

Ambition for Excellence

An evaluation for Arts Council England

Prepared by In2Impact

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About the Authors



In2Impact is an insight and evaluation consultancy working in the education, Arts and culture sectors in the UK and internationally. In2Impact helps sector organisations, government agencies, universities and NGOs to understand their customers and markets and to plan, monitor and evaluate the impact of their programmes and services. In2Impact develops insight by analysing data from a range of primary and secondary research sources and undertakes primary research through its research partner, *Research Stories*.

2. Introduction

- This report is a research-led impact evaluation of the Ambition for Excellence (AfE) programme which was funded through Arts Council England.
- The evaluation focuses on understanding the extent to which Ambition for Excellence has met its aims and objectives and left a longer-term impact and legacy.
- Ambition for Excellence was a £35.2m programme fund which supported 67 Arts projects led by 66 organisations across England. The fund opened for applications in May 2015 with the final awards made in February 2018.
- The headline aim of the programme was to stimulate and support ambition and excellence across the Arts in England. It focused on the funding of creative and development opportunities for large-scale projects that could support a step change in practice both within and beyond the funded organisations.
- The evaluation of this rolling programme was commissioned in early 2020, a considerable time after the programme launch, because Arts Council England wanted to ensure that the majority of the projects were complete, or close to completion, before the evaluation was undertaken.
- Spring 2020 saw the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic which had a huge impact on projects within AfE which were still live at that time as it did, of course, on the arts sector in the UK more widely. These impacts are discussed in sections 7 and 11 of this report.
- The evaluation and the findings in this evaluation report are based on research which took place during the pandemic and which was extended to include feedback on projects which had been delayed because of it. As such these findings are representative of a moment in time and should be considered within the wider context of the external environment in which the research was undertaken.
- The research for the evaluation comprised an online survey among grantee representatives¹ and in-depth interviews² with stakeholders of projects in receipt of an AfE grant, including grantee representatives, project partners and Arts Council England Relationship Managers. No response to the online survey was received from representatives at 12 funded projects although feedback on some of these projects was captured through the in-depth interviews.
- Overall, research coverage of the funded projects and grantees is strong. Where no, or limited, original research engagement with projects was achieved it commonly reflects the disruption caused by the pandemic and the impact of staff and organisational changes. Full details of the methodology are provided in section 6.

¹ The online survey received 55 partial/complete responses (82% response rate from 67 projects) and 35 complete responses (52% response rate) from grantee representatives.

² Interviews were completed with 47 stakeholders in total, including from 5 Arts Council England Relationship Managers and 2 grantee representatives involved directly in projects for which no survey response was received

3. Executive Summary

	Summary Findings
	<p>Overall aims of Ambition for Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of impact across all four AfE programme aims and especially in terms of contributing to strong cultural places, talent and leadership development and creating high quality new work. 83% of survey respondents believe that their project aims and outputs align completely to the programme aim of creating the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts. • The programme engaged with at least 6,697 artists overall, resulted in at least 1,169 new projects or commissions and created over 23,323 days of employment for artists. <p>Contribute to the development of strong cultural places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure development, the establishment of sustainable partnerships and the development of more focused local and regional strategies have been key to the contribution of AfE to the development of strong cultural places. Much of this contribution has been generated outside London. • Impact has been realised through boosts to organisational awareness and reputation regionally and sectorally, through cross-sector working, artform development, the establishment/securing of venues and the widening and strengthening of community relationships. Collaboration and co-creation beyond the lifecycle of the programme is continuing with many strong, sustainable partnerships having been created. <p>Grow and develop talent and leadership in the regions and across artforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AfE funding has enabled several organisations to gain access to the experience and talent of recognised sectoral experts and this has supported the development of in-house knowledge and expertise and helped to establish a stronger platform upon which to build future talent and skills development programmes. It has also helped to raise the ambition and confidence of many project participants, especially at a local and community level. • A training and skills focus, often including resource documentation, has been an important means of ensuring sustainability for these projects so that learning can be disseminated and shared across and beyond sectors. Beneficiaries of AfE grants, including disabled professionals, have often become more committed advocates for their organisations and sectors, supporting wider talent development and sharing best practice. <p>Create the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of grantee organisations have innovated, stretched their boundaries and undertaken new activities as a result of the opportunity provided by the programme. • The scale and scope of high-quality new work created by a wide spectrum of project AfE grantees, from internationally renowned practitioners to local and community artists, is testimony to the success of the programme. There has been a step change in the quality of work created through collaboration and co-creation across the board and especially in outdoor arts and festival contexts. This has enabled several organisations working in the sector to increase greatly their visibility and profile.

Summary Findings

Give an international dimension to excellent work

- 83% of survey respondents say that their project had an international element.
- For many grantees, AfE facilitated their first experience of international working at any significant scale.
- Engagement with international artists and practitioners facilitated by AfE funding has often introduced fresh perspectives and new ways of working.
- Significant AfE funding has helped some organisations leverage additional large-scale funding from key international bodies including from the British Council. Several AfE projects continue to make important contributions to the international agendas of these bodies.

Increase the Creative Case for Diversity

- Diversity and inclusion is a strong recurring theme through many projects, both in their leadership and delivery, marking a significant contribution to the creative case for diversity.
- Many grantee organisations regard AfE as having facilitated a step change in ambition and confidence for diverse-led and diverse-focused organisations which has been profound and which, many believe, will be long-lasting.
- Funding has also been a springboard to integrating diversity and inclusion more fully across the arts sector in England. Several previously non diverse-led organisations have consciously sought to build their expertise and experience in diverse practice through the programme. They have done so by embedding training, skills and learning approaches within their organisations and sharing best practice externally.

Funding

- Funding through Ambition for Excellence (AfE) has enabled many organisations to realise and deliver successful projects, many of which would never have been undertaken without this funding. Organisations working in sectors such as in outdoor arts have been key beneficiaries and the programme has given them an important platform for growth.
- AfE funding has been transformational for many of the organisations. It has provided a reputational boost and increased organisational confidence which has sometimes enabled them to leverage longer-term investment from other bodies beyond the immediate lifecycle of the funded projects. Some have ensured, or are on path to ensuring, greater security by achieving NPO status and/or more diversified funding streams.
- Others remain concerned about future sustainability without significant new funding from Arts Council England.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impacts

- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been very significant for many AfE-funded projects. Most facilities and artistic spaces were closed during the various lockdowns and many live performances were either postponed or cancelled. Even outside the strict lockdown periods, face-to-face audience access to many projects has often been reduced vs original plans.

Summary Findings

- A small number of projects were completely derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic. These found it difficult to adapt their ways of working to a digital context and accepted they had to reduce drastically their activities and deliverables. More commonly, projects have kept to their original aims, often with adapted activity plans but have had to work to extended timescales - with a small number of projects remaining unfinished.
- A widespread project response to the challenges of the pandemic was to divert funds to increase and improve the digital offer. A re-orientation to digital has helped facilitate a better understanding of the potential of technology, through the commissioning of new, digitally-enabled artform practice and through experimentation with the opportunities presented by digital to increase reach and engagement.
- Counter-intuitively, while the pandemic restricted many planned-for face-to-face international activities and engagement, the resulting shift to digital has often facilitated a greater level of international activity overall. As a result, several organisations have increased their international profile through AfE and become much better known globally in their sectors by, for example, sharing training materials online. In turn, this has allowed them to expand their horizons and to develop and build more international partnerships and relationships.
- Among survey respondents who said their project was off-track to some extent, roughly half attributed this to the Covid-19 pandemic while the remaining half typically attributed it to a combination of the impact of the pandemic and other factors such as the challenge of managing project partners, projects being over-ambitious or a failure to secure additional funding.

