Across the third sector, organisations focused on embedding and improving equalities and human rights in Scotland are working tirelessly and on tight budgets. The majority of organisations have seen a real terms decrease in funding and are tied to short term funding contracts.

Equate Scotland has been funded by the Scottish Government (through Equality Funding) in some way since 2006 and our funding for our core activities has remained static since 2012, which has created a significant real term cut in the resources available for staffing and free support for women. All of our work with women is delivered at no cost to the women themselves as we feel this would exacerbate the inequality they already experience by being under employed or unemployed across the STEM sectors. To overcome this challenge of decreasing funding and increases in interest and need for our work, we have attempted to focus some of our attention and very limited unrestricted resources on identifying and pursuing income generating opportunities. However, these opportunities are very limited in number, as we do not believe it would be ethical or appropriate for us to divert our attention into opportunities that are not in keeping with our core mission and aim of tackling occupational segregation and supporting, recruiting and retaining women across the STEM sectors.

Public funding challenges for the third sector:
The reality of tighter budgets and in some cases, real terms cuts has had an impact on delivery of services and activities. For example, at Equate Scotland, as of this funding year (which started on the 1st of July 2019), we can no longer provide one to one career clinics which support women seeking work or experiencing difficulties at work, through our Scottish Government funding, as costs of delivery, staffing and operations have increased, and funding has remained static. Both our coaching and career clinic services were at capacity 6 months into the funding year 2018/19.

For other third sector organisations this is a more pronounced and difficult issue, with multiple services and activities either being limited or ceasing delivery.

Whilst we continue to live under austerity and cuts to public services across the UK, demand for equalities and human rights related work delivered by the third sector, will only increase. As such, the current level of public funding to third sector organisations delivering equalities related work is unlikely to be enough to meet demand and certainly not enough to embed sustainable, long term measures or attitudinal/culture change.

Further challenges are faced by the third sector in the short term nature of funding. For a number of years Equate Scotland (and other third sector organisations) have continued to be offered one year funding contracts only, furthermore the confirmation of funding is usually provided only 4-6 weeks before the end of the current funded year. As a consequence of this, third sector organisations can struggle to maintain momentum and engagement with the base of clients/communities they are working with, as they are unable to provide long term plans on their services. Furthermore, there is an added issue of retention of staff, as one year/short term contracts become the norm across the third sector and drive away individuals to seek out more secure or permanent jobs in other sectors. This consequently means that the third sector is constrained in providing the inclusive and fair working environment that we
are attempting to encourage others across Scotland to deliver.

**Monitoring and evaluation/accountability:**
Scottish Government funding includes quarterly financial and objectives updates and year end reviews which provide fairly detailed feedback and accountability measures in place to ensure funded projects are meeting requirements. Equate Scotland, like many funded organisations, has its own monitoring and evaluating processes in place, which include training feedback, stakeholder feedback, case studies and equal opportunities monitoring data.

However, there is scope to review the impact of organisations working on equalities and human rights to influence and develop national and local policy making. In order to assess whether our organisations are having the required positive impact, a review needs to take place of who has access to influence and whether this influence is informed by the very individuals impacted by the policies being implemented (i.e. those communities which equalities and human rights organisations predominantly work with and for). By doing so, we can gather a better understanding of whether impact is being made and whether processes within Government and Parliament facilitate this positive impact fully.

**Creating conditions where we can most effectively tackle inequality:**

There is a need for more competent, disaggregated and intersectional data which can provide us with a baseline and understanding of progress on our work towards equality. This, more detailed, data is needed in understanding inequality in education, employment, civic participation and influence, health, justice and beyond. In order for us to determine whether positive impact is being made and that national priorities are being achieved (which is the responsibility of multiple influencers beyond the third sector) there needs to be an investment in data collection and analysis which informs policy making and project delivery.

Finally, in order for Scotland to become more effective in its delivery of equality and human rights, there needs to be a high level of equalities (intersectional) competency across the third sector, public sector and policy influencers. There needs to be an expectation that an intersectional approach will be taken when delivering work towards national priorities, along with support to learn relevant skills to deliver this. By doing so, we are more likely to have a deeper and more sustainable impact for the communities who need us the most, for example, those who are working class and disabled or BME women.