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Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences to enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries - from theatre to digital art - reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.

Being creative is part of what makes us human and everyone should have the opportunity to be creative and to access arts and culture that is relevant to them.

I am Director, Engagement and Audiences at the Arts Council and within my role, I am responsible for developing strategies and managing programmes that help us to deliver on our mission.

I am sorry I can't be there to join your discussions today but if anyone would like to contact me to find out more about our work then please do (I include my contact details at the end)

I was asked to respond to number of questions.....

## *How does the arts council interpret the concepts of audience development and audience engagement?*

### ***Audience development***

For us, the term audience development describes activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, visitors and participants and to help arts organisations to develop ongoing relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, involvement in decision making, education, customer care and distribution.

### ***Engagement***

There are different ways that people can engage with an activity. They might include:

- as active participants (for example, in a workshop)
- as audience members
- as readers (for example, of a publication)
- as participants in research or public consultation and decision making (such as helping to plan an activity)

We ask all of our core funded organisations (National Portfolio Organisations) to produce audience and engagement plans. As part of these plans, our funded organisations are asked to develop SMART targets against one or more (depending on funding level) of these four success measures:

- more people have the opportunity to experience and take part in great art, museums and libraries
- the number, range and diversity of people experiencing great art, museums and libraries has increased.
- levels of engagement have increased among those currently least involved in arts and culture
- you can demonstrate an increase in the depth and quality of people's cultural experience

***What are (if relevant) the main changes in the ad domain among decision makers and cultural organisations in the last 5-8 years?***

Our mission is *Great art and culture for everyone* – and to make any progress in achieving this we have to think beyond the cultural organisations we fund and their access and audience development plans.

For instance:

- a) How to support bottom up approaches/co-commissioning with the public/a move to cultural democracy

*Creative people and places* is one example of a grant programme designed to encourage long-term collaborations between arts organisations, museums, libraries, local authorities, the private sector and local communities to develop the kind of inspiring, sustainable arts and cultural programmes that people in those communities want to get involved in. To date we have invested £42 million in *Creative people and places*. We see this as an experiment in *cultural democracy* with the public involved as decision makers as well as audiences or participants. The evidence we have so far suggests that this can be an effective way of allowing people discover or rediscover their own creativity and to shape local cultural opportunities to be more reflective of the place and the people. (a bit more on the learning of this to date in the appendix)

- b) More equitable distribution of opportunities

Distribution of relevant opportunities (commercial, voluntary and subsidised) will influence engagement levels. The majority of people tend not to travel very far to engage in arts and culture. Physical distribution (touring) plays a significant role here. Lottery funding has been effective at providing a wider range of opportunities across the country. We have made a commitment to increase the % of our funding that benefits people outside London.

The significance of 'captured content' and digital distribution is increasing. The initial evidence suggests that this has the potential to increase engagement levels overall – in spite of early fears that this could draw people away from 'physical' arts

experiences. However – the issue of *who decides* on digital content is a hot topic in the UK. There are fears of a narrowing or even a homogenisation of opportunities to engage, unless steps are taken to avoid this. We (with the BFI) are part of an experiment around the potential for technologies to support the *democratisation of cinema* by turning community halls and well, any space, into a cinema quality experience. The idea is to give local communities real choice around content at the same time.

c) Insight into the reality of who is benefitting directly from public subsidy for culture

The last decade has seen a conscious effort (from the Arts Councils of the UK and the cultural sector) to get better at defining, collecting and sharing audience data and insight.

We've been supporting [www.audiencefinder.org.uk](http://www.audiencefinder.org.uk) developed by The Audience Agency. We ask all of our public facing NPOs to upload a sample of data on their audiences on to Audience Finder each year.

We also ask them to develop 'data sharing agreements' with other Arts Council funded organisations. We are trying to encourage an openness to the principle of sharing insight. Arts organisations may assume and behave as though they are in competition with each other – though it is more likely that they are in competition with the wider cultural sector for people's time and money.

## *Future steps: what kind of policies could be implemented to help cultural organisations to develop audience participation?*

We are about to consult on and develop a new 10 year strategy (for 2020 onwards) and so the following list really is my take on some of the things we may well be considering as part of this.

### **Cultural democracy**

How does 'Everyday creativity' sit within the cultural ecology? What's the role of funded theatres and galleries etc in supporting everyday creativity?

The civic role of cultural organisations (from arts and wellbeing to civic pride) – what can this look like and how does this sit with artistic vision and ambition?

What can we learn from our approach taken with Creative people and places and what influence could this have on our broader policies and approach to investment?

### **Data**

It will be important for us build on the advances we have made in the UK around audience data and insight. New technologies offer new ways of understanding audiences and engagement and we need to learn how to make the most these – without damaging the trust of audiences.

### **Digital and technology**

More thinking around how digital creativity, distribution and engagement may be shaped by the opportunities including: changing definitions of the arts, a blurring between artists and audiences, potential impact on business models for the cultural sector

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## APPENDIX

More about Creative people and places

For insight into what's happened so far, go to [www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk](http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk)

- 1.45 million audience and participants, 91% of whom do not usually attend or engage in the arts
- Across the CPP programme in its first three years, 91% of visitors belonged to one of the medium or lower engaged Audience Spectrum segments of the population, compared with 77% of the English population
- Modelling based on Mosaic types suggests that across all CPP projects approximately 53% of participants belonged to the C2, D or E social grade. This is 7% higher than is seen across all households in England, where 47% fall into the C2, D or E social grade.
- 3100 arts events (over 53,000 hours of activities)
- CPP has involved nearly 6000 volunteers
- Over 800 partners across the programme including voluntary, community, public and business sectors eg housing associations, rugby clubs, universities, haulage companies,

### Current key messages:

- Local people are integral to Creative People and Places projects as participants, decision-makers, artists, volunteers, and of course audiences. People are listened to and help shape a programme that's relevant and inspiring to them and the place they live in.
- Creative People and Places is experimenting with different approaches to excite people about the arts. As an action-research programme, we will take risks, reflect on what has worked and what hasn't and share our learning widely.
- Projects are working with professional artists and a diverse range of over 800 local partners including a haulage firm, housing association and a championship rugby club. Many of these partners are now programming and resourcing arts events independently as a result of working with Creative People and Places.
- Quality of art is linked to the quality of the engagement process

**More Than 100 Stories is worth looking at for text snippets, illustrations, animations [creative commission that uncovers themes and stories of CPP]:**

<http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/more-than-100-stories>

This report gives a simple overview of the findings from the independent research to date:

<http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/faster-slower-slower-faster>