Digital

- Among grantee respondents to the online survey, a large majority (90%) claim that their project had a digital element and the vast majority of these say that they intend to increase their digital focus going forward.

Legacy/Sustainability

- Projects with established and stable leadership teams, a clear strategy and a dedicated project lead have typically had the greatest success and impact.
- Projects which have experienced difficulties are often ones in which there has been inconsistent or recently established leadership, loss of key staff, newly established or complex stakeholder relationships and diffuse project ownership.
- Some of the most successful projects have been ones which were already developed or central to grantee activities and looking for funding, rather than projects developed as a *specific response* to the opportunity provided by funding.
- The scale of funding provided for arts organisations, including those in sectors such as outdoor arts, circus and festivals, demonstrated that targeted, large-scale funding can make a huge difference and has enabled these organisations to establish strong foundations for future growth.
- Although not designed specifically to do so, the outcomes of Ambition for Excellence do support the Art's Council's *2020-30 Let's Create*³ Strategy as a consequence of their close alignment to the outcomes and investment principles of that strategy.

³ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

4. Lessons Identified

	Lessons Identified
	<p>Legacy/Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having raised their ambition, some organisations have struggled post-project to develop a sustainable legacy without the significant funding of AfE; smaller projects and some focused on disability and inclusion are among those that feel most vulnerable. There is of course a desire for further funding but there is also a call for more practical guidance and support, including through sharing good practice, on how to build a sustainable legacy. Specifically, there is also a call to provide guidance and support to the sector post-pandemic. • The success of outdoor arts through AfE has supported the artform's profile and representation within Arts Council England, with key stakeholders engaged and its role and potential well reflected in future strategy. One consequence of the pandemic is that out of necessity more art has shifted from indoors to outdoors. Some stakeholders expect this shift to become a more permanent legacy as the quality and output of outdoor art increases to meet the growing interest and appetite for the artform. • The transformational impact of AfE funding for many grantee organisations means that almost all would like Arts Council England to develop a follow-up programme, even if funding is scaled down. <p>The Creative Case for Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and inclusion was a central theme of many projects and this focus is widely considered to have been a major success of the programme. In order to build on that success, and to achieve the diversity goals within the Arts Council England's <i>Let's Create Strategy 2020-2030</i>, many grantees would welcome Arts Council England prioritising the focus on mainstreaming diversity and inclusion in future funding streams and strategy. <p>Digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on digital working and digital creativity within the sector, always a theme of AfE, has been massively amplified by the pandemic. This digital focus is partly an unanticipated legacy of Ambition for Excellence, dictated by its timing. • Given the positive results of the focus on digital, grantees were keen to include this as a major theme of their own strategies. <p>Management and engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable leadership and project management proved key to the success of projects. • Poor management of stakeholder relationships, especially the relationships between project partners, was a common issue among projects that faced challenges. Some Arts Council England Relationship Managers would like to see the strength and coherence of key project partner relationships, and the clarity of project ownership, assessed more closely in future funding applications. • Lack of appropriate engagement and consultation with key communities and external stakeholders detracted from both the implementation and legacy planning of some projects. On occasions, this stemmed simply from a lack of appreciation of how important and time consuming such engagement is.

	Lessons Identified
	<p>Role of Arts Council England Relationship Managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of Arts Council England Relationship Managers was to monitor projects with a light touch, hands-off approach. Most projects benefited from strong relationships with their Relationship Manager and gained constructive input from them. <p>Peer learning and in-programme relationship building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While AfE was a rolling funding programme, for almost all grantee organisations it was experienced as a discrete project. There is a sense of an opportunity missed to create a community(s) of shared practice and to develop a programme which was greater than the sum of its individual projects. Most project leads said that they would have welcomed peer learning sessions to share experiences and best practice approaches, especially in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an element they would like to see developed in future Arts Council England funding programmes should there be capacity to do so. <p>Non-financial Project Metrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the importance of monitoring and financial control, there is a strong focus from Arts Council England on financial reporting by grantees. While projects do report on more than just financial data, there is currently an information gap around metrics which could provide some indication of actual or potential impact. Based on In2Impact’s extensive experience in programme evaluation, there could be value to Arts Council England in establishing a small number of common metrics in standard project monitoring reports to collate information on, for example, audience numbers, the number of activities undertaken, or partnerships established. Reporting against these metrics would provide richer and more consistent data on individual projects, help Arts Council England Relationship Managers to understand whether projects are on-track against targets and significantly improve the ability of Arts Council England to assess and monitor the impact of the programme as a whole.



'Claire Haigh photography'. Photo taken at 2017 Mixed Reality Lab, part of *In_Collusion* held at Cambridge Junction. The artist is Marcia X

5. The Ambition for Excellence Programme

- Ambition for Excellence (AfE) is an Arts Council England fund that aimed to stimulate and support excellence across the arts sector in England.
- The AfE fund opened for applications in May 2015 with the final awards being made in February 2018. Arts Council England invested £35.2m into the programme, funding a total of 67 projects led by 66 organisations (The Young Vic in London had two funded projects). A full list of funded projects is provided in Appendix 1.
 - The fund aimed to contribute to achieving Goal 1 (excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums, and libraries) of the Arts Council England’s 10 Year Strategy 2010-20, “Great art and culture for everyone”,
 - Artists, arts organisations, museums, and libraries are delivering artistic work and cultural experiences that represent the height of ambition, talent, and skill,
 - Demonstrating England’s status as a world centre for cultural excellence, more artists, arts organisations, and museums based in England are exporting their work internationally and visitors cite the arts and culture as the reason they visited England,
 - The work produced by arts organisations and museums, and services provided by libraries, reflects the diversity of contemporary England.
- The specific formal aims of the Ambition for Excellence programme were to:
 - Contribute to the development of strong cultural places,
 - Grow and develop talent and leadership in the regions and across artforms,
 - Create the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts,
 - Give an international dimension to excellent work.⁴
- An additional cross-cutting theme of Ambition for Excellence was to support the Creative Case for Diversity.⁵
- The Programme focused on the funding of creative and development opportunities for large-scale projects that could support a step change in practice both within and beyond the funded organisations.
- The following organisations were eligible for funding, either on their own or within a partnership⁶:
 - National Portfolio Organisations (NPO),
 - Organisations based in England that are primarily focused on and have a track record in at least one of the following: creating, producing, distributing, and presenting the arts in England,
 - Universities and colleges that have a standalone arts entity,
 - Museums.

