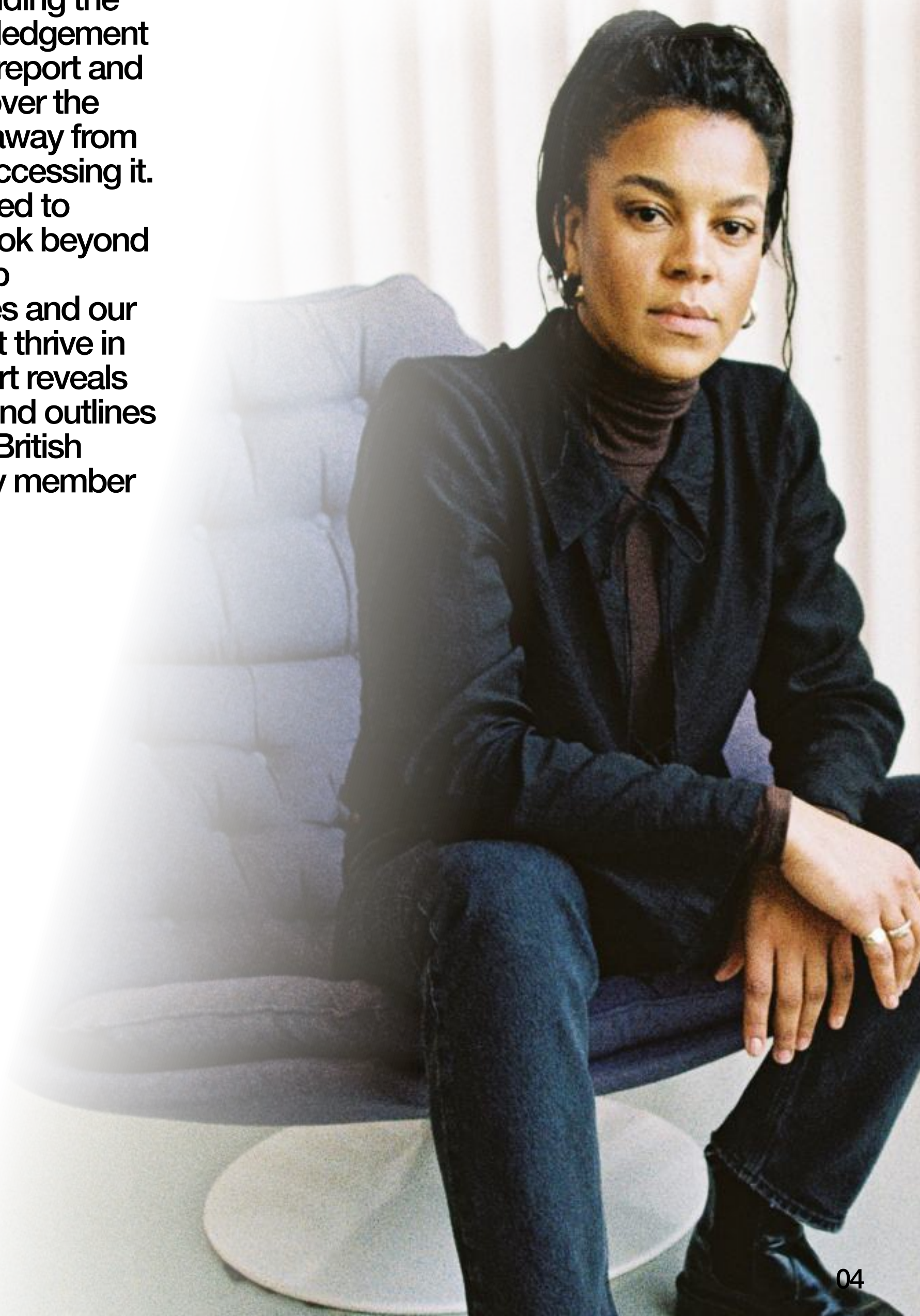
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Note From CEO, Rebecca Ajulu Bushell

What we have achieved in four short years is completely unique. A scale of direct impact that hasn't been attempted before. We have built the fastest growing pipeline of Black Talent in the UK, truly changing lives and rewriting generational narratives. We've learned a huge amount and now we're ready to meet an even bigger challenge than access: workplace culture. Imperative to building the future that we all want is an acknowledgement of the things that are broken. In this report and through our work everyday we uncover the barriers that mean those furthest away from opportunity have the hardest time accessing it. Our internship programme has started to change that fact, now we need to look beyond the doors we have opened, and help organisations transform their cultures and our incredible community of Black talent thrive in the workplace. Our first impact report reveals the essential nature of our mission and outlines a vision that will change the face of British business in the best interest of every member of our society.



Note from Author, Nana Campbell, Chief Impact Officer

Measuring our impact has always been a sticky challenge—one that defies easy quantification. How do you measure something as intangible as the experience of not quite belonging, but not quite knowing why?

The numbers speak for themselves, over 50,000 young people have applied to our programmes in the last four years, and in applying, over 50,000 young people have said that this is a programme they want and need. This only scratches the surface of the challenges we're tackling.

As Chief Impact Officer, my mission is to find a way to quantify that which can't be put into words. To me, impact can only truly be articulated by those it affects. What that looks like in practice is creating a space for people to tell their own story, and amplifying the voices of those that have engaged with our work. This report aims to do just that - to tell a story of our journey, and the people that have joined us along the way.

The Foundation began with a humble aim: to 'unkink the hosepipe' at a specific point, for a specific pinhead of the demographic we serve in order to democratise the early careers space, but as we've built and scaled, we've discovered pockets of opportunity to expand the depth of our impact. With our new 10-year strategy, and plans to build out a dedicated impact team, we hope to unearth more opportunities to create lasting change, extending far beyond that initial entry point for Black students and graduates embarking on their careers, moving to a place where we focus on equity of experience too.

This report represents the beginning of deep reflective work, the start of a journey to understand our impact in new and insightful ways. It encourages us to explore fresh lines of inquiry, to be data-driven and insights-focused, ensuring we're constantly maximising our potential to create lasting change.

My hope for the future is that those closest to the problem no longer bear the sole burden of solving it, and a world where everyone in"



Opening the door to opportunity

The McGregor-Smith review suggests that “there is discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career, and even before it begins. From networks to recruitment and then in the workforce, it is there...”

For the past four years, the 10,000 Interns Foundation has been on a mission: to open doors for Black students and graduates, through our flagship programme 10,000 Black Interns, and our pilot programme 10,000 Able Interns.

As we near our ambitious goal of facilitating 10,000 paid internships, it's time for reflection. We look back on our programmes, and look forward, with a renewed focus on ensuring those doors we open lead to lasting opportunities.

This report aims to qualify the impact we've had since 2020, the lives we've transformed through our internship programmes, and the workplaces that have found themselves changed on account of our work. We have gathered qualitative and quantitative insight from our founders, trustees, our candidates, interns and alum, our participating organisations, and our funders and donors, as well as our team, all with the aim of understanding our impact, situated in a contextual analysis of the socio-political and economic conditions of today.

Methodology:

To truly grasp the depth and breadth of our impact, we embarked on a comprehensive research journey. This involved partnering with global management consultants and organisational culture experts Q5 who donated their in-kind services, and minority research experts Clearview Research, and engaging directly with our community through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Here's a snapshot of our methodology:

Research Partners:

ClearView and Q5 provided valuable expertise and guidance throughout the research process. Q5's pro bono support, through the Q5 Foundation, included desktop research, interviews and data analysis.

Co-creation Group:

Six members, a mix of successful and unsuccessful interns, offered their lived experiences and insights to shape the research.

"Big" Survey:

Gathered perspectives from 790 applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, to understand the candidate journey.

Foundation-Run Surveys:

Engaged 946 current interns, applicants, and alumni to track their progress and experiences.

By combining these diverse perspectives, we've created a rich tapestry of data that illuminates the transformative power of our work.

Intern Exploration Labs:

Conducted in-depth focus groups with 27 interns, applicants, and alumni to delve deeper into their stories.

Organisation Surveys:

Collected feedback from 299 participating organisations to assess the impact on their workplaces.

One organisation feedback project:

Direct conversations with 145 a cross section of organisations across all years of operation and types of participation, and a further 61 survey respondents.

Organisation Exploration Labs:

Interviewed 12 participating organisations across various industries to gauge their perspectives on our programmes.

Key Highlights:

01

Scaling for Growth:

In just four years, the Foundation has built a community of over 7,000 alumni with over 50,000 applicants applying to its programmes .

02

Creating the single point of entry for Black talent:

Over 30% of applicants surveyed claimed that the only roles they were applying to were through the Foundation's programmes. The 10,000 Interns Foundation has now built a unique trust with young Black jobseekers.

03

Revealing the employability of Black talent:

More than 70% of programme alumni are currently employed, with 30% of alumni retained at their internship host organisations.

04

Uncovering recruitment as the biggest barrier to entry:

We've found no direct correlation between application quality and intern performance for our candidates. It's the narrow definition of "quality" that biases recruitment and creates the highest barrier to entry.

05

Building for the community, by the community:

The 10,000 Interns Foundation is a women-run charity, which is 75% global majority heritage, and 50% Black or Black heritage.

Chapter One

100 Black Interns: How a simple pledge disrupted the narrative



The year 2020 forced a global conversation on diversity. The murder of George Floyd ignited a worldwide movement for racial justice, demanding systemic change and a focus on equitable futures.

Organisations everywhere faced a moment of truth, compelled to examine their own practices and cultures. The investment management industry was no exception. A stark reality emerged: despite Black people comprising 3% of the UK population and over 13% in London, only 1% of fund managers were Black in 2020¹.

Equally sobering were statistics that showed just “5% of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees in investment management were placed on leadership programmes compared to 43% of their white colleagues. The number identified as “high potential” was even more stark: 17% for BAME employees versus 35% for white colleagues”². Anecdotes from Black leaders further illustrated the pervasive bias and microaggressions they faced.

Black Women in Asset Management published a powerful call to action, urging industry leaders to dismantle racial inequalities. They highlighted the economic imperative: equal participation and progression across ethnicities could add £24 billion annually to the British economy. A key step? Expanding the pipeline of Black talent and improving access to social capital³.

This climate of reckoning opened a window for a new dialogue. Society was ready to confront inequality head-on. Four City of London money managers seized this moment, determined to create tangible change in an industry primed for transformation.

“While innovation continues to be made to reduce risks in E and G areas, social investment risks, especially those related to racial injustice, are rarely considered. But prejudice and racism are a destructive pollutant with effects not dissimilar to the destructive effects of carbon emissions on the environment. Systemic racism is the type of contaminant that can only be stemmed with continued, unyielding, and effective anti-racism principles.”

Black Women in Asset Management

The legend of the 100 Black Interns programme goes like this:

“For as long as I can remember, there have been very few Black asset managers. I’m talking about the folk who actually manage asset portfolios. The Lewis Hamiltons of asset management. Financial News wrote a piece that calculated there were about 12, maybe 13. That’s out of a total of 3,000. In other words, virtually none. Some of us had attempted to deal with the problem; we wrote about it, talked about it and had meetings about it. We even had a dinner at the House of Lords with all 12 of them and we came up with an action plan. Nothing changed. It was what the sociologists call a “wicked problem”: easy to describe, very hard to fix. And then, two things happened that changed everything. On 25 May 2020, George Floyd an unarmed, harmless, Black man was murdered in Minneapolis by a police officer who casually knelt on his neck, suffocating him whilst a crowd looked on and caught it on their phones. At the same time, the world went into COVID_19 lockdown and a reflective stillness descended.

In the crucible of that uncomfortable discourse was born an idea that would change the trajectory of thousands of young Black undergraduates in the UK. Four of us made phone calls to powerful and influential captains of industry asking them to consider offering a paid, six-week, internship in a front office seat. We told them the 12, maybe 13, out of 3,000 stat and asked for their help.

We thought we might get twenty positive responses; we got more than 200, creating over 500 internships. Four years later, we are approaching the ten thousand mark.

Like Nelson Mandela said: “They always say it’s impossible; until it’s done.”

**Dawid Konotey-Ahulu,
100 Black Interns Co-Founder**

That same year, Jonathan Sorrell, Michael Barrington Hibbert, Dawid Konotey-Ahulu, Wol Kolade, and a dynamic team of young Black professionals issued a call to action for the sector: pledge to hire 100 Black students and graduates in the summer of 2021. The 100 Black Interns pilot program was born as a tangible step towards a more equitable future. It underscored a simple but powerful truth: talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not.

“Initially, I just wanted to try to do something pragmatic to help address the issue of the underrepresentation of Black talent in the investment management industry. If we could get 100 Black people into investment management each year who might otherwise not have an opportunity, then eventually we might see some improvement overall. Or in other words, how bad could it be?

I had been involved in the issue for a little time with some successes here and there, and 100 Black Interns seemed like an idea worth trying... The initial vision, such as it was, was just "to do something pragmatic to have a positive impact on the underrepresentation of Black talent in investment management". Not very catchy, but you have to start somewhere!”

Jonathan

“[The programme] was built to provide access, it was an opportunity to provide support, and create a pipeline for people that look like me, to have a chance to progress, initially in asset management...

The unemployment rate of young Black people is 26% as opposed to 10% for young white people.⁴

71% of employees from a Black background reported feeling overlooked for opportunities owing to their heritage.⁵

I live my Blackness everyday, and fighting for representation and equality is part of my everyday... What this has done perhaps is put it together in a more coherent, strategic, impactful way, where there is a brand, and there is a mission. It's for my community, but it's also about creating an “ah ha” moment for senior leaders that don't look like me”

Michael



News Reel

How a City fund manager's idea to hire 100 Black interns spread to Goldman, Google and TikTok

Financial News

"Fund managers launch #100blackinterns initiative"

FT Advisor

"We'll hire 100 black interns a year, say UK fund managers"

The Guardian

"UK investment managers to welcome '100 Black interns' next summer"

Institutional Asset Manager

"Fund industry to tackle poor representation of black people"

Financial Times

"100 Black Interns project doubles number of participating firms after fantastic response from fund management community"

BlackHistoryMonth.Org

"City institutions offer black graduates a first step on the ladder"

The Times

Opening Doors:

The pilot at a glance

In 2024
we placed
501 interns
in 212
companies.

The Programme In The Interns Words

Transformational

Inspiring

Life-changing

Great

Excellent

Trailblazing

Impactful

Amazing

Key to destiny

Invaluable Great Vivacious Revo

enomenal Insightful Problem solv

h The foot in the door Impactful

Speaking on the programme in 2021, 100 Black Interns alum Gold Oyelade, told the BBC "I've had to prove myself."

