



BBC Audience Council Members Role Description

1. Overview and Purpose

The BBC Audience Councils are advisory bodies of the BBC Trust, the governing body of the BBC. There are four Audience Councils – for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The BBC Trust's role is to get the best out of the BBC for licence fee payers. This involves ensuring that the BBC operates in the public interest and delivers the high quality and distinctive programmes that licence fee payers demand. The Trust is also responsible for ensuring that the independence of the BBC is safeguarded.

The Audience Councils play an important role in providing the Trust with informed insights on the views, needs and interests of audiences in their respective nations, and on how well the BBC is serving these audiences and delivering its Public Purposes through its portfolio of UK-wide and local services (see Appendix One).

Audience Council members are appointed by the BBC Trust, usually for a term of three years, as independent volunteers from outside the BBC. Each Council is chaired by the Trust member for the relevant nation, and there are 12 members in total (with the exception of Audience Council England which has 13 members).

2. Outputs and Activities

The Audience Councils bring the views and perspectives of local audiences to bear on the work of the Trust in a number of ways:

- i. They assess how well the BBC is performing for audiences in their nation, most notably through an annual report to the Trust.
- ii. They provide input into the Trust decision-making process, for instance in reviews of services or policies, or decisions about major changes to services.
- iii. They identify emerging issues of importance to local audiences which inform the Trust's annual workplan.

This is achieved through the following activities:

Audience Council Meetings: Audience Councils meet between 6 and 8 times a year to discuss and consider the advice they will provide for the Trust, drawing on a range of audience information. Minutes are taken and published on the Council's webpages.

There are also mechanisms for the four Audience Councils to work together to provide advice for the Trust on matters of common interest to audiences in different parts of the UK.

Understanding audiences: Each Audience Council has a programme of direct engagement with different sections of the audience in their nation to understand the range of audience needs and perspectives. These activities are shared among Council members who listen to audience views and sometimes facilitate discussion. In England this is achieved through a network of audience panels, each led by a Council member. Council members also draw on their own understanding of local audiences, and their personal, social and professional networks, to contribute to Council discussions.

Providing advice to the BBC Trust: The Audience Councils report regularly to the Trust and provide advice into various streams of Trust work, such as reviews of BBC services. Each year representatives of the four Audience Councils meet with the BBC Trust to discuss the priorities for audiences around the UK. The Councils also make an annual report to the Trust, a version of which is published.

3. Time Commitment

In order to effectively deliver the work of the Audience Council, members are asked to make a time commitment of approximately 12 days per year, although some months may be busier than others. This includes attending meetings and outreach events along with other activities, such as preparation and travel. Audience Council England members will also attend regional panel meetings.

4. Remuneration

This is a voluntary, unpaid position. However, any travel, accommodation or other expenses incurred as a result of Audience Council business are paid in line with a published expenses policy.

5. Standards and Conflicts of Interest

As with other public bodies, members are expected to apply high standards of behaviour in their approach to their role and responsibilities. The Trust has adopted the standards outlined by the Committee on Standards of Public Life (see Appendix Two). It is also necessary for members of all Audience Councils to declare any potential conflicts of interest.

6. Support

Audience Council members are supported in their role by staff from the BBC's Trust Unit.

Trust Unit staff provide information and advice to the Audience Councils and organise and support their meetings and activities. An induction programme is provided for new members.

7. Selection Process

Council members are selected through an open selection process. Vacancies are generally advertised on BBC services and sometimes in the local press. Usually a shortlist is compiled and shortlisted candidates are invited to interview.

Membership is open to anyone aged over 16, except: certain elected political representatives; office-holders in political parties; senior public servants; BBC employees; senior employees of major suppliers to the BBC; and senior employees of other media organisations.⁽¹⁾

The following selection criteria will be used when considering who to nominate as members of the Audience Councils:

1. An understanding of the role of the BBC as a public service broadcaster, and an informed interest in its local and UK-wide services across television, radio and online.
2. An understanding of the diversity, needs and interests of audiences in the relevant nation in relation to the range of BBC UK-wide and local programmes and services.
3. An ability to use audience feedback, views and concerns, along with a range of other audience information, to provide strategic advice to the Trust.

4. Experience of working collaboratively with others (for example in a voluntary, community or other organisation) to identify and achieve group objectives.
For Audience Council England : Experience of facilitating discussions and working collaboratively with others (for example, in a voluntary, community or other organisation) to identify and achieve group objectives.
5. A willingness to make the time commitment necessary and work to the standards expected of members.
6. You must be a resident in the part of the UK represented by the Audience Council.

Appointments are based on merit and with regard, given the purpose of Audience Councils, to the desirability of including people with varied skills, experiences, knowledge and background from different parts of the nation.

8. Further Information

Further information about the BBC's Audience Councils can be found on the BBC Trust's website at

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/who_we_are/audience_councils/

^[1] For more information about roles that might exclude people from membership of an Audience Council please see the Audience Councils Protocol F3 at :

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/regulatory_framework/protocols/trust_operations.html

APPENDIX ONE: The BBC's Public Purposes

The BBC is a public service broadcaster with a specific remit to promote six Public Purposes. They are:

1. Sustaining citizenship and civil society
2. Promoting education and learning
3. Stimulating creativity and cultural excellence
4. Representing the UK, its nations, regions and communities
5. Bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK
6. In promoting its other purposes, helping to deliver to the public the benefit of emerging communications technologies and services and, in addition, taking a leading role in the switchover to digital television

For more information about the Public Purposes, see:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/governance/tools_we_use/public_purposes.html

APPENDIX TWO: Seven Principles of Public Life

Audience Council members are expected to apply high standards of behaviour in their work for the BBC. The Seven Principles of Public Life, outlined below, set out the standards that should guide the work of Council members.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make decisions on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should always be as open as possible about all decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The Seven Principles of Public Life were developed by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, an independent advisory body to the UK government which monitors, reports and makes recommendations on issues in relation to public life.