⁴ Arts Council England – Great Art and Culture for Everyone: 10-year Strategic Framework. 2010-2020 (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/great-art-and-culture-everyone>)

⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity>

⁶ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/ambition-excellence#section-3>

- Organisations could bid for between £100,000 to £750,000 for their project and activities but funding from AfE could only make up a maximum of 90% of the total cost of a project or activity. The additional 10% funding had to be sourced from outside Arts Council England.
- Throughout the process, from bidding for funds to executing their project, grantee organisations were supported through initial advice and monitoring by Arts Council England Relationship Managers. These Relationship Managers are region-specific and often, although not always, focus on one artform.
- At the outset of AfE it was intended that funded projects would run for no longer than 3 years, with all funded activity originally due to end no later than April 2021.
- However, from March 2020 onwards the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the whole arts and cultural sector, both in the UK and globally.
 - England went into lockdown between 23rd March 2020 and 4th July 2020, again between 5th November and 2nd December and then again from 6th of January to 19th July 2021.
 - As a result, all arts venues and museums in England were required to close.
 - Even when not in lockdown, arts venues and museums were required to enforce strict social distancing and had to place restrictions on how many people could attend in person at any particular time.
- Several projects within Ambition for Excellence were impacted by the pandemic as discussed in section 7.
- In recognition of the extraordinary circumstances, 11 organisations were granted extensions for their AfE-funded projects beyond April 2021 of which 6 continued running beyond the end point of the research for this evaluation (October 2021).
- The five projects completed between May and October 2021 were:
 1. **Brighter Sound, Both Sides Now** – September 2021
 2. **Northern Ballet, Leeds Dance Partnership** – September 2021
 3. **Bath Spa University, Paper Nations** – August 2021
 4. **National Centre for Writing, East Out** – June 2021
 5. **Turner Sims Southampton, Jazz South** – June 2021
- The 6 projects that remained ongoing beyond October 2021 (with target end dates) were⁷:
 1. **Battersea Arts Centre** – March 2022
 2. **Corn Exchange Newbury, 101 Outdoor Arts** – March 2022
 3. **New Arts Exchange Ltd., Africa/UK: Transforming Arts Ecologies** – March 2022
 4. **Robert Pacitti Company, On Time and Place** – March 2022
 5. **Sunderland Culture, BELIEVE IN ME: CATHEDRALS TO CREATIVE CITIES** – March 2022
 6. **TIN Arts, The Talent Hub** – December 2021

⁷ Battersea Arts Centre, Robert Pacitti and TIN Arts completed as of March 2022

6. Methodology

6.1 Evaluation framework

- This evaluation aimed to assess the impact and legacy of the AfE Programme referenced to its target aims.
- The evaluation logframe, which details the aims, evaluation questions and high-level KPIs, is set out below.

Table 1. Summary Logframe

AfE Programme Aims	Evaluation Questions	High-Level KPIs
Contribute to the development of strong cultural places	To what extent has the fund supported the development and visibility of the arts in its local areas?	Number of projects developed and supported by AfE
		Contribution of AfE-funding to projects
		Reach / Engagement
		Benefitted the careers of local artists/arts professionals
Grow and develop talent and leadership in the regions and across artforms	How many opportunities for individual artists have been created through this fund? What kinds of opportunities were there?	Number of individual artists who have worked on a project
		Type of opportunities available
	To what extent has the fund supported artists and practitioners in their practice? What impact if any, has it had on their careers?	Increased skills, knowledge and confidence that enables facilitates artistic practice
		Increased skills, motivation and confidence that facilitate professional opportunities
Create the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts	Was the work funded of high artistic quality?	Reach / Engagement
	What type of digital work (both creation and distribution) has been funded by this programme? How, if at all, has this supported the quality and ambition of funded work?	Number of digital works created
		Reach / Engagement
		Perceptions that the digital work supported the projects in terms of quality and ambition
	To what extent has the funded work impacted upon the wider sector and changed artform practice?	Projects had a positive impact in the wider sector
Projects changed artform practice		
Give an international dimension to excellent work	How has work funded developed international partnerships and exchange? Are these partnerships sustainable?	Increased number of international connections
		Increased number of international partnerships
		Perceptions of likelihood to collaborate with international partners

- Alongside the questions and measures set out above, this evaluation has also explored:
 - The extent to which the fund had a lasting impact on ways of working, and the ambition of work delivered by funded arts organisations and artists. What factors have contributed to this impact?
 - How does impact vary for grantees in and out of London?
 - What were the barriers and enablers of impact and change in this programme? How could this type of investment be developed in the future to provide greater impact?
 - Whether and how the fund has supported the Creative Case for Diversity and how this could be strengthened in future funding programmes?

6.2 Research Methodology

6.2.1 Research stages

- The evaluation research used a mixed mode data collection methodology, collating secondary data from Arts Council England and the grantee organisations and primary data via online surveys and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.
- The evaluation collected primary data from:
 - Grantee representatives,
 - Mainly the Project Leads at the grantee organisation,
 - Partner organisations where applicable,
 - Arts Council England Relationship Managers acting as the main contact point between the grantees and the funding organisation (Arts Council England).
- Secondary data analysed was collected and provided by the grantees and Arts Council England. This includes the formal project reports submitted to Arts Council England and data relating to:
 - Project funding,
 - Project team diversity,
 - Audience numbers and demographics,
 - Quality metrics (e.g., audience feedback, critical reviews),
 - Social media, website, and media metrics (e.g., media articles).
- As a condition of receiving funds, grantee organisations had to self-evaluate their projects and deliver to Arts Council England interim and final evaluation reports. Most (but not all) completed projects did so, although the format style and content differ markedly. Some projects also commissioned their own external evaluations.
- From a review of these documents an output matrix was developed. In this matrix, data has been collated to provide estimates of reach and outputs delivered across the projects funded within the Programme (see Section 7).

- The research process was broken down into two stages:
 - Stage 1: Inception Research (September 2020 – May 2021),
 - Stage 2: Main Research (June 2021 – October 2021).

6.2.2 Stage 1: Inception Research

- The purpose of the Stage 1 Inception Research was to gain a greater understanding of the grantee projects and organisations, the projects' status and the range and quantity of relevant data available to inform the subsequent main stage of research.
- The Inception Research specifically collected information regarding:
 - The status of projects and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - Supporting data (e.g., audience numbers) the projects could share,
 - Access to supporting sources of feedback and insight (e.g., participating artists, arts professionals, partners),
 - Greater detail about the aims and intended legacy of the grantee projects,
 - More information on the project team, specifically around diversity and inclusion.
- Primary research within this Inception Stage included:
 - An online survey of grantee representatives (the survey was open from December 2020 to February 2021),
 - From 67 projects (66 organisations) in receipt of an AfE grant, a total of 55 grantee representatives started the survey, out of which 35 (52%) reached completion and 12 did not respond.
 - 12 interviews using a semi-structured discussion guide among:
 - 9 grantee representatives,
 - 3 Arts Council England Relationship Managers.
- It had been hoped to undertake in-person scoping visits to a sample of ongoing projects during the Inception Stage but given the restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic this proved impossible.
- Based on the Inception Research and discussions with Arts Council England, 10 projects were identified with the potential to be developed into case studies during the Stage 2 Main Research. These projects represented a mix of grant sizes, art forms, regions and contexts and are designed to showcase the breadth and diversity of projects funded through AfE.