*"Where it seems we are just as qualified on paper, for one reason or another, that hasn't been in our favour in getting internships... 'Your network is your net worth' is alive and well, and can be a disadvantage to people who haven't had opportunities, or who don't know someone in a leadership position in the firm"*⁶. Gold is now a full time analyst in the Financial Institutions Group at Evercore.

The pilot aimed to offer 100 Black students and graduates paid positions in the City of London, but grew to over 500 internships across more than 200 firms.

100 Black Interns wasn't just a local solution, it ignited a nationwide movement. Its success demonstrated the power of simple, intentional action, uncovering both the scale of the challenge and the potential for transformative impact. The program became a rallying cry, inspiring other industries to join the cause. It was clear that this was a solution for us, by us, but encouraged those with the ability to enact change to engage, and propelled the conversation up the corporate agenda.

100 Black Interns planted a flag, and the community responded. Black students and organisations alike recognised the potential for change. The pledge grew, and the mission expanded: 10,000 paid internships across 30 sectors in 5 years.

The results spoke for themselves. 98% of participating organisations in the pilot program recommended it to their peers, and 40% continued their involvement in the next phase of our journey.

Chapter Two

Scaling Up



More Internships, More Impact

Our model was delivery focused, and the aim was to scale up to scale the impact, with a rigorously executional approach that sought to create as many opportunities as possible. With 10,000 applicants applying to the programme, and 526 firms making a pledge within one year of operation, it was clear the demand was immense.

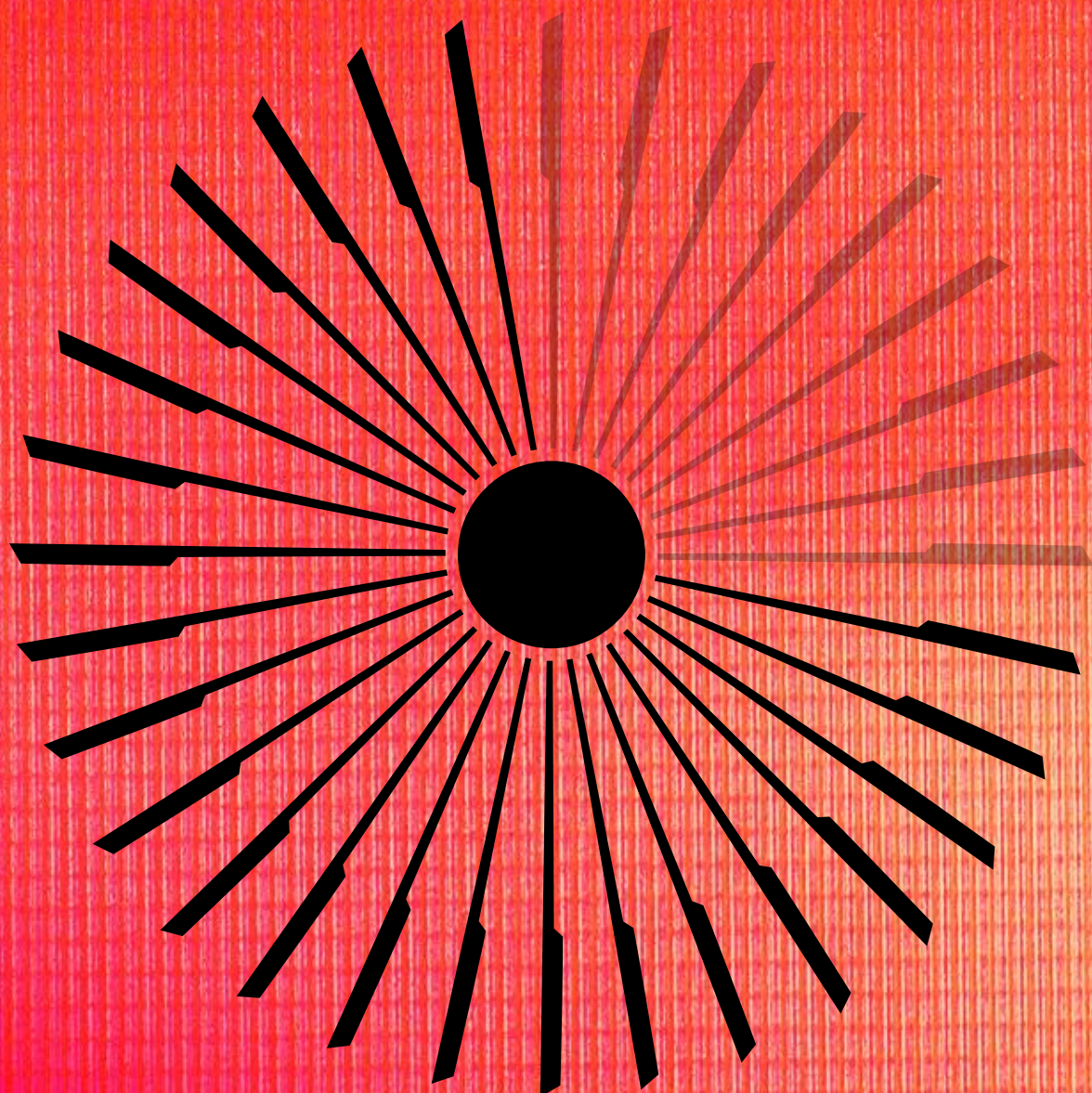
To meet this challenge, we needed resources. Championed by Paul Britton, and Jonathan Sorrell, seed funding from Capstone Investment Advisors allowed us to build a small but mighty team and invest in the operational infrastructure needed to expand.

In 2021, with a team of four, and a simple Applicant Tracking System (ATS), we facilitated more than 2,000 opportunities, connecting aspiring Black professionals with hundreds of organisations in the first cycle of our 10,000 Black Interns programme.

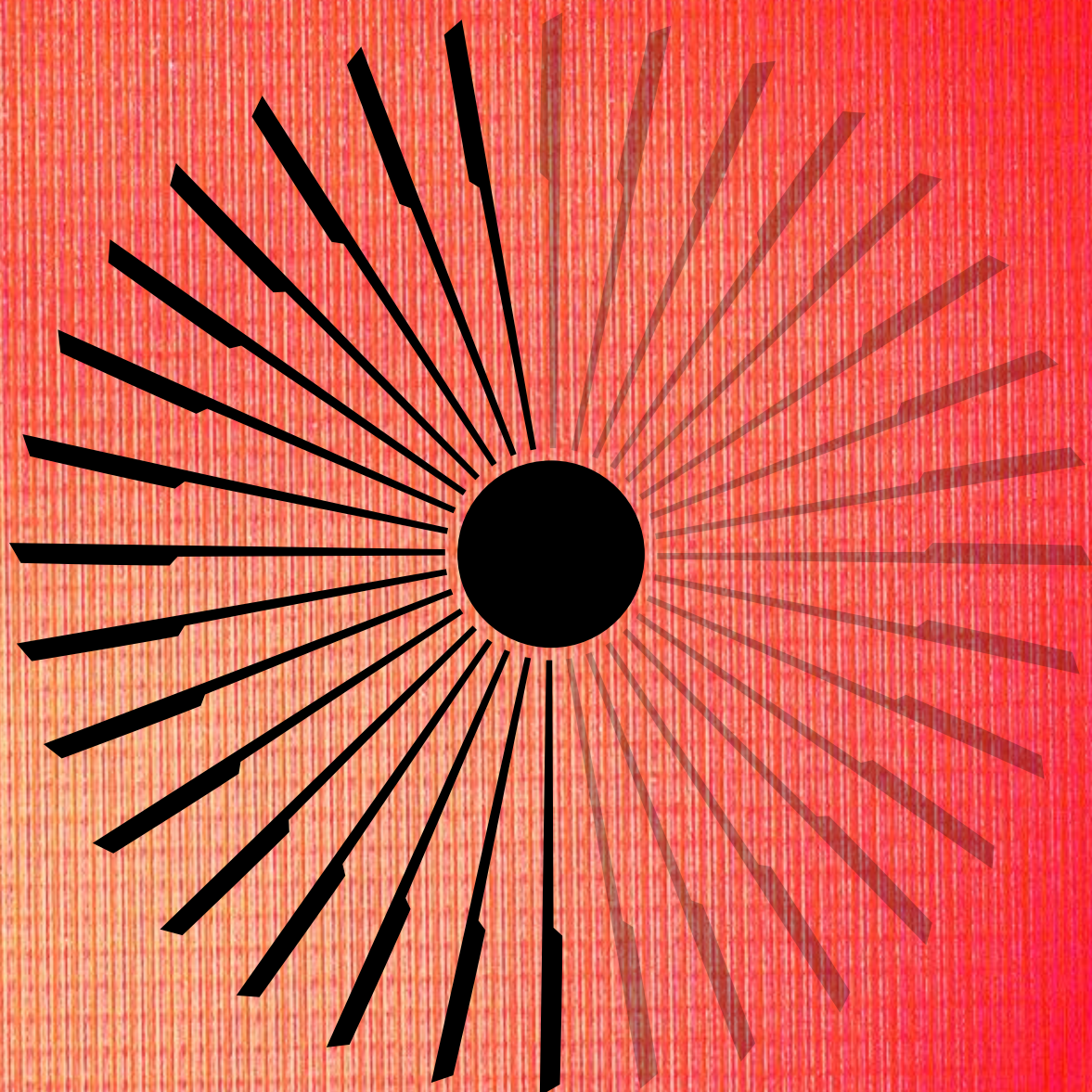
It is not without the support of our original major donors MSCI, and Permira, and legal support from Simmons and Simmons, that we were able to build for growth. Soon after, LinkedIn joined us as a strategic partner supporting our mission annually through grant funding, support in kind, and generous marketing spend.

Living the values we preach is really important, which is why all our interventions are co-created with the communities we seek to serve.

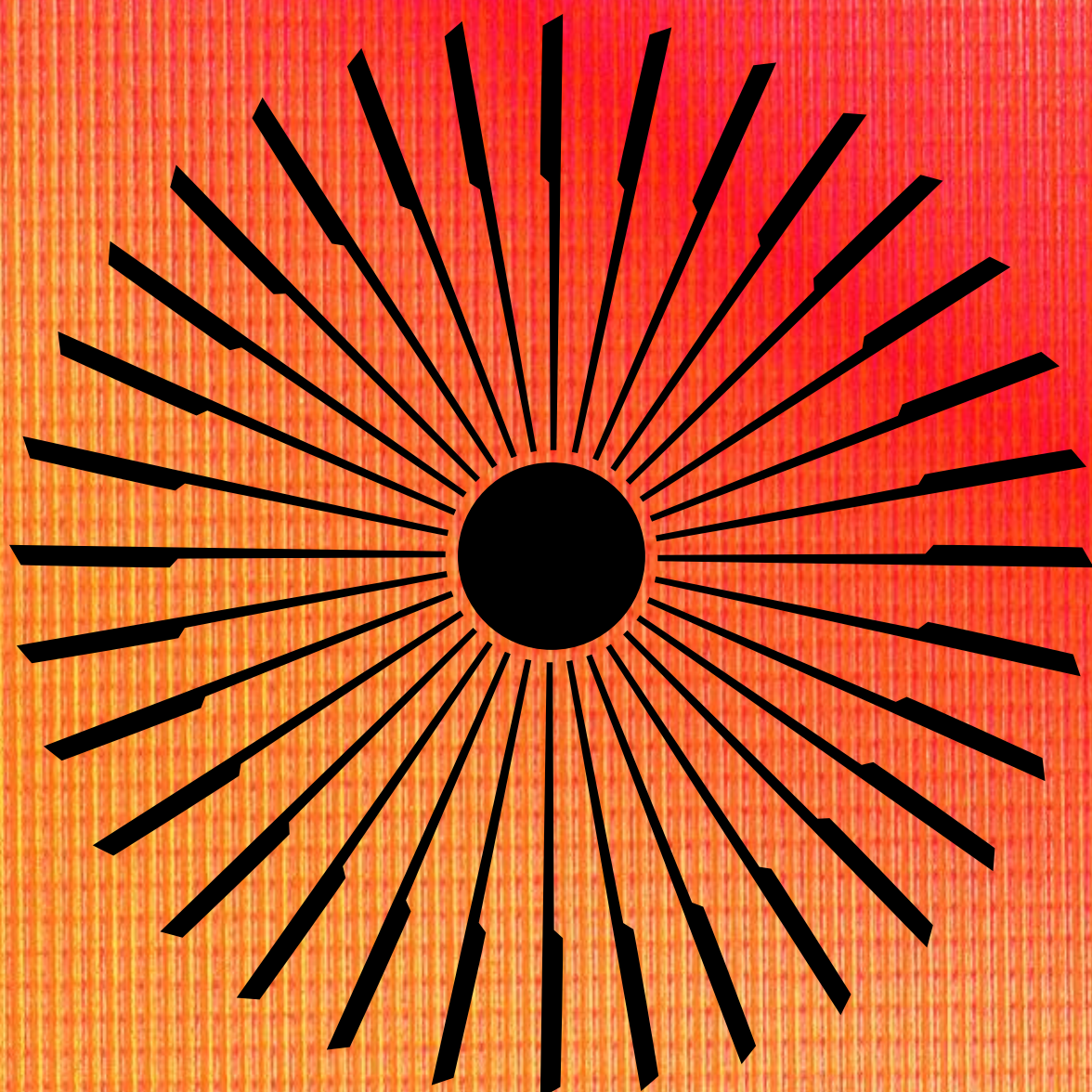
As of 2024, we're proud to be:



