

This is Battersea Arts Centre's Arts Council England application for "Creative and Social Change Network" – now called "Co-Creating Change" – as you can tell, it is not just the language has moved on since we made this application – we have also changed some of the ideas about how the network might operate based on conversations to date and more thinking.

1. Meeting the brief

Weighting: 50 per cent

WHY THIS PROPOSAL IS IMPORTANT

The activity of cultural organisations in the UK is often defined by artistic directors and curators. These individuals often come from a relatively narrow demographic of the population. The participation model for the institutions they lead is often based on an invitation to the public "to come and do what we do". Unsurprisingly, this model has perpetuated rather than expanded the demographic of people who engage in culture. As a result, the sector is currently super-serving the most socio-economically advantaged people in our society, as described in the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value in 2015.

Reflecting this concern, Arts Council England is driving an agenda for culture to become "an integral part of everyday life, accessible to all, and understood as essential to the national economy and to the health and happiness of society" as per the current 10-year strategic framework. The new 10-year strategy is likely to go further in terms of supporting socially engaged arts practice. How will this be delivered?

There is a growing movement of artists and organisations in England who think that the sector needs to urgently grow its collective purpose and practice, beyond a narrow definition of participation which tends to breed more of the same work, towards a model where we co-create in partnership with communities. They understand that "improving access and increasing engagement are no longer enough: communities should be engaged at a deeper level in determining what the arts and creativity mean for them" (*Rethinking Relationships*, Calouste Gulbenkian, 2017). This is the work that reaches the heart of the Creative Case for Diversity, work we must support and grow if the arts sector is to achieve our ambition of truly enriching the arts for artists, audiences and our wider society.

Yet despite a groundswell of excellent co-created work, the wider sector has failed to establish models and talent pipelines for commissioning, showcasing and distributing work of this nature. The result is that excellent socially engaged arts practice is often isolated and poorly understood. This is bad for artists because it reduces the opportunity for their work to be experienced by a wider audience, bad for arts organisations because best practice is not shared, and bad for the public because great ideas often do not reach beyond a single community.

This is at odds with a sector which is proficient and practiced at developing, commissioning, aggregating and distributing live shows and exhibitions. The sector struggles to understand how it can distribute work which is so deeply rooted in communities. How can you tour work which is co-made and co-authored by a specific community? The problem is that we make the assumption that in order to share this work, we must focus on the product. We need to move beyond this industrial

mind-set of product distribution. We must begin to focus on the creative methodology and intellectual property being used to develop this work. So rather than tour the product of socially engaged practice, a step-change is required to upskill artists and arts leaders in ways that enable them to co-commission, share and tour the creative processes and methodologies which lead to exceptional outcomes and artistic product.

EXAMPLES OF THE MOVEMENT

Over the last ten years, an increasing number of artists, cultural organisations and communities have been finding innovative ways to combine creativity and social change, undertaking exceptional socially engaged arts practice. Outstanding examples include:

- The Lowry and Manchester City Council's *Young Carers* – an artist-led programme supporting young people across the city with caring responsibilities
- Entelechy's *Meet me at the Albany* – an all-day arts club for over 60's revolutionising day care for older people
- Mima's *The Coffee House* and *Cloth Club* which partners with refugees in creative ways in Middlesbrough
- Streetwise Opera – which uses music to help homeless people make positive changes in their lives
- Contact's and BAC's *The Agency* – which develops young people's social enterprise ideas

Excellent work in this field not only increases the resilience and relevance of arts and arts organisations, but has a meaningful impact on individuals and communities. An example from our work in Battersea includes Martinee, a participant on the artist-led Create Course, which explores ways to get creative in everyday life. She had never engaged with Battersea Arts Centre before, and said that the programme "inspired me to think about life, day to day, more creatively, to write and utilise my creative skills to get my business started."

It is a movement which has been identified and promoted by a number of national research and advocacy programmes, demonstrating the value of, and appetite for, this work. These include:

- *Creative People and Places* – led and funded by Arts Council England
- *Rethinking Relationships: Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations* – led by Gulbenkian Foundation
- *Re-imagining community development: a more central role for the arts* – a roundtable led by Big Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and Gulbenkian
- *Towards a Cultural Democracy* – a research report led by King's College London
- *Socially Engaged Practice* – a symposium led by British Council and Arts Council England (2018)

However, the work of practitioners in this territory remains relatively isolated, ignored by critics, and poorly understood by the wider sector. For example, The Lowry's Young Carers programme is artist-led, award-winning and proven, and yet in the arts sector's current mind-set we do not consider that the programme can tour. This, combined with the challenges of the current funding model, is almost certainly why there is only one such artist-led Young Carer's programme in England. But what if we sought to understand, codify and share, the creative methodology that sits behind the Young Carers programme? What if we shared the process not the product? We think this will be the key step change in the current approach of the culture sector - in order to begin co-commissioning, co-developing, co-promoting and touring outstanding socially engaged arts practice. And to work

closely with funders, including local authorities, to understand how we transport great models. At a time when local authority funding is being frozen, there is a more urgent need than ever to develop cost-effective approaches such as the creation and sharing of replicable models, rather than constantly reinventing the wheel.