6.2.3 Stage 2: Main Research

- The research during Stage 2 covered three groups of projects funded within AfE:
 - Projects that had already been completed as of June 2021,
 - Projects that would be completed by the end of the evaluation (October 2021),
 - 6 projects which would remain uncompleted by October 2021.
- Original data collection during Stage 2 included an additional 35 interviews undertaken using a semi-structured discussion guide (Table 2):
 - 13 interviews with grantee representatives additional to those interviewed during the inception research,
 - 15 interviews with Arts Council England Relationship Managers,
 - 10 Relationship Managers of projects from which a survey response had been received,
 - 5 Relationship Managers of projects from which no survey response had been received,
 - 6 interviews with partner organisations involved in funded projects to gain a 3rd-party perspective on their success,
 - 1 follow-up interview with a grantee representative already interviewed during the Stage 1 Inception Stage to track the project's further progress.

Table 2. Stage 2: Main Research Interviews

Stage 2 Interviews				
Relationship Managers	Project Grantees	Partners	Grantee Follow-up	Total
15	13	6	1	35

- As far as possible, interviews were chosen to be representative of all projects funded through AfE in terms of region, grant size, Art form and context.
- The interviews were also used to try to take multiple perspectives (e.g., Grantee representatives, Relationship Managers, Partners, Artists) on the projects identified as potential case studies. Interview research across the two stages is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Research Stages Aligned to Audience Groups

	Grantee Representatives	Relationship Managers	Partners	Grantee Follow-up
Stage 1 Inception Research	✓	✓		
Stage 2 Research	✓	✓	✓	✓

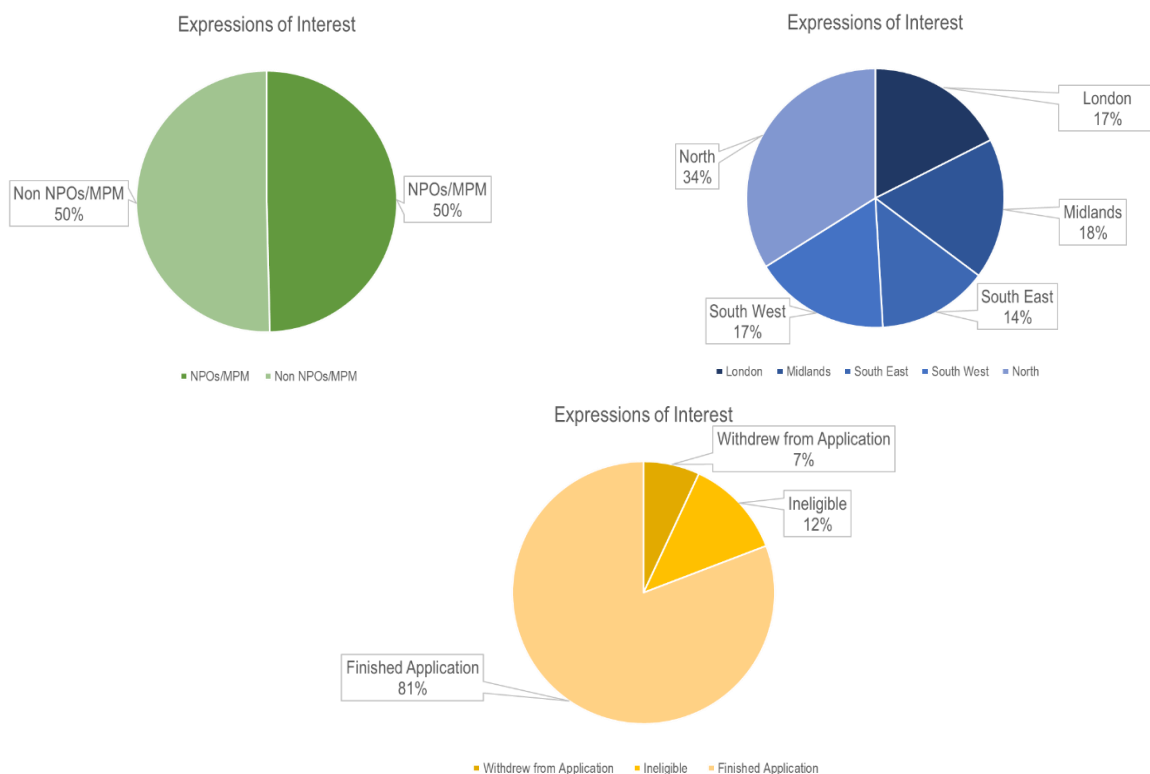
- Following the Stage 2 Research, the 10 projects identified as case studies were finalised:⁸
 1. **Unlimited, We are Unlimited**, (London, Combined Arts, >£500k, NPO/MPM, disabled led)
 2. **Jerwood Arts, Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries**, (London, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, not NPO/MPM, diversity)
 3. **Mind the Gap, Daughters of Fortune**, (Midlands, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, NPO/MPM, diversity)
 4. **Heart of Glass St Helens**, Helen (North, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, not NPO/MPM)
 5. **TIN Arts, The Talent Hub**, (North, Dance, £250-£500k, NPO/MPM, disabled led)
 6. **Cirque Bijou Productions, Extraordinary Bodies**, (South West, Combined Arts, >£500k, not NPO/MPM, disabled led)
 7. **Diverse Action, Junction CDC**, (South East, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, NPO/MPM)
 8. **Collusion, In Collusion**, (South East, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, not NPO/MPM)
 9. **Corn Exchange Newbury, 101 Outdoor Arts**, (South East, Combined Arts, >£500k, NPO/MPM)
 10. **The Eden Trust, Eden Project, Growing Ambition and Excellence in the Arts**, (South West, Combined Arts, £250-£500k, not NPO/MPM)

⁸ Key for the project description: Location, grant awarded, NPO status, diversity/disabled led

7. Programme and Delivery

7.1 The AfE Programme

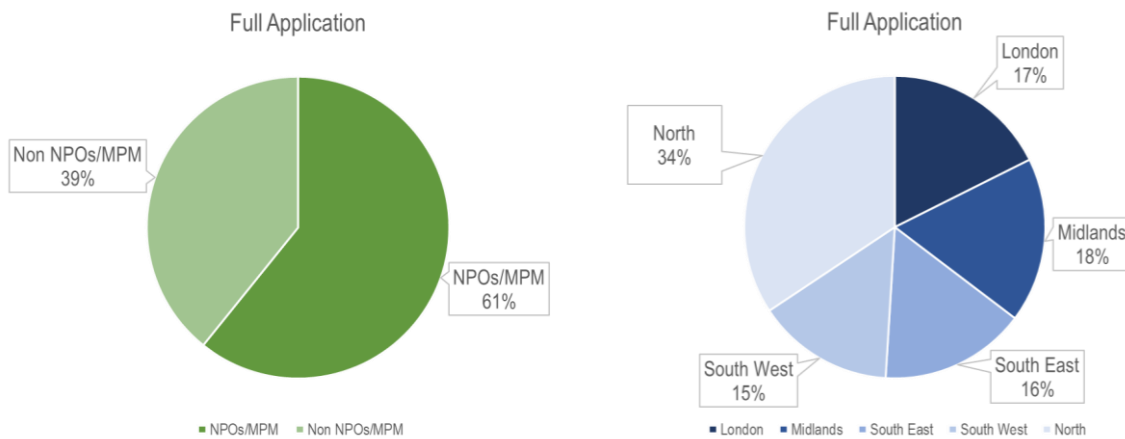
- Ambition for Excellence was an open programme with 25 rounds of funding.
 - The number of successful applications made per round ranged from 1 to 5.
- There was a two-stage application process:
 - Interested parties were first invited to put forward an Expression of Interest (EOI),
 - Arts Council England would then invite organisations and partnerships to make full applications where it was thought the EOI had responded well to the aims of the fund and were developed enough to take to a full stage application.
- Applications were assessed against the following criteria:
 - Meeting the brief,
 - Governance and management of activity,
 - Financial viability.
- There were 380⁹ Expressions of Interest (EOI) made for AfE funding. Of these:



Source: In2impact analysis of Arts Council England internal data / Evaluation survey (2020/2021)

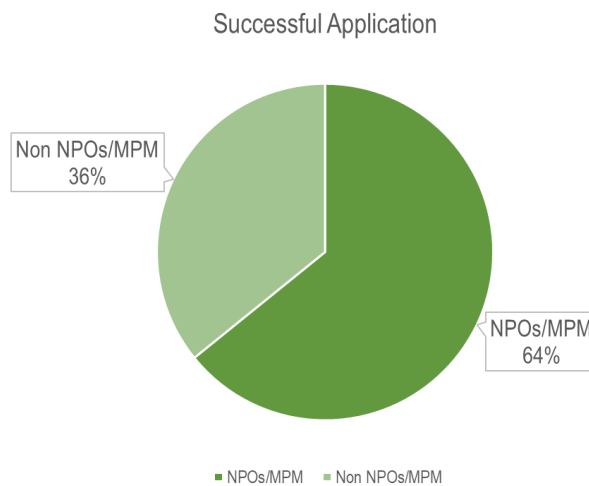
⁹ Charts are based on 375 EOI; data for 5 EOI was unavailable

- From the eligible EOIs, 104 full applications for funding were made. Of these¹⁰:



Source: In2impact analysis of Arts Council England internal data / Evaluation survey (2020/2021)

- From the 104 EOI full applications, sixty-eight were successful (65% of applications). Of these¹¹:



Source: In2impact analysis of Arts Council England internal data / Evaluation survey (2020/2021)

- One initially successful project was subsequently withdrawn and not funded, meaning that the final AfE portfolio consisted of 67 funded projects led by 66 grantee organisations. The Young Vic in London had two funded projects.
- One of the aims of AfE was to ensure that most of the funding was committed outside London and although slightly short of the original 80%-90% expectation¹² (86% of the funds were awarded outside of London), the majority of funding was indeed invested outside the capital. Full details of the final projects are included in Appendix 2.

¹⁰ Charts based on 102 full applications. Data for 2 applications was unavailable.
¹¹ Charts based on 67 successful applications. Data for 1 application was unavailable.
¹² [Ambition for Excellence | Arts Council England](#)

- A feature of the funding was its large per-project value relative to many initiatives in the Arts sector. The majority of projects received funding of over £500k, with only 6 of the projects receiving less than £250k. For this reason, Arts Council England maintained an especially close oversight of the financial performance of grantee organisations. Tracking financial risk was a central part of the role of Relationship Managers appointed by Arts Council England and grantees were required to submit regular financial returns throughout the project life-cycle.

7.2 Delivery

- Across the portfolio of 67 projects, hundreds of diverse activities and events were delivered. The record is incomplete (some of the projects didn't record the same data for all their activities) but analysis of available project feedback summarised in Table 4 suggests:
 - The programme engaged more than 6,697 artists overall,
 - It resulted in at least 1,169 new projects or commissions,
 - It created over 23,323 days of employment for artists,
 - It facilitated training and development opportunities through at least 19 different projects.

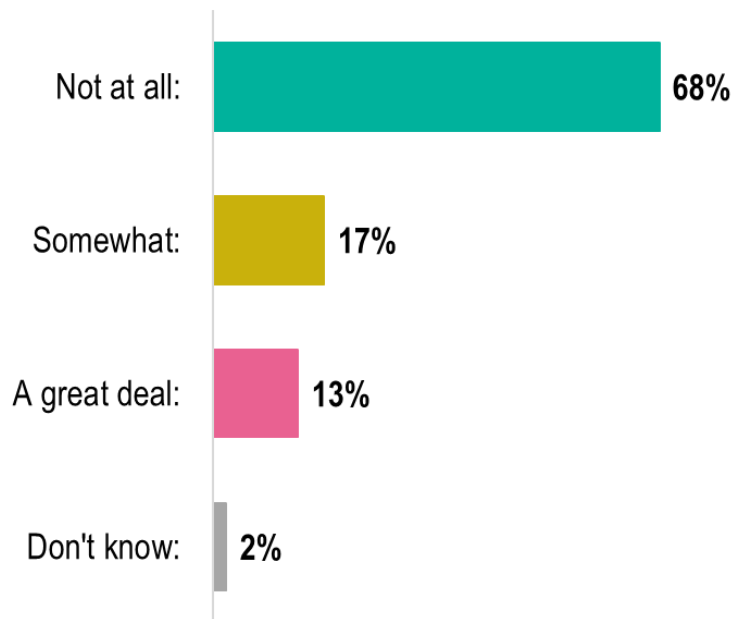
Table 4. Summary outputs from AfE-funded projects

AfE Programme Aims	Outputs		Total (at least)
Contribute to the development of strong cultural places	Partnerships	Council/ Government	10
		Others	23
Grow and develop talent and leadership in the regions and across artforms	Training	Does this project have a training element to it?	19
		Number of sessions for education, training or taking part	6,194
	Diversity	Is there a diversity element to the project?	23
Create the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts	Activities	Number of new products or commissions	1,169
		Period of employment for artists (in days)	23,323
		Number of performance or exhibition days	5,375
Give an international dimension to excellent work	Collaboration	Does/did your project have an international element?	56

Source: In2impact analysis of Arts Council England internal data / Project reports and Evaluation survey (2020/2021)

- Evidence collected through this evaluation suggests that these outputs were delivered by projects which on the whole were able to follow through on their original grant proposal by maintaining consistent project aims. Two-thirds of projects responding to our online survey claim to have retained consistent aims throughout the life-cycle of their project (Chart 1).

Chart 1. How much, if at all, have/did your project's original aims changed since the funding application to Ambition for Excellence was approved?



Base: Project grantees of AfE (47)
Source: Survey for the evaluation of Ambition of Excellence (AfE) (2020/21). Fieldwork and analysis by In2Impact.

- However, 13% (potentially 8-10 projects within the whole programme) said that their aims had changed a 'great deal'.
- There are various reasons why some funded projects had to change their aims but the major one was clearly the completely unanticipated impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Typically, the pandemic directly impacted the timescale of projects that had not already been completed by Spring 2020 and this derailing of timing often had multiple knock-on consequences for other elements of the original plan.
- AfE-funded projects still ongoing in 2020 were confronted with a new reality in which most facilities and artistic spaces were closed and live performances were either postponed or cancelled.