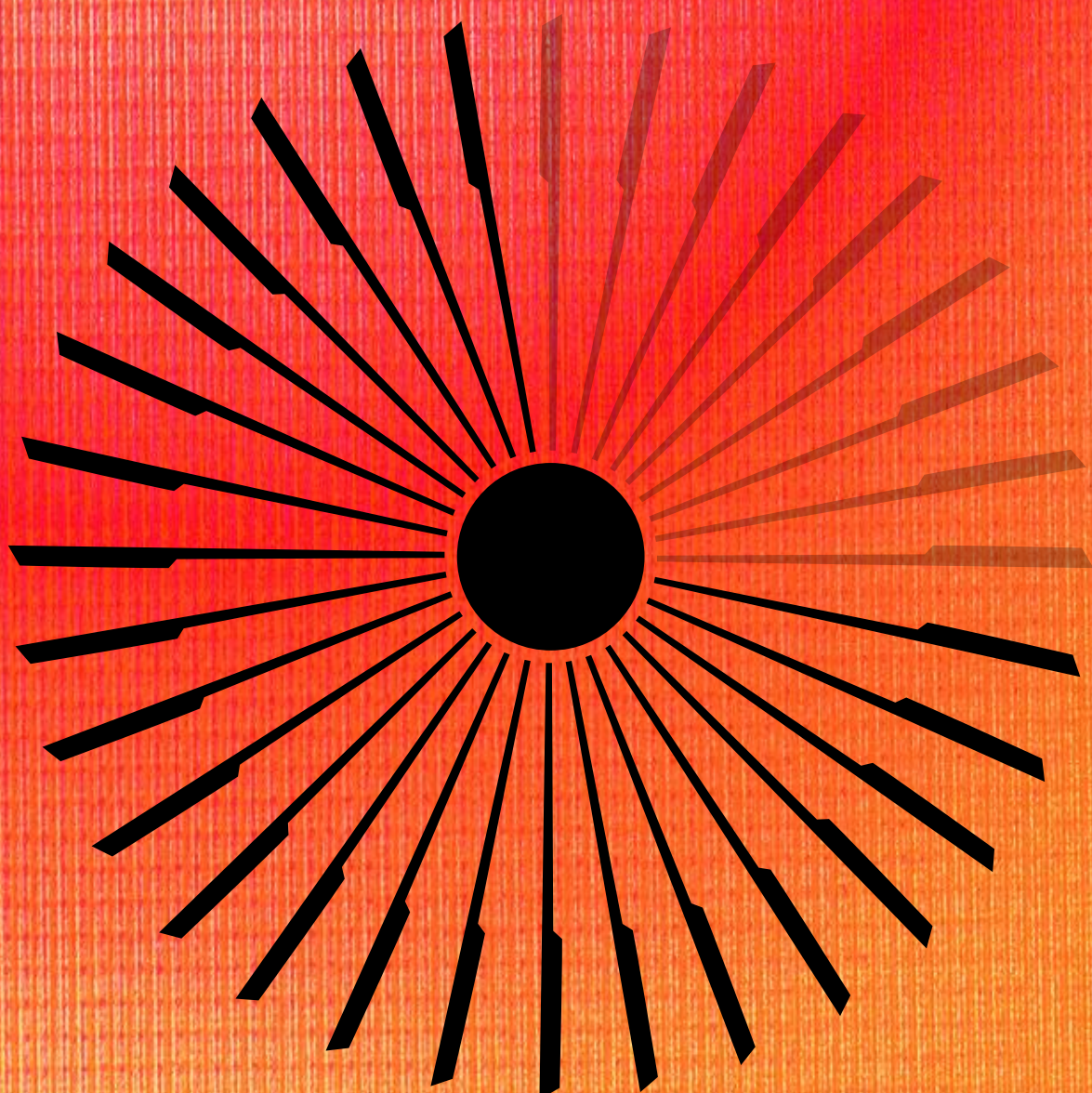
75% Global Majority Heritage



50% Black or Black heritage

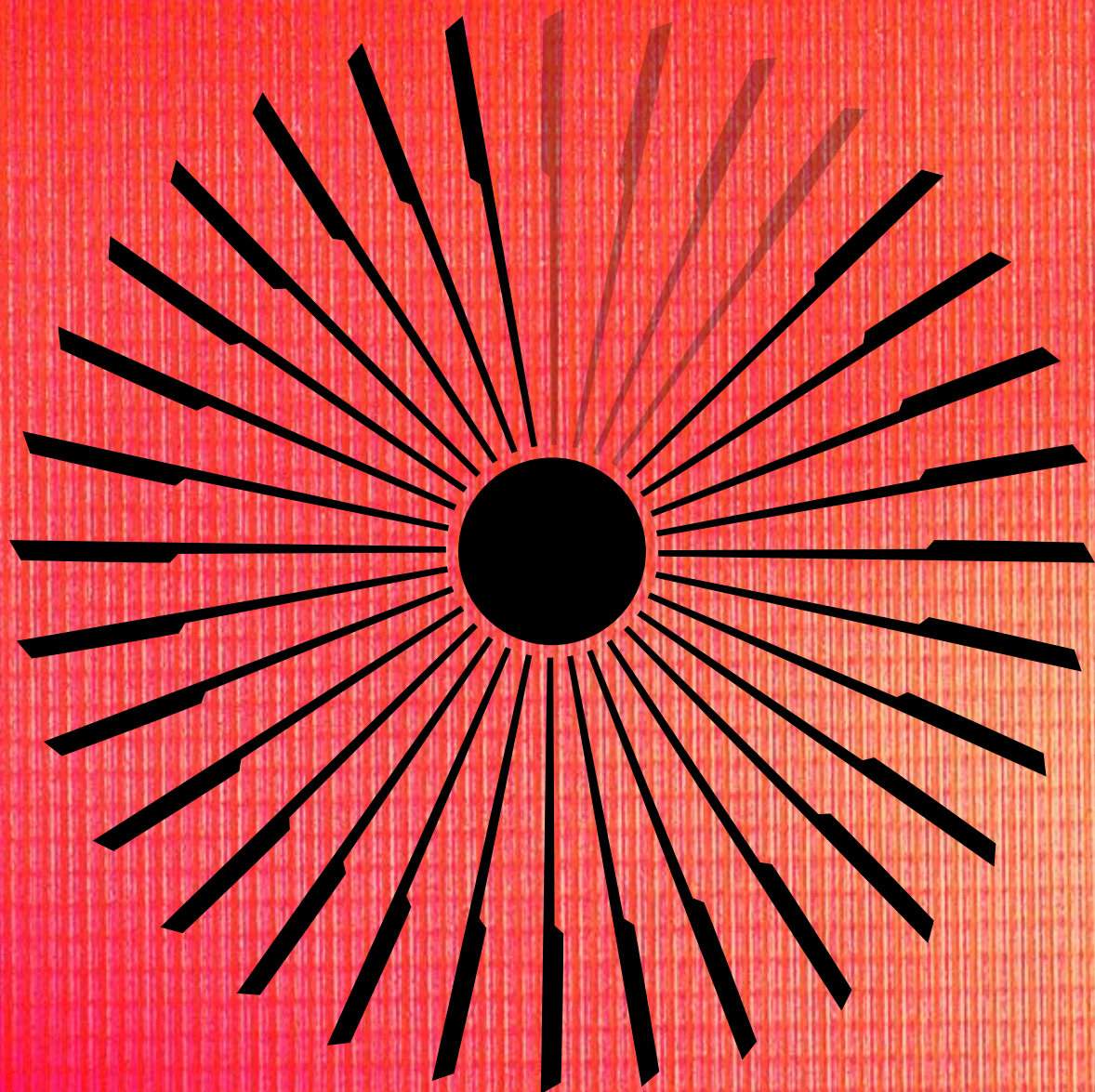


100% Women-led

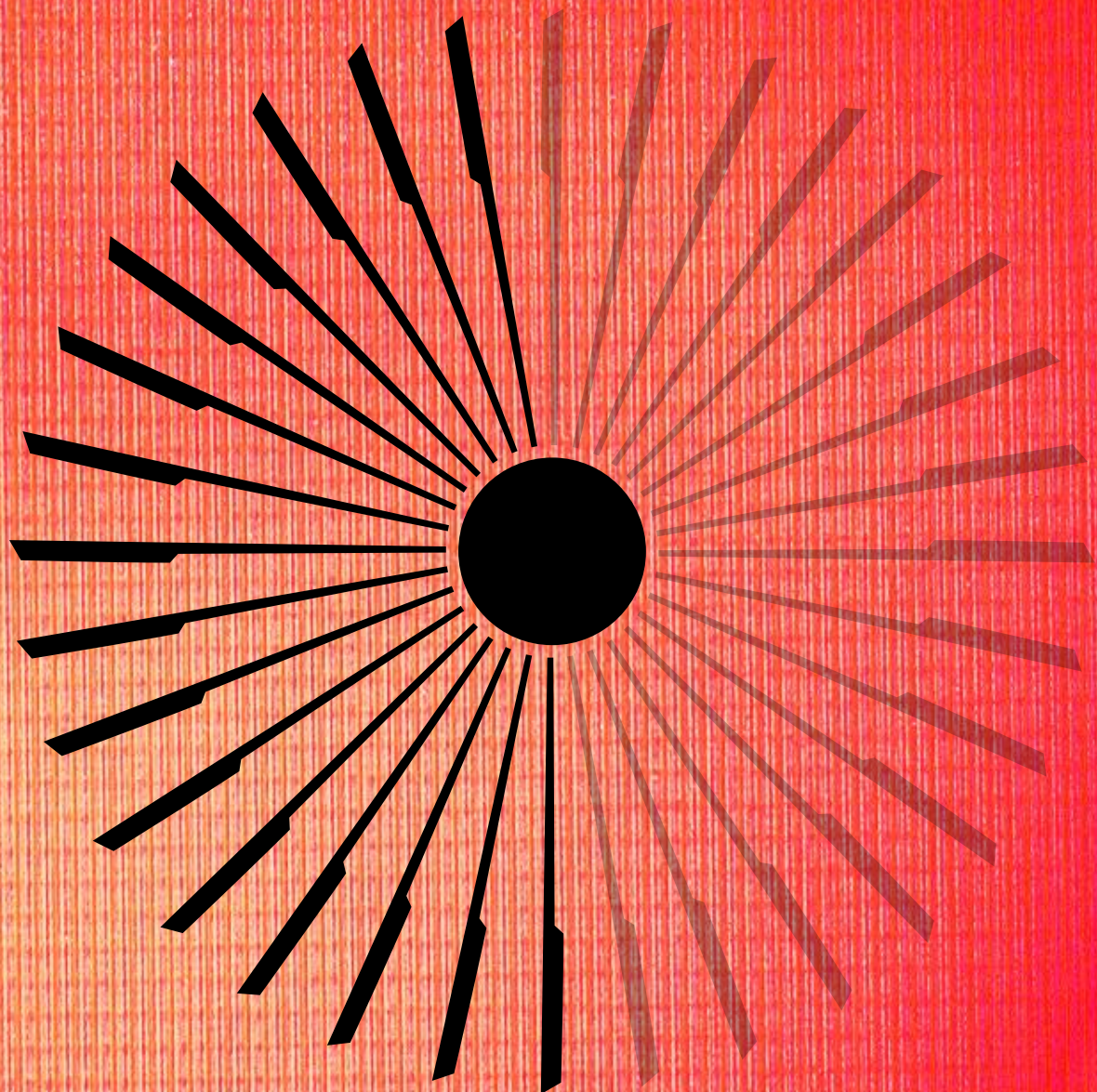


75% Women

With a board of six Trustees and Co-founders:



16% Women



50% Black

“My role as Programme Lead is to ensure that all the gears are running in the 10KBI programme, looking for ways to improve and build on the impact that we’ve created so far. I joined the 10,000 Interns Foundation to become part of a team of dedicated individuals who I knew would be taking new steps toward new challenges each year. I’ve learned that change does not happen overnight, but is founded on the efforts I build individually and with the Team each day. We know why and who we exist for, and will continue to champion those who deserve to be represented.”

Yejin, Programme Lead

“I have always been inspired by the mission, as it deeply resonates with my values and my commitment to transforming workplace culture for the better. I've gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by minoritised candidates in the early stages of their career and the work that is still needed to be done. I am excited to see what we achieve in the next 10 years!”



Tiyana, Engagement Manager

The Foundation's Impact at a Glance:

2020-2024

Here's what's happened since 2020:

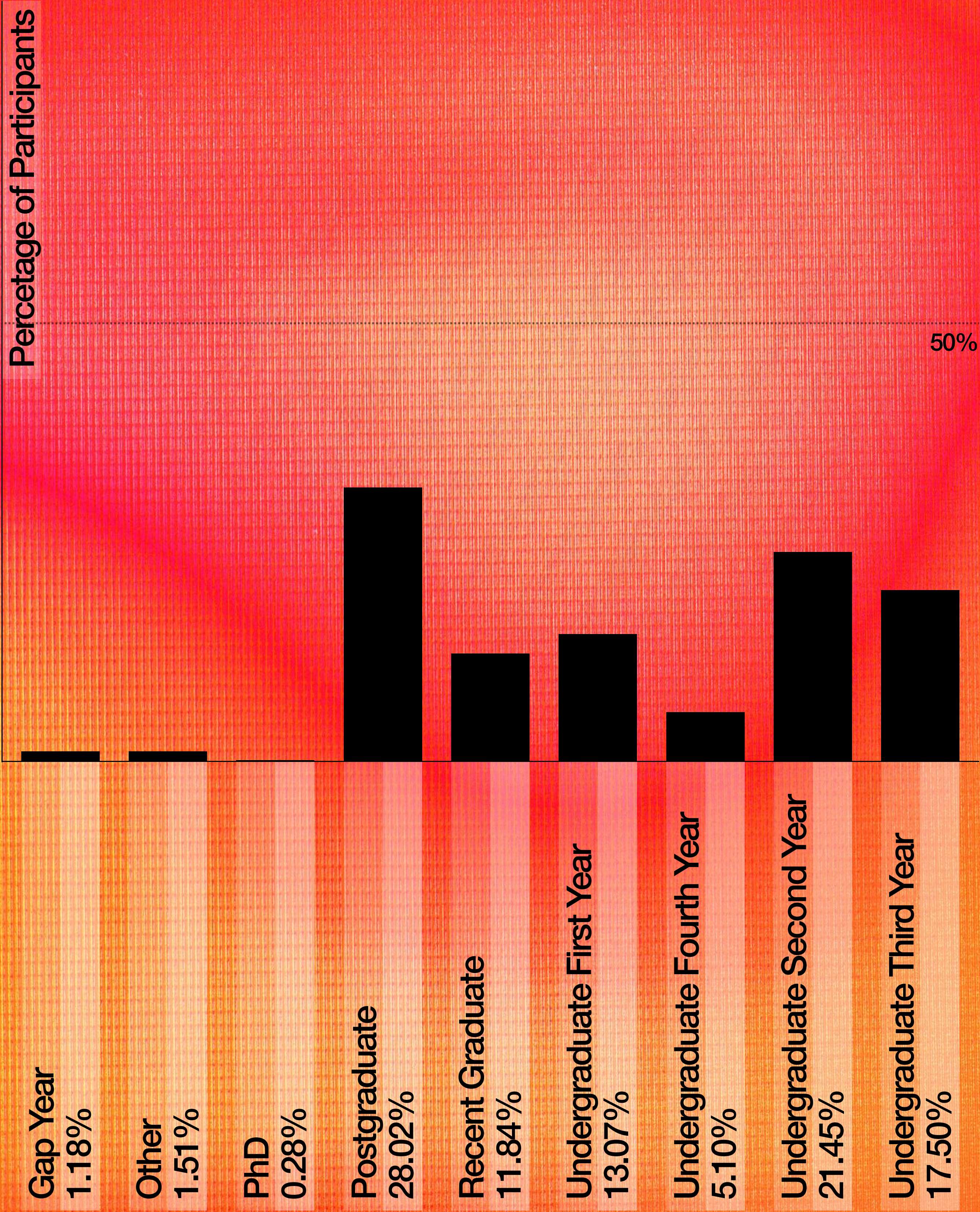
We have engaged with 1,300+ participating organisations with an average yearly rollover (retention) rate of 53%