AMBITION FOR CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE NETWORK

The network will be a community of like-minded associate organisations, associate artists and international associates, led by Battersea Arts Centre. More detailed work on network structure is under Qu.2 Management of Activity. In three years' time:

1. the network will have established a nationally recognised and celebrated movement of artists, cultural organisations and communities, known for commissioning, developing and sharing excellent socially engaged practice. This will build upon the learning of the research and advocacy programmes described above;
2. the network will have created and developed:
 - a. simple tools and approaches, such as those which already exist for the creation and touring of live work, to help promote the growth of socially engaged arts practice;
 - b. modelled new partnerships with trusts, foundations and local authorities to help promote improved funding models for transporting this work;
 - c. an improved marketplace for this work (nationally and internationally) by making it easier for organisations to package and present this work to each other;
 - d. an improved critical debate about the quality of this practice so that our current cultural critics, and social sector journalists, develop a language to debate this work which in turn impacts on excellence
3. as a consequence, both the arts and social sectors will have developed a much better understanding of the potential of this work to transform the relationship between cultural organisations and communities. The work of the network will have begun to influence the thinking of cultural institutions, funders and cultural critics across England. London is placed as a world-leader in arts and social change practice and as a gateway to the rest of the country.

STRANDS OF ACTIVITY

The Creativity and Social Change Network will combine three interlinked strands of activity over a three year period, with an out-of-London focus:

1. Artist Commissions

There will be approximately 12 x £10,000 open call commissions for artists to partner with communities and cultural organisations to 'scratch' innovative creative methodologies. These commissions will be carefully developed and supported: to achieve this we will adapt BAC's *Agents of Creative Change (AoCC)* programme. This has, over the past three years, brought together communities, artists and professionals working in the public and voluntary sector. It is a model which has been funded by both Gulbenkian and Paul Hamlyn Foundations and is a proven approach to developing exceptional socially engaged practice. *AoCC* will be the framework we use for creating new work across the network, a good example of sharing methodologies.

The core partners will form a commissioning panel led by BAC and will assess applications for artist-led ideas for partnership projects with communities and the voluntary sector. Successful applicants will be asked to formalise the desired outcomes, rather than specific outputs, of their project. Where appropriate, local research partners will be attached to projects, to record progress towards project

aims and strengthen local partnerships with HE institutions. Every project will be promoted online and shared at network events.

2. Network Events

There will be a varied programme of year-round creative & practical events to build a community, find partners for future projects, exchange knowledge and develop skills. The events will seek to share best practice within the network and most will be open to the wider arts sector. Workshops, symposium and event strands will practically explore a number of themes and ideas:

- Sector development – how to:
 - develop the marketplace to grow and scale ideas
 - learn from best international practice and importing methodologies
 - use a Scratch approach to improve quality
- Training and skills development for artists and organisations – how to:
 - package up and distribute your methodology
 - receive and grow a methodology/project
 - work in community settings under challenging circumstances, learning from social sector partners
 - pitch projects to non-arts organisations
- Advocacy and championing – how to:
 - speak with one voice with decision makers, politicians, funders and the press
 - develop a language and critical response for this work
 - work with funders to create new models to spread and grow ideas
 - capture long term outcomes of projects for both arts and non-arts partners

The major annual event will be a National Creative Conference which showcases best practice from our network members, our commissioned artists and other best examples from the UK and abroad. The conference will be informal, creative and consist of one-to-one conversations, round-tables, training, presentations, workshops and Q&As. At its heart will be a marketplace of methodologies - to introduce the sector to great artists working in social change work to spread good ideas and to buy, sell, adapt and grow proven methodologies.

The conference will happen in a different England region each year. In year 3 there will be a more international focus with money in the budget for international delegates who we want to forge relationships with for the future partnerships and distribution channels, promoting the UK as an international destination for creativity and social change.

3. Growth Commissions

The network will offer £150,000 of artist commissions to support the most effective projects, emerging from the artist commissions, to scale-up and operate in multiple locations across England. Approximately 5 growth commissions of between £20,000-£30,000 will be provided in years 2-3 to support artists and partners to adapt their work in new locations across the country with local support from arts and non-arts partners. The core members will carefully select these commissions on the basis of three criteria: quality of the work, the potential for spreading and growing, and way the project enables all parties to develop a more resilient business model. Replication and evaluation toolkits will be developed through these commissions to capture learning which will be shared with the network and the sector. Network events and online resources will offer CPD in how to best replicate and scale up arts practice and methodologies informed by the growth commissions.