*The aims have been amended to focus on artists, promoters and educators, but with a reduced level of activity to reflect the challenge of delivering such a large amount of activity with limited resources, responding to the needs of the sector as a result of the findings from the audit, and the impact of Covid. **Project Grantee***

*In Feb 2020 we were on track to achieve all outcomes and complete programme by Sep 2020. Covid-19 has meant that we were not able to complete the final stages and are now looking to revise and adapt our final outcomes to align with what might be possible in 2021 due to ongoing restrictions. **Project Grantee***

- The loss of access to face-to-face (F2F) audiences forced many projects to reassess their approach and on occasions to reassess the whole aim of their project. For some, the impact on projected revenues also undermined the anticipated benefits around financial sustainability because the funding injection through AfE did not lead to the anticipated boost in audience and other income envisaged within their original plans.
- Even so, feedback suggests that AfE-funded project teams were often remarkably adaptable and resilient in response to the challenges of the pandemic. Arts Council England Relationship Managers were also often praised by grantees for their swift response and support in, for example, agreeing amended project plans.

- To reflect the changed circumstances of the pandemic, project funds were often diverted to increase and improve the digital offer and to adapt ongoing projects accordingly. The result was a massive increase in digital commissions vs original plans and the delivery of far more training and support via digital platforms. A few projects re-oriented to digital completely. Through this embrace of digital working, new partnerships and relationships have been built, access and reach has often been widened and creativity enhanced.

Covid showed how adaptable and resourceful many of these organisations are. They had to find different ways to deliver and much of what was achieved was really creative. **Relationship Manager**

Open call for the artistic programme and Cultural Leadership programme recruitment and delivery were paused. Reworked the timeline through scenario planning – and ran a smaller open call of digital collaborative projects. Extended the timeline to March 2022 and delivering the remainder of the programme. **Project Grantee**

- The pandemic-driven pivot towards digital working has also on occasions created more opportunities for collaboration and co-production within and across sectors and helped some organisations increase their reach more generally.

Covid-19 has revolutionised the work we have done, through bringing artists, promoters, and educators together in a way that would otherwise have been challenging. The commissions we have launched – and the resultant podcasts and filmed premiere performances – have brought artists into contact with audiences and promoters in a way that would have previously been unimaginable. **Project Grantee**

- The pandemic was clearly the most significant factor impacting on project delivery across the programme but other factors were also sometimes important. Issues discussed more fully later within this report include the challenge of managing project partners, projects being over-ambitious and a failure to secure additional funding.

The budget holder was not the same as the project deliverer and so this caused problems in commissioning work, paying people and pushing the project forward. This was very difficult for the practitioners and there were some fundamental differences in approaches to how best to manage a project of this nature **Relationship Manager**

Everyone needs to have a clear idea of what they are bringing to the party and what is expected of them. This needs to be built in very early on as otherwise things can fall down and we don't get the best out of everyone **Project Grantee**

We were unable to achieve the live performances and related components with our 3rd partner, however we still achieved our audience targets overall. We did not achieve full funding of our overall business fundraising target. One of our main original business partners went into liquidation (due to Covid -19 and Brexit). **Project Grantee**

- A number of projects had issues with parallel capital projects which impacted on timetables. For example, *101 Outdoor Arts* experienced significant delays in starting the planned programme of activity as a result of the extended time taken to secure planning permission for required work to its residency space and workshop.

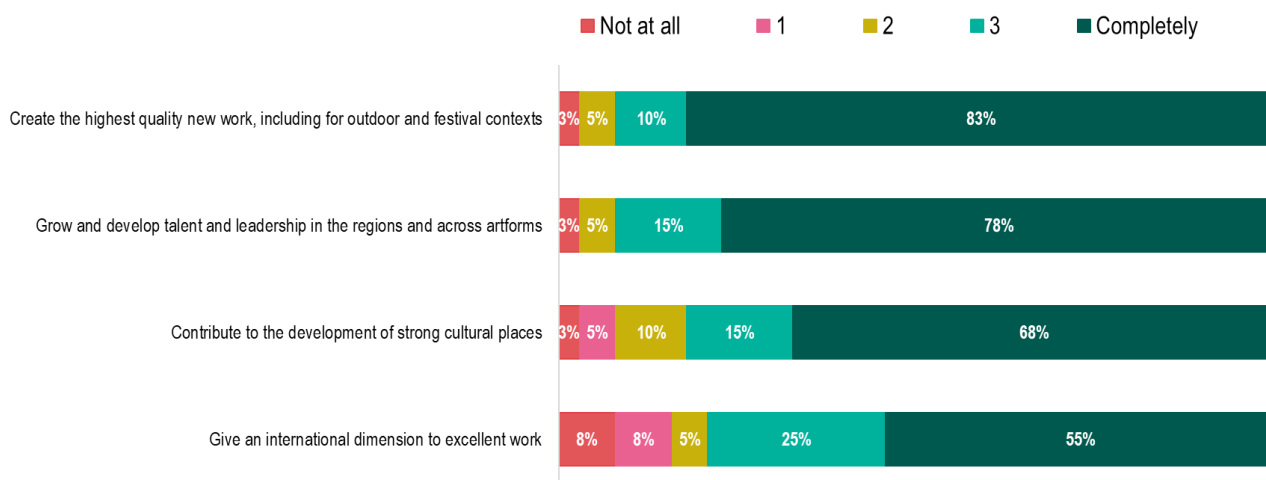
8. Overview of the impact of Ambition for Excellence

Key Findings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is evidence of impact across all four of the Ambition for Excellence aims, especially in terms of contributing to strong cultural places, talent and leadership development and quality and innovation. • AfE funding has been critical to the success of these projects, many of which were only made possible through this support. The programme met an important need in the arts sector for funding of sufficient scale to support sustainability and enable a step change in organisational practice. • The funding has been transformational for many organisations, giving them time and space to experiment and to stretch their boundaries. • Organisations in sectors such as outdoor arts, circuses and festivals are very well represented among project grantees and funding through AfE. The programme has given these organisations an important and unprecedented platform for growth. In particular outdoor arts grantees, focused on the intersection of art and technology, have been able to gain momentum. • More broadly, the success of the funded projects has often been used by grantee organisations as a springboard for expansion. Grantee organisations have typically gained both increased organisational confidence and a reputational boost by qualifying for AfE funding and this has helped many secure further funding and sponsors. In turn, this has often allowed organisations to expand permanently the scale and scope of what they do.

8.1 Alignment of projects to the aims of Ambition for Excellence

- Through feedback from the online survey and from interviews, it is clear that stakeholders felt that Ambition for Excellence has delivered significantly against each of its four main aims, and especially against, ‘Creating the highest quality new work’, ‘Growing and developing talent and leadership’ and ‘Contributing to the development of strong cultural places’ (Chart 2).

Chart 2. The aims of Ambition for Excellence are listed below. On a scale of 0-4, please indicate how well you think your project aims and outputs align(ed) with each of these



Base: Project grantees of AfE (40)
 Source: Survey for the evaluation of Ambition of Excellence (AfE) (2020/21). Fieldwork and analysis by In2Impact.

8.2 Funding has delivered a step change for many organisations and artforms

- Funding through the Ambition for Excellence (AfE) programme has helped to realise and deliver many successful projects, many of which would never have happened without this investment. The funding has enabled these organisations to develop programmes on a scale that has been transformational for their own organisations as well as for the places, artforms, artistic practitioners and professionals involved. It has often given them the space and time needed to realise their ambitions. Some projects which had been more fully developed ahead of AfE and aligned well to the programme were particularly well placed to take advantage of this opportunity. For others, the funding provided a spur to bringing to life a project which they would never have been able to fund without the programme:

*We might have done some of these things anyway but AfE gave us funding within a timescale so that we could really scale up everything to make it happen. **Project Grantee***

*Without funding like this, I'm not sure if our project would just have remained a pipe dream. We had the idea and were able to seize this opportunity to shape and grow it into a reality. **Project Grantee***

*AfE shows that with investment over a period of time incredible work can be achieved and that this should not just be one off opportunities for this kind of funding. How can organisations evolve and grow without this sort of investment in the future? What is put in place to build on the legacy of the work achieved i.e., international touring? **Project Grantee***

- The very wide range of organisation (size and type), project and aims funded by the programme is testament to its relevance and the need it met within the sector for funding of this scale and ambition.