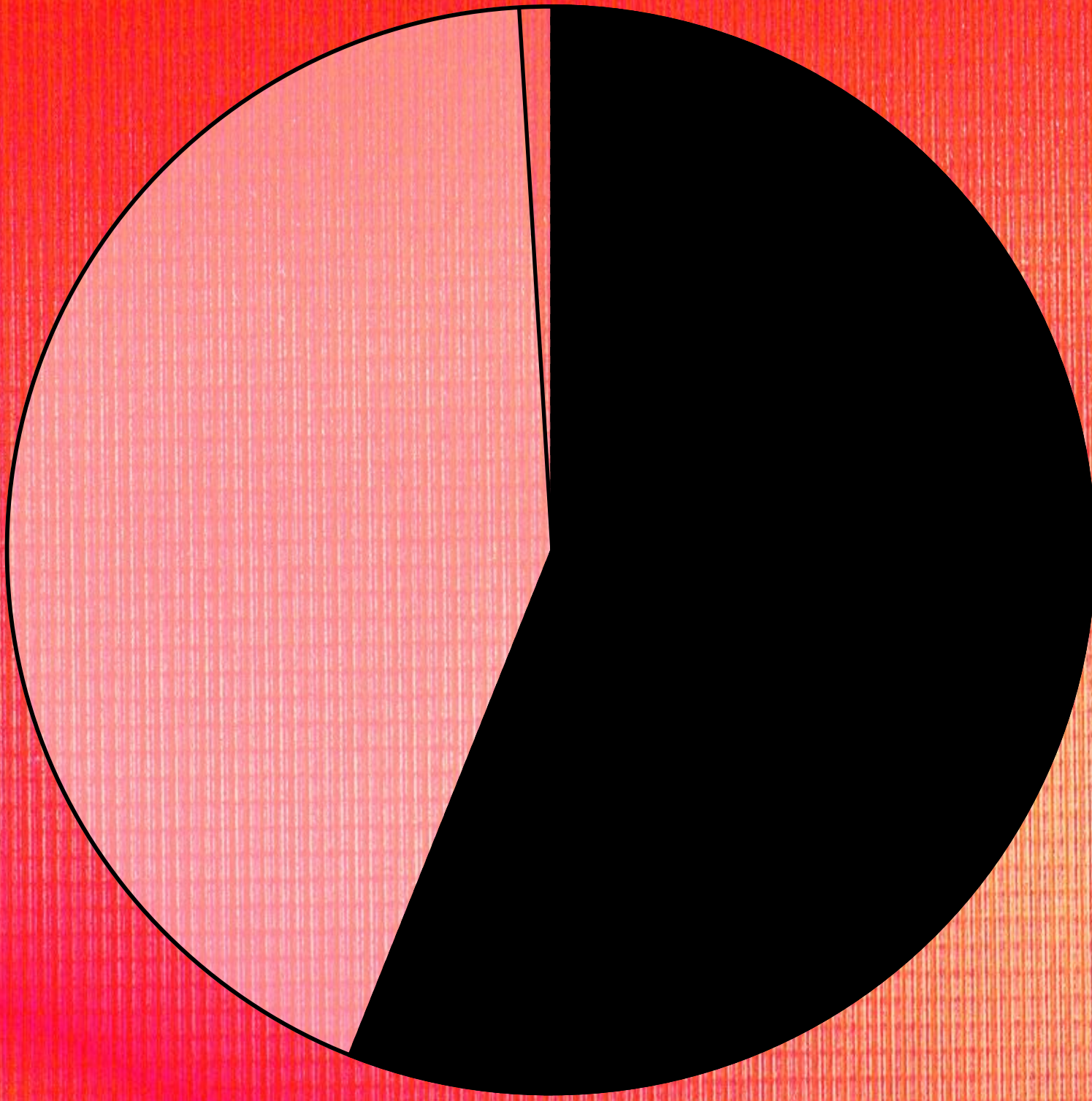
Applications have grown by 100% since the first iteration of our expanded programme

We have a total alumni network of over 7,000, with a view to onboard 2,500 people to our newly launched online alumni community on LinkedIn by the end of 2024

We have engaged with 149 universities through campus Careers Services, and campus societies including ACS's, attracting applications across all years of study.

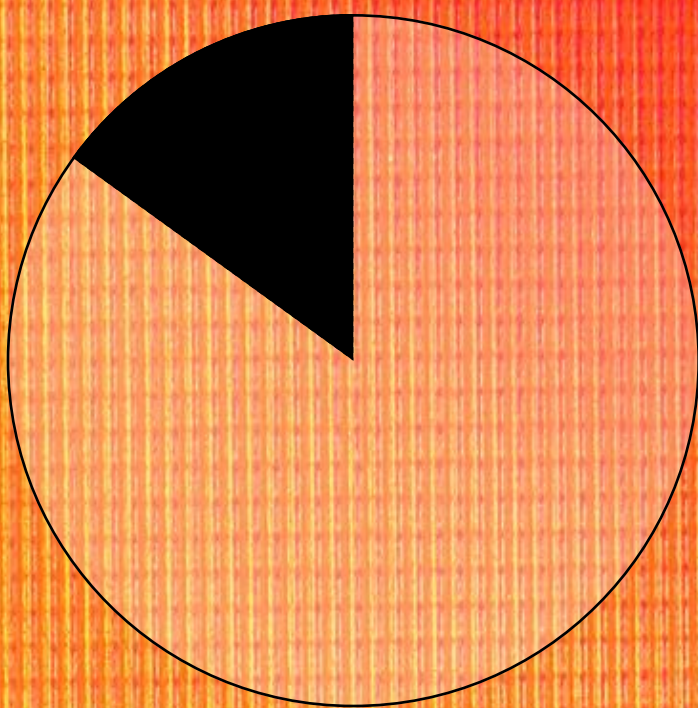
Year of study: % of applicants according to their year of study





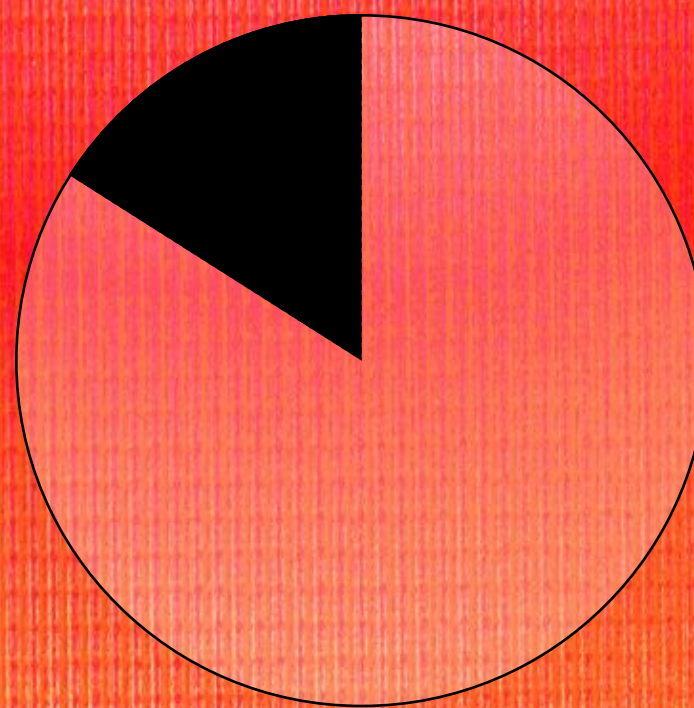
Gender:

56% Female
43% Male
1% Non binary, or no answer



Disability:

15% of our applicants identified as Disabled (inclusive of applicants from our 10,000 Able Interns programme)



Visa Sponsorship:

16% of our applicants required visa sponsorship

Operationalising at Scale:

How the Programme Works

Our expanded target was ambitious: 10,000 paid internships for Black students and graduates in five years. Building on the success of our expanded program in 2021/2022, we've maintained a laser focus on execution, replicating our proven process year after year through procedural rigour and a focus on building the operational capacity and capability of the team.

Our mission remained decidedly simple, and our measure of success equally so; how many Black students and graduates were entering the workforce because of our programme?

To gauge this, we track several key metrics:

Interns hired

The number of interns securing positions year on year

Organisations pledging

The number of organisations committing to hire interns annually

Pledges fulfilled

The number of organisations successfully making hires

Sector representation

The diversity of industries participating in our programme

Geographic reach

The range of universities our applicants attend

These metrics allow us to track our progress and ensure we're making a tangible difference in opening doors for Black talent.

The 10K process:

1. Organisations pledge: They select their sector, identify the types of roles they're offering, and specify the number of interns they intend to hire.
2. Candidates apply: They choose up to three business areas of interest, submit tailored cover letters, and upload their CV.
3. We match: We connect candidates to roles based on their preferences and the organisation's needs, ensuring regional compatibility and addressing any visa requirements.



By matching candidates to business areas rather than specific industries, we emphasise our mission to educate and empower. We recognize that many of our candidates are early in their careers, and our approach exposes them to potential career paths they might not have considered. This enables them to make informed decisions about their future and shape their own success stories.

Operating in a yearly cycle that aligns with the academic calendar, all our internships take place during Summer - ensuring our programmes are as accessible as possible.

To qualify for our programme, candidates must be:

- A current student at a UK university,
- A recent graduate (within the last three years) from a UK university
- or an incoming university student with a confirmed place for the following year

They must also be:

- Black or of Black heritage (including mixed-race)
- 18 or over



Timeline of Growth

100BI

Autumn 2020 - Summer 2021

2170 applications for the pilot programme

212 organisations pledged to take part

501 interns secured internships

Opportunities were localised in Investment Management

Cycle 1 - The Programme Expands

Autumn 2021 - Summer 2022

Our first cycle attracted 10,666 applications

2,000 young Black students and grads received internship offers

We worked across 28 different sectors

Applicants represented 159 universities across the UK

Innovation Highlights:

Able Interns Pilot Launches:
The Able Interns pilot sought to support Disabled students and graduates of all ethnicities in entering the world of work. The pilot saw 25 interns hosted across 10 organisations in the Summer of 2022.

Key Milestones:

Alexander Paul Award Hosted at Downing Street:
The Alexander Paul Award recognises some of our most outstanding talent. Each year we ask participating organisations to nominate their stand out interns. The winners receive a cash prize, mentorship and a yearly subscription to LinkedIn premium. The first year the award was launched, we were invited to host the ceremony at No10 Downing Street.

Cycle 2 - Momentum Builds

Autumn 2022 - Summer 2023

Our second cycle saw significant growth and refinement:

Applications soared to 13,797 (13,023 - 10KBI, 947 - 10KAI)

Pledges from organisations reached 3,340 (3,191 - 10KBI, 149 - 10KAI)

Over 2,000 internships were successfully filled (2,035 - 10KBI + 98 - 10KAI)

Key Innovations:

Sector Expansion:
We expanded from 28 sectors in Cycle 1 to 31 in Cycle 2, and the number of business areas/functions grew from 24 to 36. We actively listened to feedback, ensuring better alignment between opportunities and candidate interests

Arts and culture collective:
In the Spring of 2023, we launched an Arts and Culture collective, addressing hard to reach sectors, and ensuring that the opportunities available on our programme were as diverse as our candidates.

Key Milestones:

High Retention Rate:
67% of organisations continued their participation from Cycle 1, a testament to the program's value

Alexander Paul Award:
We celebrated outstanding interns at the Royal Academy of Arts, celebrating the launch of our Arts and Culture initiative

Rebranding:
We evolved into the 10,000 Interns Foundation, reflecting our broader mission and expanded programmes

Cycle 3 - Applications at an all time high (Rollover rate drops for the first time)

Autumn 2021 - Summer 2022

Applications 22,316 (20,324 - 10KBI + 1992 - 10KAI)

Pledges: 2,616 (2,304 -10KBI + 312-10KAI)

Hires: 2069 (1874 - 10KBI + 195 - 10KAI)

Key Innovations:

Corporate Membership Launches:
The Corporate Membership launches to address growing diversity fatigue, and a sustainable engagement for our most invested participating organisations

Key Highlights:

Retention rate:
53% of organisations from Cycle 2 continued their participation in Cycle 3

Sector expansion:
Expanded our reach from 31 to 32 sectors

Business area expansion:
Grew our internships across 42 different business areas, continuing to expand the breadth of opportunities

Alexander Paul Award and Dar Awards: Annual awards hosted at The Emirates, with the launch of the Dar Awards, celebrating interns across the 10,000 Able Interns programme

Cycle 4:

Autumn 2024 - Summer 2025

5,000+ applications in the first 7 days

Key Innovations:

ATS refinement:
Developed new ATS features in response to feedback Including new features such as simpler UX/UI, the ability to generate better reports, the ability for participating organisations to have improved communication with candidates, and more sophisticated algorithmic matching of candidates to opportunity based on geolocation

Early application window:
Introduced “early application” window as a bespoke response to sectors with specific recruitment timelines

The Challenge In Practice:

These themes showed up in different ways when speaking to organisations, many found the issue “too hard to pin down” or, “difficult to put into words exactly what the issue was” but overwhelmingly our case studies pointed to the same issue, the gap seemed unquantifiable and also impossible to surmount; one participant shared that they were aware that even though Black candidates were often statistically more qualified, that the quality of applications for BAME applicants are generally poorer. Even going so far as to claim that they can guess the ethnicity of the applicant even when anonymised based on writing style. They acknowledged that white counterparts have more access to coaching on how to write applications. For example, when they were part of a recruitment programme, when they looked back at their recruitment in reverse, after un-anonymising their applications, they found that applicants were 3x less likely to get a place if they were Black than if they were white. So for the next round they had to offer a workshop to support applicants to write applications. The range they saw in interns from the programme were those who say: “I’m a lovely person who works hard vs those who say “I can do A,B,C” from the job spec. It’s about self reflective skills.”



Chapter Three

Hard to Reach Talent vs Hard to Access Industry



Uncovering the Real Barrier

For participating organisations, the first cycle of our expanded iteration (2021/2022 programme) continued to prove that across industries, the same challenges were preventing progress towards better representation, the challenges emerged as two key messages:

The talent wasn't there:

For some organisations, whilst the talent may have been viable, it just wasn't readily available, it didn't exist, or it was simply too hard to reach, which is why underrepresentation persisted.

The talent wasn't good enough:

For other organisations, the talent just simply wasn't matching up to their standards, and didn't feel like their traditional candidates.

These beliefs mirror wider industry findings. A 2023 report by the World Economic Forum⁷, suggested that organisations cite an inability to attract talent (53%), and identify an inability to bridge skills gaps (60%) as the key barriers preventing industry transformation.