*The impact of Ambition for Excellence has been phenomenal in terms of the way we have been able to work. It has been game-changing in terms of our organisation's activity, reach and impact. **Project Grantee***

*We have created and test driven a vision for a future of the centre and managed to demonstrate the impact that we could have through working with a far greater range of artists and organisation. **Project Grantee***

- AfE has been an opportunity for most grantee organisations to innovate, stretch their boundaries and undertake new activities as a result of the funding. It has given them time to explore new areas and ways of working, something which is often not possible within the confines of a typical small project grant. This has allowed some organisations to include exploratory R&D as an integral component of the project. For example, a key strand of the *101 Outdoor Arts* project was the Seedbed Residencies, a series of funded research and development residencies with a specific focus on cross-artform collaboration, new partnerships and development work with diverse artists. These wrap-around residencies enabled artists and organisations to explore outdoor arts and to benefit from *101 Outdoor Arts*' extensive knowledge of the artform and the relevant technical and managerial skills.
- Organisations in outdoor arts, circuses and festivals are well represented among project grantees. Established players in the sector such as *101 Outdoor Arts* and *Unlimited* have been able to expand their reach and activities, while smaller scale collaborators such as *Cirque Bijou* and *Diverse City* have had the opportunity to grow and develop a stable partnership within the *Extraordinary Bodies* project.
- A number of outdoor arts projects focused on the intersection of art and technology, often exploring how the use of cutting-edge technology can embed innovation at the heart of grantee practice. *Collusion*, an outdoor arts organisation both created and produced new public artworks that explore the creative use of technologies and the impact of emerging technologies on society. The *Bridge* project from the *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* explored the intersection of art, engineering, social and educational change through outdoor arts activities developed in parallel with community and education projects.

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8.3 Some organisations have been transformed by participation in Ambition for Excellence

- The benefits of being funded through AfE have often exceeded the expectations of grantee organisations and enabled them to develop their organisation and build momentum in unexpected and sometimes transformational ways. For example, *The Eden Trust* has leveraged the funding to bring coherence to the different strands of activity already in place, raise its profile and support increased engagement with communities.
- Other organisations have developed projects beyond their mainstream activities and have seen AfE as an opportunity to focus activity on a gap in provision. *Both Sides Now* from *Brighter Sound* is a gender equality initiative to support, inspire and showcase female music creators and industry professionals across the North of England. The project aims to create long-lasting change around the roles, representation and recognition of women and gender minority people in music – from the classroom to the boardroom and the stage. The project has brought many interested groups together, galvanised a desire for change in the North and importantly, laid the foundation for future collaborations, not just in the North but potentially more widely across England.

It has had an impact on our own ways of working but also with the broader community of music making; bringing people together with shared experiences and they gained confidence, – it makes the industry feel less of a lonely place and more of a community. Project Grantee

- AfE has enabled organisations (especially smaller ones) to leverage the success of their project as a springboard for expansion and has enabled them to widen their horizons and ‘think big’. They have been able to scale up their activity and build on their achievements. AfE has commonly been leveraged by grantee organisations as an endorsement of quality and has helped many to secure further funding elsewhere, funding which has been essential for the success of the projects themselves and more importantly for their legacies going forward. Organisations such as *ArtReach* have been able to secure further international funding from the development of their AfE project.

The success with Ambition’s funding enabled us to develop major partnership funds (public and private) to realise a large-scale festival programme whose work continues today. Project Grantee

We have been able to attract a range of sponsors thanks to AfE and the significant contribution that has made. This has enabled us to sustain funding throughout this iteration and beyond. Project Grantee

9. Contribute to the development of strong cultural places

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placemaking has been a key legacy of the programme for many grantees who have been able to enhance and grow their own practice as well as to support the development and visibility of the arts in their local region or area. Some projects have contributed to enhancing the reputation of their region for particular artforms or practice. Infrastructure developments, whether new premises or improvements to existing spaces, have provided long-term security and contributed to the sustainability of several organisations. The development by grantees of more focused local and regional strategies and an increased profile locally, regionally and sectorally has contributed to the development of strong cultural places. Lasting impact within geographic areas has been achieved through cross-sector working, developing artforms and securing partner venues. The establishment of sustainable partnerships within regions has been one of the most significant and enduring legacies of the programme and to the support of creative ambitions. Ongoing collaboration and co-creation are key outcomes of these strengthened partnerships. Building community relationships has helped to create impact and many grantee organisations have been able to increase community working and to strengthen community partnerships and outreach. Some organisations have ensured longer term sustainability as arts players within their regions and communities by achieving NPO status or by leveraging their association with AfE to access other sources of long-term funding.

9.1 Support for expanded practice and new infrastructure

- Placemaking has been a key legacy of the programme for many grantees who have been supported to expand their own practice, develop new and existing infrastructure and enhance the visibility of the arts in their local region or area.
- A number of grantees have been able to establish and grow practices within existing organisations. For example, at *The Eden Trust* the cultural arts practice has been developed in its own right with a higher profile across the region through stronger networks and partnerships. *Extraordinary Bodies* has given permanence to the partnership between *Cirque Bijou* and *Diverse City* enabling them to collaborate in a longer-term and more focused way. Other examples of successful practice within existing organisations developed through AfE include *TIN Arts' The Talent Hub* for neuro-diverse and autistic artists and *Unlimited International* which enabled *Unlimited* to extend its global engagement and influence through co-commissions with non-UK based disabled artists.

Thriving arts programme in the performance space, an ever-expanding Learning and Engagement programme and we now have a national and international reputation, embedded in the activities in the local and artistic community. Project Grantee

- Infrastructure development through the establishment of permanent buildings and facilities has been a tangible legacy of AfE for a number of organisations which previously had less visibility and a lower profile in their regions/local areas. AfE funding provided essential financial security and support for premises for *Cornubian Arts and Science Trust (CAST)* in Helston, Cornwall from where the *Groundwork* project was run. *Heart of Glass* secured a permanent home in St Helens which was funded by the local council post-project, providing a focal point for future activities and programmes.