And these beliefs aren't simply misconceptions, they are the lived experience of the organisations we engage with, but we must interrogate why this is a reality for hiring organisations, because compounding these findings with unconscious bias in the recruitment process, and the result is simply, a strikingly unequal playing field for Black talent.

Challenging the narrative

With over 10,000 applicants and a lean team of four doing all the outreach, even the first cycle of our programme proved that Black communities are far from “hard to reach” as often reported. To date, over 50,000 eligible students and graduates have applied to our 10,000 Black Interns programme.

Through whatsapp groups, church groups, social media, university careers services and Afro-Caribbean societies, Black students across the country responded to the programme, as the only offering of its kind, and once again proved that talent is indeed everywhere, and not as unavailable as often presumed.

Our secret? Authentic engagement.



Rethinking 'quality':

From perception to performance

The programme also revealed that organisations are defining 'quality' or 'required skills' in very narrow and restrictive ways. It became clear that the primary barrier to entry lies in how these narrow definitions manifest in the recruitment process, which in turn limits access for candidates who don't fit within these constrained criteria.

Although candidates are reportedly comparable, if not superior, to their non-Black peers once in the industry, they are simply not passing through the recruitment stages, and as a result, reinforcing the narrative that Black talent isn't up to par.

Throughout our programmes, we've observed a recurring pattern. While many organisations initially perceive applications from Black candidates as falling short, the performance of these same individuals once hired often matches or surpasses their peers. This disconnect highlights a critical issue: the traditional definition of 'quality' may be biased against Black talent.

Meanwhile, some organisations struggle to compare candidates, simply because they've had limited exposure to Black talent in the first place. This lack of representation perpetuates a cycle of exclusion.

2023/2024

How would you rate the quality of the applications you received?

22.03%	Exceeded usual standard
44.07%	Matched usual standard
27.12%	Below usual standard
6.78%	Cannot judge

How would you rate the quality of the interns you hired?

38.60%	Exceeded usual standard
38.60%	Matched usual standard
15.79%	Below usual standard
7.02%	Cannot judge

2022/2023

How would you rate the quality of the applications you received?

6.78%
Cannot judge

20.69%	51.72%	24.14%
Exceeded usual standard	Matched usual standard	Below usual standard

How would you rate the quality of the interns you hired?

0.00%
Cannot judge

34.48%	48.28%	17.24%
Exceeded usual standard	Matched usual standard	Below usual standard

2021/2022

How would you rate the quality of the applications you received?

Exceeded usual standard	12.50%
Matched usual standard	39.29%
Below usual standard	30.36%
Cannot judge	17.86%

How would you rate the quality of the interns you hired?

Exceeded usual standard	10.71%
Matched usual standard	50.00%
Below usual standard	33.93%
Cannot judge	5.36%

5.36%

Below usual standard

2020/2021

How would you rate the quality of the applications you received?

0.00%
Cannot judge

Exceeded usual standard	15.15%	
Matched usual standard	59.60%	
Below usual standard	25.25%	

How would you rate the quality of the interns you hired?

0.00%
Cannot judge

Exceeded usual standard	18.95%	
Matched usual standard	63.16%	
Below usual standard	17.89%	

Organisations that struggled to recruit through our programmes largely cited “skills gaps” as their main challenge, but the most common critiques focused on “soft skills”: CV errors, interview performance, presentation, and office etiquette.

This raises important questions:

- Should soft skills be the primary barrier to entry, especially at junior levels?
- Does the absence of certain soft skills accurately predict a candidate's ability to excel in the role?

Defining quality as the raw talent/ability needed to meet the challenges of the internship and the workload, rather than the way those challenges are met or the way the work world is navigated, leads to radically different outcomes.

Organisations that embraced a broader definition of quality saw greater value in our programme and fostered more inclusive environments. In fact, 48% of participating organisations in our first cycle reported that the program sparked positive changes in their recruitment practices.

We've found no direct correlation between application quality and intern performance for our candidates. It's the narrow definition of “quality” that biases recruitment and creates the highest barrier to entry.

So at entry level, we need to question the very definition of competency, specifically, what does competency mean for candidates who are new to the workforce and relatively inexperienced?



Hear It From Them: Employers Reflections

“I have now developed a firm belief in developing talent rather than hiring cookie-cutter perfect candidates. It was extremely rewarding for me as a senior professional!”

“We are reviewing our recruitment processes, we are asking for blind CV's, holding our recruiters to a diverse shortlist and asking for diversity stats on each hire. We recognise the need for black role models in our business to make us an attractive employer for junior talent and have set internal targets for ethnic hires.”

“We trialled strengths based interviewing and have used it subsequently for junior hires”

“Given insight to some of my team as to the effort and struggles of people outside of the usual financial services social and family networks, overcoming (not first) language and cultural challenges and meeting setbacks head on. We hold a high opinion of all the interns and some are (were) especially talented and admirable people”

“The programme has just really opened [hiring managers] eyes, and that's not to say that they had no interest in it before. But by meeting these individuals [from the 10,000 Interns Programme], suddenly, it's like they kind of popped the bubble of the individual and kind of started to see that there's things outside of what I'm aware of in my experiences. It really just opened up a lot of eyes and perspectives”.

“Representation matters. We make sure that one person in each interview panel is Black. This is easier to do in London than anywhere else. We host an inspirational speaker every Friday, and try to showcase a a realistic make-up of the industry. We wanted to give all interns a mentor of colour, but couldn't for all 17, but we do see why this is important. One intern really opened up about asking her mentor the really vulnerable questions about being a Black woman in the industry”

“We've only got 5 team members, but the team makeup has been diversified. We work with a language specialist to identify biases in job descriptions. We've proactively sought to speak to Black women about their need to for more time to talk and connect during interviews. We realise we need to establish more trust so that there is an opportunity for the candidate to share. So we extend the meetings for longer than 30 mins”

“The standard of the candidates is different, largely because you are being allocated a slate rather than receiving targeted applications. But this has meant that we’ve made offers to interns on the programme that we wouldn’t usually give offers to... Taking a chance and giving them space to grow. We appreciate that at CV review stage, 10KBI applicants don’t have as clear a narrative about what they know about the company or industry - that’s the process. But we make sure at interview stage we have a good understanding of whether the candidates would be able to keep up with the work”

“We received a broad span of candidates, but that was quite nice because it gave the hiring managers more to think about. We gave one placement to a less experienced candidate who had a good attitude; she changed the perception for what we wanted in the role. Then we also went for a well matched, more experienced candidate. Candidates could have had more interview training / lacked some knowhow on etiquette, but we understood that they are new to the professional world.”

“We usually require specific skills - specifically an economics degree. What I found refreshing was that because of the lack of targeting through the programme, we were seeing candidates who had done other degrees and understanding what they could bring to the role, or the wider business. We actually did end up hiring economics students anyway because of our limited capacity to train and develop other interns in other departments, but we really valued seeing a different set of CVs and being forced to think a little differently”

Candidates Perspective:

10KIF as the single point of access

A study by the Centre for Social Investigation (2019) at Nuffield College, University of Oxford, found that Black candidates had to send 60% more applications to receive the same number of callbacks as white candidates⁸. This study also highlights that one of the stages where applicants from Black and ethnic minority groups face bigger challenges is at the initial stage of the application process.

Similarly, according to The Black Gen Z Report⁹, Black Gen Z experience barriers related to racial discrimination during the application process. As a result of these experiences or concerns of discrimination, 22% of Black Gen Z have changed their names on job applications to improve their chances of success, compared to only 7% of White Gen Z.

Beyond these sobering statistics, the 10,000 Interns Foundation is providing a beacon of hope with 80.7% of applicants who gained internships through the programme suggesting that the programme positively changed their expectations and experiences of the job market in general.

The 10,000 Interns Foundation has now built a unique trust with young Black jobseekers. Over 30% of applicants surveyed claimed that the only roles they were applying to were through the Foundation's programmes. Combine this with the fact that over 40% of candidates heard about the Foundation's programmes through word of mouth, and what we are seeing is the importance of network based knowledge sharing, and trust.

The 10,000 Interns Foundation plays an important role in being potentially the first, single, and most trusted source of truth about early stage careers for Black candidates.

This trust is only building as new intakes see the continued results of the cohorts ahead of them. Participating organisations need to trust the Foundation to provide access to talent, which is equally talented.

More than 70% of alumni surveyed are currently employed, highlighting the employability of the candidates coming through the Foundation's programmes.

Do you work in the same company you interned with?

Do you work in the same industry you interned with?

Are you currently employed?

Has 10KIF Impacted your career?

NO

YES

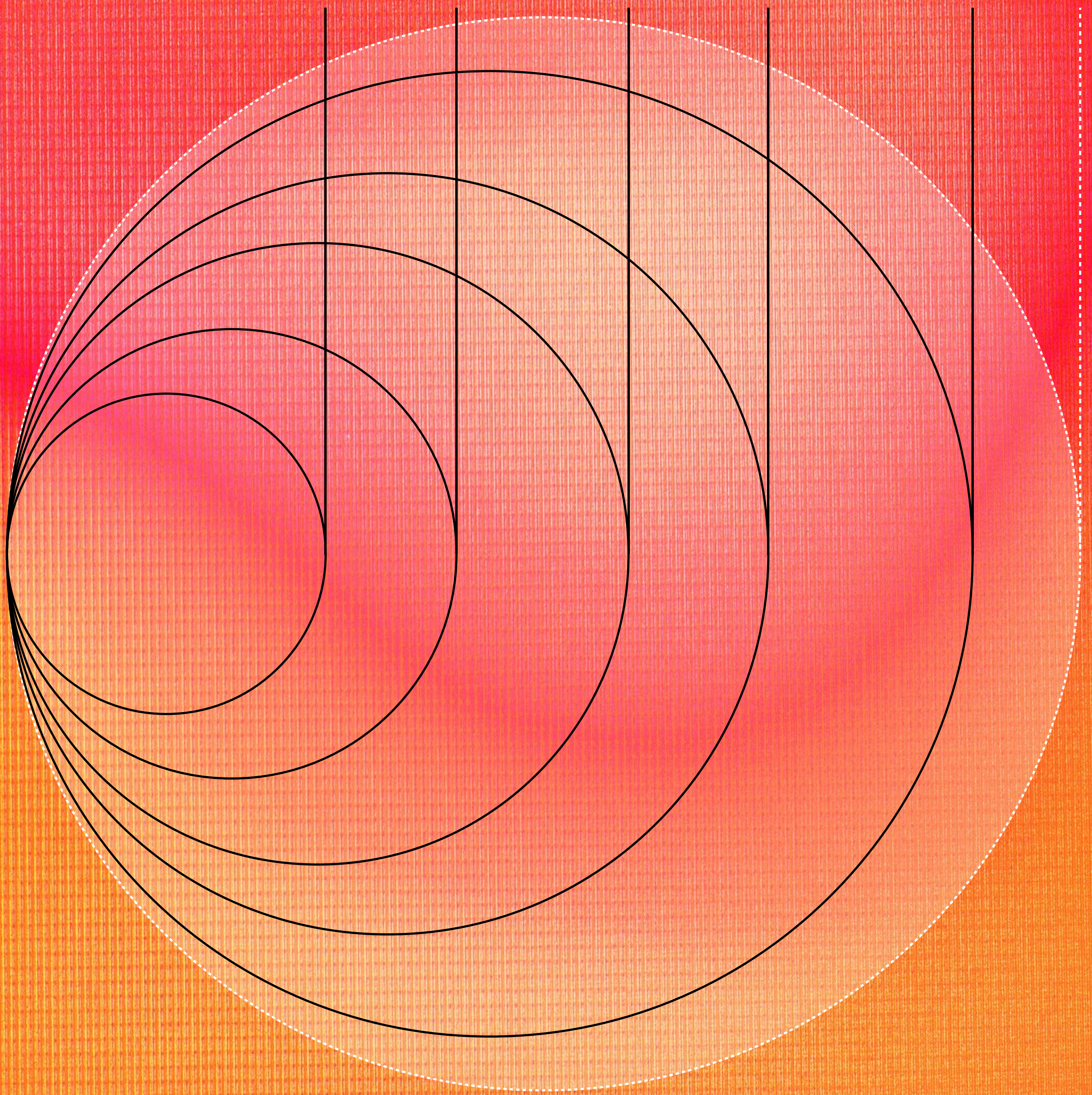
30%

42%

58%

71%

90% 100%



Hear It From Them: Knowledge Creation & Exposure To Industry

“I don’t think I would have had my current job without the internship. I didn’t even know it existed. The internship helped with sector familiarity and skills development for both employability and personal development.”

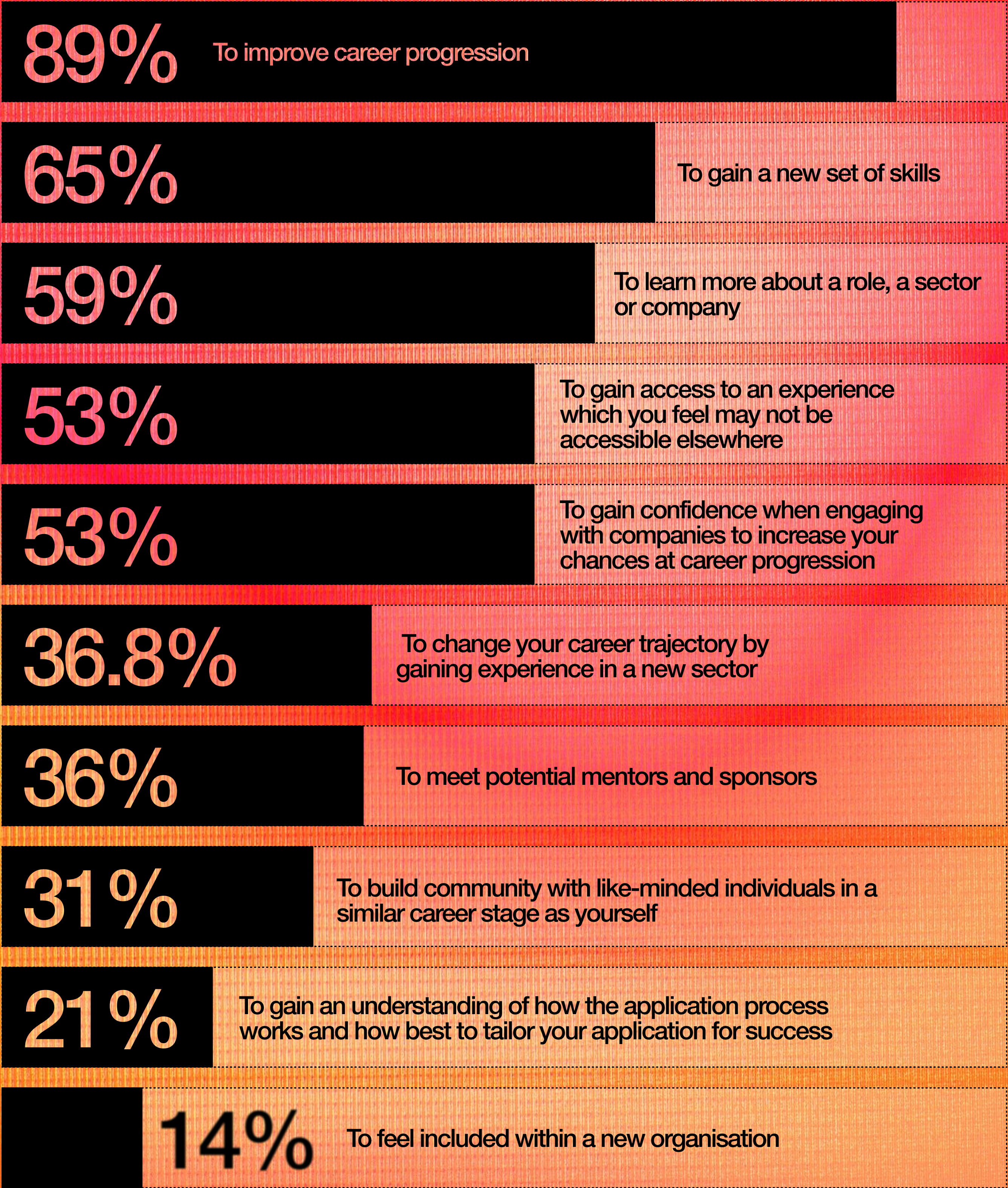
“Before the internship I had no idea how to get into a well paying white collared job. After the internship I’m now fully employed in one.”

“I found out about my employer through 10,000 Black Interns advertising different opportunities”

“It was my first exposure to the corporate world and I learnt so much from it”

The heart of our impact lies in the stories of the candidates we serve. And their motivations for applying to the 10,000 Interns programme resonate with the challenges we seek to address: limited access to opportunities, a desire for career advancement, and the need for guidance and community.

Some of the reasons driving candidates to apply include:



For candidates, our programme's impact is undeniable:

- 89% of surveyed candidates across our two programmes agree that it positively impacted their professional development*

For candidates, our application process was “straightforward”, and provided a level of accessibility to recruitment that hadn't been felt externally, and helped them navigate a traditionally alienating entry into the professional world. They described the process allowing them to explore pathways that were previously not considered, and access “hard to access” industries.

The programme's impact can be categorised into six themes:

Career Acceleration and Opportunity

Personal Growth and Development

Networking and Connections

Support and Guidance

Empowerment and Representation

Life-Changing Opportunities



Career Acceleration and Opportunity

Career Advancement

Many interns highlighted that the programme provided pivotal opportunities that accelerated their careers, including securing internships, job offers, and roles in prestigious firms.

Access to New Sectors

Interns expressed gratitude for being introduced to sectors and firms they may not have considered before, broadening their career possibilities.

Increased Confidence to Apply

The experience gained through the programme boosted interns' confidence in pursuing their careers and applying for future roles.

“I am truly thankful for this programme as without it, quite literally, I would not have discovered a new, refreshing role within HR at [company name] This pathway had never crossed my mind but as three pathways needed to be selected, I chose HR as a last resort. Little did I know that this HR internship would unlock so much! I am loving my time at [company name] and the team have been spectacular so far.”

Personal Growth and Development

Overcoming Self-Doubt

Several interns mentioned how the program helped them overcome self-doubt, improve their social skills, and become more optimistic about their futures.

Skill Development

Interns noted that the programme helped them develop essential skills, both technical and soft, that are crucial for success in the workplace.

“The application process is far easier and geared towards your passion for sectors as opposed to Cover Letters which can sometimes just come off as pandering towards a company. The training available was helpful in developing skills and confidence. I’ve completed 3 internships from the scheme and each of them have developed skills in the individual sectors, and have honed my soft skills which will be essential when looking for a career post-grad. My first two internships both resulted in call backs for post-graduation. All three have been essential for making me comfortable with the corporate world and figuring out what I enjoy and what I’m good at.”

Networking and Connections

Building Networks

The programme provided valuable networking opportunities, allowing interns to connect with professionals in their fields, fellow interns, and other students, which they found inspiring and beneficial for their careers.

Long-Term Relationships

Some interns mentioned forming lasting relationships with people they met during the internship, both within their host firms and among their cohort.

“Provided me 2 internships each year I’ve currently been in university. I’ve had the opportunity to see what works for me and what I don’t think works for me. I’ve been able to network and gain valuable experience whilst developing my skills”

Support and Guidance

Comprehensive Support

The programme was praised for offering support throughout the internship process, including during the application phase, the internship itself, and even afterward, which helped interns navigate their early career stages.

Inclusive Environment

Interns appreciated the inclusive and supportive environment fostered by the program, which often led to them feeling valued and treated as equals within their host firms.

“10,000 interns simplified the application process, while increasing opportunity to work at organisations which were not previously offering internship programmes nor placed much emphasis on diversity and inclusion. It raised my awareness about organisations and roles I might never have considered before. I liked how we could apply to different sectors rather than specific organisations because it broadened my options and overcame any preconceptions I might have had. 10,000 Interns saved me a lot of time trying to find relevant organisations which offer internships and care about DEI. I’ve also been more successful with 10,000 Interns than without.”

Empowerment and Representation

Increased Representation

The programme was recognized for its role in increasing representation of Black individuals in various industries, particularly in sectors where they are traditionally underrepresented.

Breaking Barriers

Several interns mentioned how the programme helped break down barriers for Black students and professionals, providing them with opportunities that are often difficult to access.

“It’s such a blessing being part of a programme that recognises my unique experience as a Black candidate. The Foundation has given me a community of people, my people, even when that’s lacking at work. It’s also given me a better understanding of what I should expect from future employers, and how important role models are”

Life-Changing Opportunities

Transformative Experience

Many interns described the programme as life-changing, emphasizing how it opened doors that would otherwise have been closed and provided them with experiences that significantly shaped their career trajectories.

Generational Change

The impact of the programme was seen as not just affecting individual careers but also contributing to broader generational change, inspiring interns to share their success with their communities.

“I love this programme! Without it, I would not have considered so many sectors nor the less-obvious firms within them. This has accelerated the start of my career and I am so eager to help my friends and family feel the same joy. Thank you 10,000BlackInterns for founding a platform that is already creating generational change in its infancy♥.”

Training, Mentoring, and Development

Our philosophy asks organisations to make an effort to meet talent where they're at - if schools, universities, and wider networks of support are not building and refining the skills employers require at the point of entry, it is the role of employers to help create a level playing field for graduates, build equitable recruitment processes and in turn, representative intakes.

Our training works to bring our talent a little closer to hiring organisations, and help bridge the gap between the 'hard to reach talent' and the 'hard to access industries'.

Our pre-application, pre-interview, and pre-internship sessions represent our own offering of sustainable career support, including peer-to-peer mentorship, opening up spaces to discuss tabooed subjects such as mental health and imposter syndrome, fostering confidence, and engendering hope.

We recognise that competence is nuanced, and our training sessions offer a space for prospective interns and hired interns to get a first glimpse into what the professional world looks like.

Out of those surveyed,

79%

79% of applicants said the training supported them in making applications to other roles beyond the 10,000 Black Interns programme.

76%

76% said it helped them prepare for interviews more generally.

80%

Almost 80% of interns in 2021 and 2022 felt they would not have got an internship without the programme.

40%

40% of interns in 2022 received other opportunities directly after completing their internships.



“The difference was the training sessions that were given to us. It helped to prepare for interviews (which are nerve wrecking for a beginner) and gave a glimpse on what recruiters are looking for.”

“The training prior to application made a significant difference and helped me in understanding what was required in my sector, as well as developing my commercial awareness.”

Another challenge highlighted in the This is Black Gen Z report as well as through the studies conducted by the Centre for Social Investigation 2019¹⁰ highlighted barriers in the application process. For example, 34% of Black Gen Z highlighted not knowing how to tailor their CV for different types of roles as a barrier during the application process, compared to 24% of White Gen Z.

Out of 234 responses, 46% of respondents stated that our own training sessions were “very impactful”, followed by 33% who stated they were somewhat impactful.

Chapter Four

Deepening Impact Beyond Scale



Operating at such a dramatic scale restricts our ability to create both breadth and depth of impact, specifically our ability to do deep development work on an individual level. However, over the last four years, we have uncovered a set of complex themes that have guided the creation of bespoke interventions, and created the building blocks for future strategy.

These dimensions have acted as a calling card to participating organisations and funders, and enabled us to begin developing beyond our programme, deepening our impact and ensuring that our support responds to some of the most immediate needs of our communities while meeting the challenges of a changing macroeconomic and sociopolitical environment.

Within this complex lattice, we have identified five core challenges that have proven to create the biggest hurdles, yet if surmounted, become the greatest enablers of transformation, both on an individual and systemic level.

These core themes cover contours of both our interns, and our participating organisations' experiences:

- Imposter syndrome as a blocker to applicant progression
- Intersectionality as critical to all future interventions
- Overcoming inequality in opportunity from a regional perspective
- Moving beyond the corporate world
- Diversity fatigue

Imposter Syndrome:

A Silent Killer Of Opportunity

A lack of confidence emerged as a key barrier for our community in applying to roles generally; stemming from intimidation of the recruitment process, imposter syndrome, and a feeling of not belonging.

Recurring themes emerged from our intern surveys, namely interns “feeling like they had a chance”, that “they belonged”, that their “confidence increased”, and that internship opportunities would not have been available to them without The 10,000 Interns Foundation.

5% of participating organisations surveyed between 2022 and 2024 explicitly mentioned that candidates were dropping out of the recruitment process due to self-expressed feelings of “imposter syndrome” and a lack of confidence.

This begs the question, how many more applicants are experiencing their own lack of confidence as a barrier to entry. From a candidate perspective, when asked about the impact 10,000 Black Interns had on their lives, 26% of survey respondents*, both programme alum, and applicants that were unsuccessful in securing an internship explicitly described the positive impact the programme had on their confidence, unprompted.

*this includes respondents from our four post-internship surveys to applicants and alum with a total of 1646 respondents

Hear It From Them: How The 10,000 Interns Foundation Programmes Bridged The Confidence Gap

“I run my own company. The internship program gave me the confidence to believe in myself. All my applications were successful, my last internship in particular at [company] had me peered with students from oxbridge / imperial and more. And my work was just as good as theirs. Proving that I was capable of anything”

“I got the sense that the process was in my favour and I actually had a chance. I know the vision of 10KIF is to hold me and others like me on their shoulders to reach organisations that would have been harder for me to reach otherwise.”

“The application process offered me different possibilities of areas that I could try; the training process was very important to improve my confidence since it was the first time I experienced being with a team focused on black students. Even though I was not approved for an internship the process helped to keep motivated to try other opportunities”

“I think the 10KBI process is set up to enable one to succeed while I think other applications are set up in a way that doesn't really cater for everyone to succeed if one doesn't have the right connections to point out simple things like how to draft a convincing application if you're not from a background where that is done regularly so there is nothing to compare your application to.”

“I applied via 10k because it's the first exclusive opportunity for me as a black person where I'm not worried that I won't be given the same application experience because of what I look like. It was also really reassuring to see other people that look like you strive to achieve greatly too and to not be the only person in the room that looked like you.”

“The 10,000 Interns Foundation bridged that learning gap and taught me how best to present my skills for prospective jobs and strengthened my overall confidence.”

“10,000 Black Interns restored my confidence after months of applying to job roles without any success. I was offered a position at the company I interned at and have now been there for over a year.”

“It was super easy to complete, seamless and stress free. Overall, it has provided me an opportunity to be highlighted to companies that would not look my way or give me a hard time with my application and I am so grateful for that. It made me feel valued & gave me the confidence to do my best at my current role which I was able to secure through 10,000 Interns.”

“Because we are made to apply for and be allocated to companies. I found myself interviewing with really prestigious companies and securing a role at one whereas on my own I would not have the confidence to send an application to one of them”

“It helped to boost my confidence and perspective of my future.”

“Something I heard recently “we were never meant to be here.” Seeing these rejections sometimes felt like an email confirming this statement. 10KBI changed that. They helped override these underlying issues. We simply applied then we were taken straight to landing pages that fast tracked the process for us. Which we deserved.”

“I had the confidence to apply for ambitious roles. I also learned how to do interviews and communicate with colleagues which fosters a healthy working environment”

“I think it enabled me to network and to understand the value I add to a team, but also how to add value to the team. It taught me about the industry and the ins and outs and the type of person you need to be to succeed within the industry. It made me sure of my capability and allowed me to have confidence in the fact that actually I can and do want a career within healthcare management.”

Addressing intersectionality:

The 10,000 Able Interns programme

The 10,000 Able Interns programme was piloted in 2022, and ran a full cycle in 2023 and 2024. Designed to trial our programmatic intervention to support another underserved group, the 10,000 Able Interns programme supported Disabled students and graduates, of all ethnicities, into paid internship roles within the early careers space.

The idea was to introduce specific programmes of support for other minoritised candidates, to eventually provide a full suite of programmes that addressed key categories of underrepresentation; race and ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic disadvantage.

Over the course of the 10,000 Able Interns Programme, we quantified our impact as the following key metrics:

10,000 Able Interns at a glance

Cycle Two

2024

No of interns: 25
No of organisations: 10

Cycle One

2023

No of interns: 100
No of organisations 61

Pilot

2022

No of interns: 25
No of organisations: 10

Reflections from our alumni:

Our 10,000 Able Interns alumni were asked about the value that the 10,000 Able Interns provided, their feedback can be categorised into three categories:

1. Support: The novel feeling of being supported by an organisation that acknowledged and accommodated their needs, whilst treating candidates like any other intern

2. Access: Having the opportunity to learn about career paths that were previously not considered due to lack of knowledge or confidence

3. Confidence: A straightforward application process that boosted confidence in applying for roles

“What I valued most was that my managers provided me with meaningful and challenging work as they would provide any other intern but were also very understanding when my disability meant that it would take me longer to complete a task. I was assured that my work would be useful to the company and I didn’t feel as though my work was dumbed down in any way.”



1. Support: The novel feeling of being supported by an organisation that acknowledged and accommodated their needs, whilst treating candidates like any other intern

2. Access: Having the opportunity to learn about career paths that were previously not considered due to lack of knowledge or confidence

3. Confidence: A straightforward application process that boosted confidence in applying for roles

“It has given me the opportunity to experience and learn about an area of business which was completely new to me, in an environment that was supportive of my disabilities. This is an opportunity I've never had before and I'm very grateful for the chances I've been given.”



1. **Support:** The novel feeling of being supported by an organisation that acknowledged and accommodated their needs, whilst treating candidates like any other intern

2. **Access:** Having the opportunity to learn about career paths that were previously not considered due to lack of knowledge or confidence

3. **Confidence:** A straightforward application process that boosted confidence in applying for roles

“I really valued the simplicity of the application process to the scheme, which made everything feel very easy and removed a lot of the pressure that can come with job applications.”



Knowledge Creation: The world of work as the new frontier

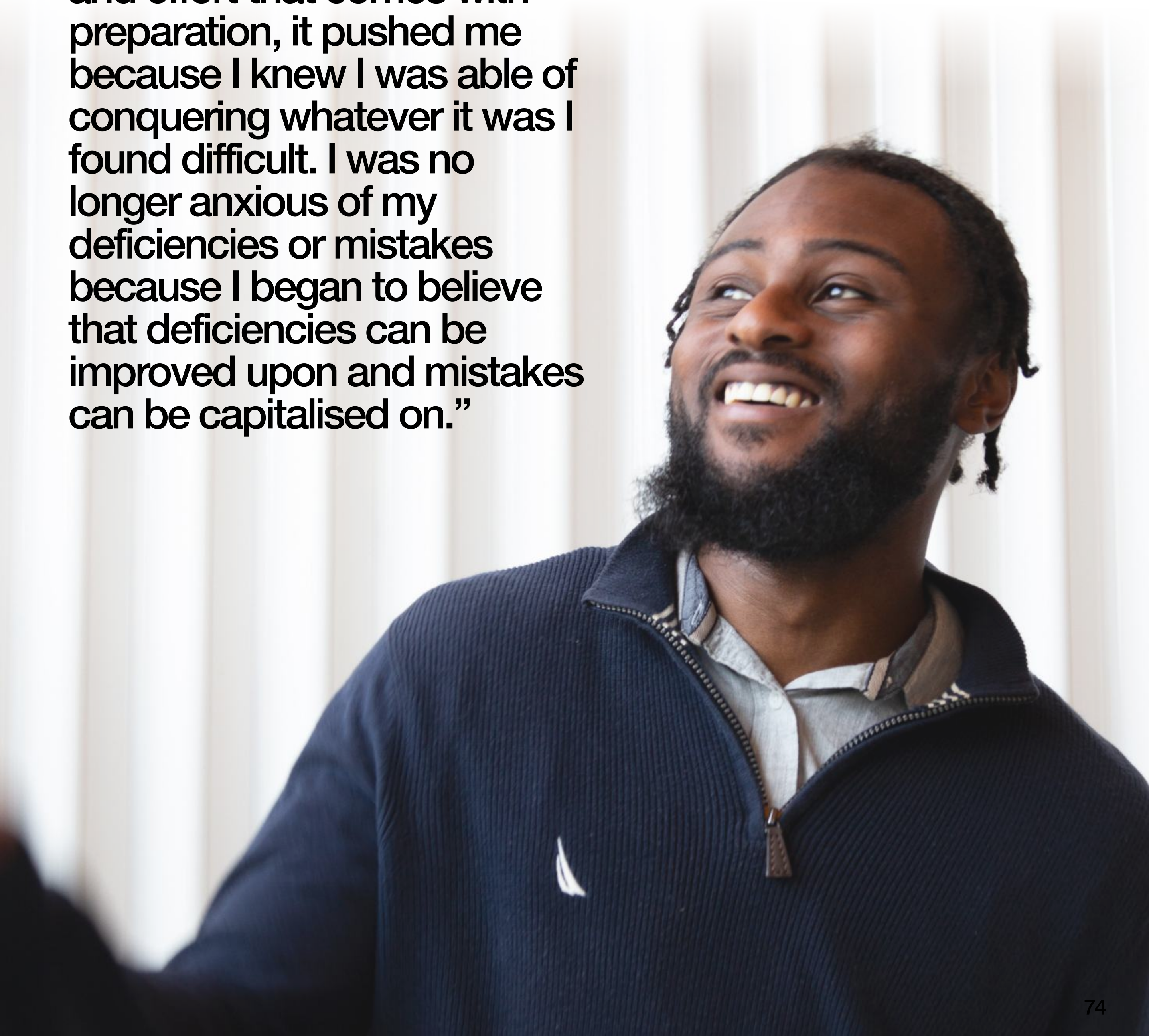
Similarly to the 10,000 Black Interns programme, candidates were using the 10,000 Able Interns programme to gain experience into the world of work, to improve their understanding of how to navigate the corporate world, and to gain insight into new career opportunities.

“I gained an even greater understanding of my strengths and weaknesses in a corporate setting, as well as the varying challenges that disabled people face across the workplace, regardless of setting, industry or sector”

“My intern programme put me through many new situations - lunches with seniors, networking events, meetings and presentations. Especially when going into new situations, preparation is vital but can make you aware of your deficiencies. This can be demotivating. When preparing for my presentation, I told a colleague that I was not good at public speaking. In response he told me, ‘Don’t say that, you’ve never done this before.’

When I first started presenting I would write out almost word for word what I would say then practice 10 times where I was happy with my performance.’ Hearing this shifted my mindset. Instead of being demotivated by the struggle and effort that comes with preparation, it pushed me because I knew I was able of conquering whatever it was I found difficult. I was no longer anxious of my deficiencies or mistakes because I began to believe that deficiencies can be improved upon and mistakes can be capitalised on.”

This continues to highlight the disconnect between green employees, and employers. Students and graduates with little experience of working life are often more cognisant of the limits of their knowledge and understand internships as learning opportunities, as opposed to employers who are, albeit unconsciously, using knowledge gaps as a barrier to entry in the early careers space, even when knowledge is necessarily limited across the board at this level of employment.



Disclosure as a means to thrive

Through feedback from our applicants and alumni, candidates overwhelmingly had not experienced a safe space to disclose their disability before in the workplace, and that environments that encouraged disclosure sensitively empowered Disabled candidates to thrive, improving their confidence in the recruitment process and subsequently, the world of work.

One candidate shared,

“I felt more confident knowing that it was okay to be upfront about my disability and the accommodations I would need from the very beginning of the recruitment process. Usually, I would worry about when it was safe to disclose without it negatively affecting my application.”

Another said,

“I felt I could be completely open and honest about my disability in a way I haven’t before.”

A third candidate highlighted the challenges faced when disabilities are undiagnosed or not fully understood:

“When I was going through the recruitment process, I wasn’t yet aware of my neurodiverse condition. I often passed the application stage and sometimes got through to interviews, but I struggled with the tests or quizzes required to move forward. This meant I missed out on opportunities.

I think it’s time firms reconsider how much they rely on these tests, as they don’t accurately reflect the abilities of many people with learning disabilities.”

One organisation took a proactive approach after participating in the programme. They developed a new process, known as the “wand” which allowed employees to safely disclose their needs. This initiative significantly improved communication around reasonable adjustments within the company.

They said:

“We don't want to know why people need it. We don't need to know anybody's disability or diversity. We just need to know what they may need. So we encourage people to maybe list the support they get at university, or they've had a school. So that gives some sort of guidance, and then we can signpost. The managers say ‘right. This is how you can get what you need... [this form] belongs to the user, it doesn't belong to the company, the users don't have to declare it. But rather than saying, ‘Oh, I need to ask for some help, and I don't know what to say’. It's just saying, put it all into there and tell us you have a wand, and we'll take it from there. It's just that it's making them comfortable.”



In conversation
with

Co-Founder,
Sami Dar

Can you describe why you founded the 10,000 Able Interns programme?

I founded the 10,000 Able Interns programme off the back of my own experiences as a Disabled student - I felt as if my disability made it difficult for me to compete for internships and jobs at the same level as my able-bodied peers. The available data on young Disabled people and their employment prospects, seemed to tell a story of a shared experience across the Disabled community.

I set about trying to implement a framework to tackle the issue, and in doing so, began working with the co-founders of 10,000 Black Interns to reach a more polished offering - 10,000 Able Interns.

What was your initial vision for the programme?

My initial vision for the programme was to give young Disabled people the confidence, industry exposure, and income they needed to help kickstart their careers. Since speaking to some of our interns, there are countless benefits to participating as an intern that I had never considered, but those were my initial hopes for the programme.

Why do you think the work we do is important?

The work we do is important because those from underrepresented backgrounds compete from a starting point much farther behind their peers. I come from a working-class background myself, and I was the first member of my family to pursue education beyond GCSEs, so even the concept of university applications was foreign to me. Growing up, I'd heard internships mentioned in films, and I assumed they were a largely American concept. I had no idea of the scale of their presence or significance until my second year of university, with everyone around me frantically submitting applications.

Whilst I was getting to grips with the different types of internships, I had friends with two spring weeks and a summer internship in investment banking under their belt. They already had one foot in the door.

When you compound this with my disability, I was always going to have to grit my teeth and slog it out in order to catch up. Lesser privileged individuals are often just as talented, but simply never get the chance to prove it.



What would you like the future to look like for the talent that comes through our programmes?

I would like their identity not to impact their career prospects. It looks straightforward when I put it down on paper, but there's still a long way to go.

What would you say are the specific challenges faced by the Disabled community in the early careers space, that differ from those impacting other minoritised communities?

There's a lot to unpack. I think the breadth of disability makes it difficult for firms to cater to Disabled employees. Perhaps not difficult, but I think the thought of such breadth strikes an unnecessary fear into the hearts of some firms. People fear what they don't know, and people don't know much about disability. Beyond this, there are so many other challenges: difficulties networking, commuting challenges, needs during the hiring process not being met, physical accessibility, the typical 9-5 structure and how it can impact fatigue, the sensory challenges that come with typical office environments - the list goes on

Time for Pause: Understanding the power of a single intervention

Intersectionality helps us understand how different aspects of a person's identity—such as being Black, Disabled, and from a working-class background—combine to shape their experiences, particularly when entering the workplace, due to systems of bias. By recognizing these overlapping identities, we can better appreciate the unique challenges faced by individuals on our programmes and tailor our support to meet their specific needs. It is essential that we are promoting intersectionality in the right way, this includes ensuring that our students who experience multiple barriers to entry, on account of their ethnicity, disability, gender and/or more, are supported through a single intervention that allows them to express themselves fully, without having to preference which facet of their identities works as the biggest barrier to entry.

In 2024, we decided to pause our 10,000 Able Interns program to assess its impact and explore how we can better support our Disabled community. While intersectionality is important, we also recognize that supporting the Disabled community presents its own unique challenges. Although different communities often intersect, they also face distinct barriers that require specific approaches.

Our goal is to collaborate with employers and organisations that are already doing meaningful work in supporting the Disabled community. By doing so, we can ensure that candidates who are both Black and Disabled receive the highest level of accessibility and support from our Foundation. We are committed to continuing to support our alumni from the 10,000 Able Interns programme while integrating the insights we've gained into our broader 10,000 Black Interns initiative. In practical terms, this involves partnering with DCC charities to maintain support for our alumni while applying lessons learned to our 10,000 Black Interns programme.

Managing Regional Inequality within Opportunity:

According to the gov.scot website, “structural inequalities, reflected as relative disadvantage and privilege, are the outcomes of the interaction between social categories, power relations, and contexts. As a result, an individual's experiences of inequality can be chronic or transitory, creating unique lived experiences.”

This concept becomes especially relevant when we look beyond London, as the way intersecting identities show up—and how people experience being part of a minority—can vary greatly. For instance, in Glasgow, a working-class Black candidate might find that their race is felt as an influencing part of their lived experience above and beyond their class, due to the local demographics and available support systems. We spoke to a Scotland-based organisation that said their diversity and inclusion efforts were focused on socio-economic disadvantage, but they were struggling to engage with people of colour.

On the other hand, some organisations in the City of London have found it easier to include Black students and graduates from more privileged backgrounds but have had difficulty reaching those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These students often struggle to get through the recruitment process, highlighting the specific challenges faced by those who are both Black and economically disadvantaged. This demonstrates the need for an inclusive approach that takes multiple factors into account and adapts to different regional contexts.

With 25% of our internship hires coming from outside London, it's clear that we need to develop strategies tailored to the specific conditions of different regions.

When working on a large scale, it's crucial to recognize that everyone involved—whether organisations, partners, donors, or interns—is at a different stage in their understanding of workplace inequality. The conversation around diversity varies depending on the context, so our strategies need to be informed by local demographic data and the community's cultural literacy. Progress can only move as fast as the slowest participant, so we must be mindful of this in our collective efforts.

To promote diversity in less diverse regions, one effective approach is to connect the relevant experiences and challenges across communities. We've found that in these areas, it's more impactful to engage deeply with a small group of diverse talent rather than trying to make sweeping changes to visible diversity where it's lacking. This is one example of the ways we can deepen impact, despite working at scale.

Our research indicates that as we move further from London and the UK's most diverse cities, incidents of ignorance around race and ethnicity during internship placements become more common, and we must create bespoke solutions for interns and organisations in these cases.



Alumni X's Story

“For a first year in a four-year degree, getting an internship has been the biggest delight. I’ve managed to get ahead before the standard timeline which has given me the knowledge and confidence to put my best foot forward when applying to Spring Weeks soon. I’m grateful for the skills I am currently learning from my internship, but sad about how I’ve been treated. In my interview, my now boss told me she thought it was racist for the company to be “singling out black people” and that she feels saying “blacks” is racist (yes, she said blacks).

She also assumed I needed visa sponsorship even though I’m a British citizen and had small talk with her at the beginning about living in Scotland all my life.

She also told me that she was rejecting the person she interviewed before me because she “couldn’t understand his accent” and that “he was probably an international student needing sponsorship”. She then started praising me for speaking “so proper” even though I am Scottish and have been raised in white spaces my whole life.

I just felt so singled out for this but still pursued the internship because it would be idiotic of me to throw away a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity like this.

However, now that my internships began, no one there bar one of my bosses (but he's under her and she's my main boss) makes me feel welcome and has a chat and a laugh with me. I have to sit on my own for breakfast and lunch, and when my boss is around she'll take me to a table with some of the colleagues we manage (I work in Operations so I've become one of their managers for six weeks) are constantly excluding me and saying I can't understand their Glaswegian accents and laughing, even though I can. Most of my teachers at school were Glaswegian.

It just makes me sad that they don't think I'm Scottish enough because of how I look. There's also no other people of colour at my workplace. I've never experienced it this badly before ever, even in my secondary school days. I feel so isolated. My professional development has been good so far (thank goodness) but personally I feel so lonely and miserable. I'm in a whole new city 4 hours from home by myself, I miss my boyfriend and my family so much. I wish I wasn't just seen as the diversity hire at my workplace.

Thank you so much for the work you are doing as an organisation because despite everything this proves how integral your work is still. No one can convince me that DE&I is not necessary in our workplaces because from what I'm experiencing it is more than integral."

The 10,000 Interns Foundation is working to convene a network both in-person and digitally, creating an accessible avenue for Black students and graduates to create community even in areas where representation is relatively low. Research participants unreservedly shared the power 10,000 Interns Foundation had in creating community, with past colleagues, interns, and bosses, in some cases, making connections that they hope to last a lifetime, despite this, it feels important to highlight experiences, like the one above, that show how far we still have to go.



Moving Beyond Corporate:

Addressing the Gaps Through the Arts & Culture Collective

Diversity and inclusion in the UK's arts sector have been the subject of significant discussion and effort in recent years. Historically, the sector has struggled with the underrepresentation of minority groups across various roles, from creative positions to leadership.

Despite conversations on diversity being commonplace in the sector, the Arts are increasingly underfunded in the UK, with unpaid internships a common route into the industry, rendering the arts traditionally, and increasingly, inaccessible as a career path for many.

In fact, according to the Sutton Trust almost 90% of internships in the arts were unpaid, and 77% of people working the creative sector have at some point in their career worked for free¹³.

The Arts Council England reported in 2021 that only 13% of the workforce in the arts and cultural sector identified as Black, Asian, with only 3% identifying as Black¹¹. Furthermore, in 2020, only 5% of leadership roles in publicly funded arts organisations were held by individuals from BAME communities, falling to less than 1% for Black populations, illustrating the significant gap in representation at senior levels.

Not only is there a disparity in opportunities for progression, but also in the availability of certain types of roles within the arts, and the distribution of roles across different functions within the sector.

Black professionals are more likely to be found in administrative roles rather than in creative or decision-making positions. Creative roles, which include positions like artists, performers, curators, and directors, are crucial for influencing the cultural output and direction of the sector. However, these roles remain predominantly occupied by white individuals.

A study conducted by Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 2019¹² found that only 1.2% of curatorial positions in UK museums were held by Black professionals. Similarly, leadership and senior creative roles are also significantly less diverse, with Black representation often falling below 2%. In contrast, Black employees are overrepresented in lower-paid, non-creative roles such as front-of-house, where they are more visible but less influential in shaping the artistic and cultural narrative, rendering stories told through art as incomplete, further perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

In the Spring of 2023, the Foundation launched an “Arts & Culture Collective”, an initiative that sought to bring a new approach to the sector.

The Arts & Culture collective brought together 10 industry leaders for an initial round-table discussion to understand the challenges facing the sector and how we could facilitate an industry-wide collaboration to improve accessibility to primarily creative-facing roles.

Two years later we have created over 100 paid internships across 29 creative and cultural institutions.

One founding participant emphasised the need for more cultural sector organisations to participate in internship programmes like the ones organised by The 10,000 Interns Foundation to utilise the abundance of talented and interested candidates from diverse backgrounds, and dispel the myth of a lack of interest among people of colour.

In his article¹⁴ on the importance of paid internships in the arts, and their involvement with the 10,000 Interns Foundation, Henry Dowson at Artiq speaks on the stats:

“These numbers are indicators of the socio-economic barriers that act as a deadbolt lock on the door to creative careers. The harsh reality of these statistics is founded in radical budget cuts, both from within and outside of the cultural sector... At large, institutions and arts organisations simply do not have the funds to invest into artistic futures.”

He goes on to suggest that “paid internships have been linked to social mobility, with 74% of individuals from working class households demonstrating signs of positive social mobility after completing a paid internship.”

Surveys and exploration lab sessions have revealed a huge desire to support Black talent into these spaces but an inability to offer opportunities at scale due to lack of capacity and financial resources. We have found support to scale this impact by engaging partners to pay intern’s salaries. We hope to scale this effort further by bringing on many more institutions across the UK and building an Arts & Culture specific alumni group that helps understand and bridge the challenges of progression.

Diversity Fatigue:

Sustaining Support through Corporate Membership

As we refined our programme, several operational challenges emerged for participating organisations. These included internal criteria that limited candidate selection, such as requiring penultimate-year students or adhering to specific recruitment timelines. In industries like consulting and financial services, earlier recruitment windows led to mismatched timelines, causing some talent to be overlooked.

“The eligibility criteria is still a big blocker for us (and lots of other companies) where we have set eligibility criteria for our interns (penultimate year of university)” noted one participant.

At the same time, as we moved further from the events of 2020, we noticed a rise in “diversity fatigue,” with race and ethnicity slipping down the corporate agenda. This mirrored wider macro-economic discourse that saw a growing backlash against ‘ESG’; interventions focused on racial discrimination seemingly caught in the cross-fire.

Between the second and third cycles of our expanded 10,000 Black Interns program, our “rollover” rate dropped from 67.4% to 53%, with most organisations leaving due to budget cuts or shifts in strategy. This trend.

In response, we launched our Corporate Membership Scheme in October 2023, with Premier Membership addressing key challenges for participating organisations. This scheme helped keep Blackness a priority in the DEI space amid competing demands, encouraging organisations to sustainably and consistently support our mission.

To maximise participation, we offered simple solutions without compromising our mission: bespoke candidate slates for Premier Members and an “early application window” in 2024, allowing organisations to start recruitment earlier.

The Corporate Membership Scheme also enabled organisations to engage with us beyond the program and financially support our mission. Premier Members could signal their commitment to DEI beyond recruitment and align with broader internal objectives. Community Members became part of our activities beyond the free programme, with opportunities to learn from other employers, network with alumni, and gain DEI insights.

58 Community Members
donate an average of **£3,045**

17 Premier Members
donate an average of **£15,482**

Corporate Membership largely replaced our voluntary donation model which only saw 11.5% of our participating organisations contribute to the charity. Corporate Membership now makes up 77% of our annual fundraising target.



Chapter Five

**Beyond internships, Moving
through the open door**



The report began with a quote from The McGregor Smith Review, stating that

“there is discrimination and bias at every stage of an individual's career, and even before it begins. From networks to recruitment and then in the workforce, it is there...”

The quote ends like this:

“BME people are faced with a distinct lack of role models, they are more likely to perceive the workplace as hostile, they are less likely to apply for and be given promotions and they are more likely to be disciplined or judged harshly.”

So, we've opened the door, but what next?

As we surveyed more of our alumni, there was a clear need for us to go beyond our internship programme, with alumni and participating organisations alike asking, “what happens when you reach 10,000 interns?”. To understand how to craft the most appropriate interventions, we took our insights and situated them within a textural analysis of some of the leading reports on race in the workplace from 2017-2023 (please see appendix).

All the studies have highlighted that in workplaces where Black employees can be their authentic selves, where they identify representation, and feel as though there is room for progression, there are huge benefits for both the employees and their employers. When they thrive – rather than just survive – in the workplace, Black employees perform to the best of their ability, feel passionate and committed about their work, and are more likely to stay with their employer.

Looking Ahead:

The next 10 years

We have developed a 10 year strategy to ensure that the Foundation knows its direction once we reach our original mission. Our strategy centres on some of the key questions that have come out of our work so far and offers a framework within which we will answer them over the coming years, using a data-led approach that focuses on systems change, rather than pure delivery.

The 10,000 Intern's Foundation's new 10 year strategy is an action plan to support Black and Black heritage students through the door and allow them to fully integrate into the world of work in a culture that looks and feels adapted towards them, helping organisations to make the changes that will better support their culture and their new workforce..

Our strategy will ensure that the future looks different for Black talent as our vision for impact moves beyond scaling for growth, to a truly transformational mission which hopes to leave the workplace changed, for everyone.

Creating access to opportunity was the first piece of the puzzle. Now, our work will promote equity of opportunity and experience by:

- Increasing entry and success: Continuing to promote access to opportunities for Black students and graduates through our internship programme 10,000 Black Interns
- Building the leading network of Black talent: Creating a new suite of interventions to support our alumni network, and our pool of applicants that were unsuccessful in securing internships. This includes networking and mentoring opportunities that are made fully accessible to regionally diverse alum through full digital activation. Coaching, mental health support, and the surfacing of graduate roles.
- Reframing recruitment & retention: Working with members and partners create most inclusive workplace practices and processes and meet the challenges of the future.

Key to our strategy is understanding what the enablers of true transformation are and how do we create the most amount of opportunity for the most amount of people. Our strategy will be underpinned by a data-led approach, ensuring that we are informed by insights from our unique, and rich data pool.

Data & Measurable Outcomes

One of the biggest challenges facing UK industry is a lack of data on diverse experiences in the workplace. We have an incredible opportunity to improve the understanding of the Black talent experience in the UK, with a data pool spanning over 50,000 applicants, and 1,000 businesses, we hold a wealth of insights ready to be explored. Cultivating a shared understanding is potentially the single biggest challenge facing the Black community in relation to entry and progression in the workplace.

As one organisation remarked, despite a positive experience with the 10,000 Black Interns programme, they were struggling to navigate creating a truly inclusive environment. The main challenge? Lack of data

“We’re trying to better understand what we can do to allow people to better settle, to feel more comfortable in our environment. What do we need to change? What will allow them to thrive? We don’t have the data that will allow us to do that, and perhaps that is partly our fault. Perhaps people don’t feel comfortable to give us that data.”



So we will understand the impact of our activity, and create better outcomes for our communities by:

- Measuring the growth of the number of entrants, members and organisations engaging with our programmes
- Measuring improved career prospects, progression, and retention
- Understanding the growing adoption of best practice by creating an index benchmarking the inclusive practices of participating organisations
- Measuring the engagement of our alumni network through events and digital activations
- Developing a unique data set on the Black talent experience by folding surveying and feedback into our BAU activity
- Building a robust funding pipeline and organisational structure

A key transition into the next chapter is changing the way Black talent perceives, is perceived by, and interacts with the world of work. We will be the change the UK needs in collecting and understanding insights on the community, with the community, as the community.

By 2030, Black and Black heritage students will make up 20% of the classroom. By 2030, skills for jobs in the UK are set to change by 65%.

The labour market we currently have cannot meet the needs of the future. And barriers facing the talent of tomorrow cannot be allowed to persist. The racism (structural, unconscious, and interpersonal) that our young Black communities still encounter is creating soon to be insurmountable divisions with the fabric of our society.

Our programmes have shown the power of opportunity: changing lives and challenging long-held misconceptions. In our vision of an inclusive future, everyone wins, but in order to build this future we must accept that there is no silver bullet, but a myriad of complex challenges, and a seemingly ever evasive problem that we ‘can’t really describe’.

In order to be successful, we require everyone to commit to this vision because now we know that those furthest from the challenge are often those closest to the solution. We thank all those who have opened the door with us so far, and we are calling on new partners, funders, and members to support us in being the change.

**“If you want to go fast, go alone;
if you want to go far, go together”**

African proverb

We are 10,000 interns, we are talented, and we are here, join us.

Partners

Our partners are our allies. They support our infrastructure and our innovation and are the organisations that allow us to sustainably maintain and grow our mission and our activities.

We work with two types of partners; Strategic, and Pioneer.

Strategic Partners support us through funding. Some of our Strategic Partners fund particular projects that feed into their own key objectives, and others provide unrestricted funding allowing us to fortify our infrastructure and grow as an organisation.

Pioneer Partners provide us largely with support in-kind. The support of our pioneers means that we are able to innovate, and to deepen the impact of our work. Some of our Pioneer Partners provide services crucial to the functioning of the Foundation, e.g legal support, others provide resources to our stakeholders, e.g extensive training programmes.

New Frontiers

Unrestricted funding allows the Foundation to focus on systems change innovations, whilst also running a functional programme. Unrestricted funding supports the Foundation's entire community of interns, alumni, and participating organisations.

Restricted Funding

Some partners have chosen to support the Foundation by funding specific projects such as education based training programmes, community building and events, or impact reporting, data collection, and research.

Support In Kind

Many of the interventions that go beyond our programmes to support our community are tailored offerings from our partners. From interview outfits, to travel support, to accommodation, to firm training, our partners allow us to offer holistic support.

MSCI



LinkedIn



BUNAC

RA
Royal
Academy
of Arts

+simmons
simmons



PERMIRA

SMART
WORKS

FINANCIALEDGE¹

Cappfinity

CHRISTIE'S

Q5



RUSSELL
GROUP

Bloomberg



Buttinghill Foundation



Terminology / Glossary

BAME

As an organisation, we choose not to use the terms “BAME” and “BME”, as they are umbrella terms for separate communities that experience the world in nuanced and varied ways, including facing different and unique challenges in the workplace. Given the lack of data on race and ethnicity in the workplace, some of the research we have used in this report uses “BAME” and “BME” terminology. This research is illustrative, and where we have been able to, we have extrapolated data pertaining specifically to Black communities.

Disabled

We refer to “Disabled” people, or “persons with disability” in line with disability-inclusive language which promotes a “person centred approach”. We avoid language such as “Differently abled” which is a euphemism that avoids talking about a person's disability in specific terms.

Minoritised

We refer to ‘minoritised’ communities or peoples throughout the report. Minoritised people are often part of the ‘global majority’ but find themselves in the minority in specific circumstances (on account of structural inequalities or otherwise), as a result of their racial or ethnic identities.

Race

We refer to “race” as a social construct, and the ways it impacts our ethnically diverse candidates. We acknowledge Blackness in all its multiplicities, the variety of Black communities, and the specific challenges faced by people across a spectrum of ethnicities.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to our research partners, Q5, and Clearview Research, who amplified the importance of working with organisations that share in, and are invested in, your mission.

ClearView Research (ClearView) is an audience insight and strategy agency. They are leaders in providing culturally-informed insights and recruiting from diverse populations. They specialise in working on research, evaluation, engagement and strategy projects with children & young people, minority ethnic groups, culturally diverse communities, people living in vulnerable circumstances, people with protected characteristics, and those who often go unheard. They are committed to ensuring that our work is always inclusive and equitable, including ensuring that participants' voices are central in the materials (e.g. reports, frameworks, videos and interventions) that they produce.

Q5 is a global, award-winning consulting firm that specialises in organisational health. They help organisations deliver the right performance now and sustain it for the future. Q5 collaborates with clients to develop and deliver strategy, design operating models, develop their people, improve organisational culture, and deliver organisational change at speed. They also work with leaders at all levels to cultivate their inclusive leadership behaviours, to nurture a culture of equity and belonging and create a more inclusive and engaging workplace experience for diverse teams. With over 15 years delivering sustainable transformation, their highly qualified team shares a passion for driving improvements through a structured yet bespoke, people-centric design approach. Q5 provide £1,000,000 of in-kind consultancy services to Not-for-Profit organisations and initiatives each year, through the Q5 Foundation.

A note of appreciation for Daniel Levy at Q5 who became a true ally in the research process, and of our mission at large, offering thoughtful takes and listening readily, intentionally centring the voices of the community. It was a joy to work alongside you, and Ellie.

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