- Other grantees were able to develop existing physical infrastructure to support and ensure sustainability of their organisation. *101 Outdoor Arts* secured capital funding outside of AfE from Greenham Common Trust to expand and improve its workshop facility and accommodation, doubling the number of residencies available to 40 (around 250-300 artists a year) and increasing the capacity of technical and artistic support. *Collusion* also secured workshop facilities within Cambridge to support artists. The *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* had already developed the Daimler Powerhouse building in Coventry as a hub space but AfE funding was critical in supporting the sustainability of the site as an exhibition space and as a venue for creative practice.
- While many projects were run by existing NPOs (Arts Council England designated National Portfolio Organisations) such as *ArtReach*, *Pavillion South-West* and *Studio Wayne McGregor*, achieving NPO status was an aspiration for many other participating organisations. NPO status secures a longer-term funding stream and helps to ensure financial stability and sustainability as a player in the Arts and culture sector in the region and community.
- Having grown their practice, a number of grantee organisations were able to become NPOs following the success of their AfE projects. These organisations include *101 Outdoor Arts*, *Diverse City*, the partner of *Cirque Bijou* on *Extraordinary Bodies* and *Heart of Glass*. A number of other project grantees do not yet feel ready to apply for NPO status but believe that AfE has put them in a stronger position to do so in the future. The *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* in Coventry is an example. It had previously been an NPO but had lost that status. Through *Bridge*, its AfE-funded project, and through the securing of a permanent site in the Daimler Powerhouse, the organisation feels that it has regained organisational confidence and strengthened its case for securing NPO status in the future.
- Other projects have been able to attract commercial sponsorship and gain commissions from both the public and private sectors in part through the increased profile and prestige attached to AfE funding.

9.2 Development of local and regional reputations and partnerships

- Building local, regional and national reputations has been integral to the legacy ambitions of many AfE projects. For some, this has been about shaping a narrative around identity. The *Jazz South* project (*Turner Sims Southampton*) promoted a regional jazz identity in the South of England. *Collusion* has aligned local strengths and heritage to establish a role as a centre for art/tech practice excellence by capitalising on the reputation and strengths of Cambridge as a leading technology innovation hub.

Collusion's three-year arts & technology programme will achieve a step change in the production of interactive digital work by catalysing Cambridge, Europe's leading technology innovation hub, as an R&D centre for the development of artists, interdisciplinary collaboration and production. Project Grantee

- For others, the reputational legacy has been about repositioning an existing organisation. *The Eden Trust* was able to change perceptions of its role alongside contributing to changing artistic perceptions of its local area.

We were able to reposition Eden as a centre for contemporary art through exhibiting artwork and artists of international significance and East Cornwall as a significant destination for high quality art. Project Grantee

- Further, AfE enabled *The Eden Trust* to build a sectoral profile and leadership position in its championing of environmentally-friendly and sustainable practice which also reflects on perceptual associations with the region.

Critical to our mission, the programme has enabled opportunities for artists to engage broad audiences with topics of social-environmental imperative, test sustainability practice within artistic processes and encourage consideration of the environmental impact of materials and methods without compromising on artistic excellence. Project Grantee

- Increasing reach and profile within a region was commonly realised through regional/local partnerships and location-focused events often consciously targeting economically disadvantaged areas.

- *Collusion* worked closely with LEPs and local authorities in areas with significant disadvantage and has subsequently continued its partnership with King's Lynn local authority. *Heart of Glass* partnered with multi-disciplinary company *ANU Productions* and *Idle Women*, a contemporary arts organisation, to work with diverse communities of women through social spaces and within local venues in the St Helens area of Merseyside.

Despite the hiatus this year (due to Covid), there are some long-lasting connections with local communities that discovered our relevance to their lives and experiences. Project Grantee

- *Yorkshire Sculpture International*, through the *Henry Moore Foundation* developed a strong partnership between key regional sculpture organisations and local authorities to build and articulate more clearly the reputation of Yorkshire as the home of sculpture in the UK.
- The *Both Sides Now* project by *Brighter Sound*, has developed stronger and more diverse networks within the North and is now hoping to build links nationally and internationally.
- Venue partnerships have been important in helping realise ambitions to develop community relations. In Cornwall, *Groundwork*, led by Helston-based *CAST*, involved a number of venue partners. Collaboration among these partners including Tate St Ives, Newlyn Art Gallery, The Exchange and Kestle Barton has extended beyond the lifecycle of the project and given *CAST* a stronger platform to showcase its work and grow its profile in future. Many projects have involved working with local communities as participants and audiences for the projects; *Mind the Gap* is a good example of a project which has taken this approach:

To strengthen the identity of Calderdale & Sowerth as hubs of excellent practice in learning disability arts by reaching mass live & digital audiences, uniting the skills of communities. Project Grantee

- *Cirque Bijou* and *Diverse City* ran creative exploration workshops in circus at each of the participating venues in which their show performed. This approach was successfully implemented for the outdoor tour but proved impractical for the indoor tour (primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic). However, the model developed through AfE is seen as offering a blueprint and has now become an established approach for other projects and productions.
- Increased civic pride and stronger local or regional associations with aspects of the Arts are also part of the legacy of the AfE programme, especially as a result of large celebratory events. Most notably, following the *Hull City of Culture* project, a city with far different legacy perceptions began to become more closely associated with high quality contemporary art.
- As discussed above, *Yorkshire Sculpture International* boosted the image of the region as a 'the home of British sculpture' and this association was deepened through efforts to encourage artists and practitioners (foundries, fabricators etc) to relocate to the region.

Stronger cross city partnership working. Major permanent public art commissions that continue to raise awareness of the city's cultural legacy. Project Grantee



Photograph by Camilla Greenwell: *The Talent Hub, Tin Arts*

10. Grow and develop talent and leadership in the regions and across artforms

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations have been able to access the support and talent of recognised sectoral experts to help in the development of knowledge and expertise. Both national and international experts have helped facilitate this development of talent, including at the R&D stage of several projects. An important outcome of talent development work has been a significant increase in the confidence and ambition of artists, especially at a local and community level. The training and skills focus has been important in embedding approaches and techniques for the long-term. To ensure sustainability, a number of organisations are disseminating their materials more widely across the sector nationally and internationally as well as, on occasions, sharing resources outside the sector. Talent development programmes have been implemented not only for artists but also for producers, writers and people in other professional arts roles. A specific focus on developing diverse talent has helped to build capacity and support diverse artists to become advocates for their organisations and sectors and to help them in turn play a role in the establishment of best practice and future talent development.

10.1 The development of talent has been central to many projects

- Talent development was core to the design of many of the AfE projects but the approach to talent development has varied across the different organisations involved, reflecting the wide range of projects, aims and objectives.
- 101 Outdoor Arts* provided expert support and technical expertise to a large number of artists and producers through residencies and its talent development programme. Similarly, *Collusion* has provided practical support to outdoor arts practitioners involved in projects across the East Anglia region.
- The Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries* provided funding for short-term residencies overseas to give young practitioners from disadvantaged backgrounds experience of working in international settings.
- Some practice in the outdoor arts sector, including circus work, requires very specific skills and interests. AfE-funded projects have sometimes highlighted the finite capacity of the talent pipeline existing within the sector and pointed to a need to collaborate outside the arts to develop talent for the future. *Cirque Bijou* and *Diverse City* have successfully worked with training bodies within the sector including *Diverse Media* and are now looking to build relationships with organisations outside the sector e.g. with gymnastics bodies, in order to recruit and increase capacity long-term.
- Many grantee organisations have been able to access recognised experts in their fields to support talent development and help to build knowledge and expertise. Involving national and international experts, especially at the R&D stage to support sector or local practice has helped facilitate wider learning and cross-fertilisation of ideas. The *Extraordinary Bodies* team residency in Melbourne with *Cirque Oz* was a significant investment in R&D skills training.
- More commonly, international artists were invited to the UK to produce and work with UK practitioners. *Groundwork* was able to attract internationally renowned artists and ran a series of seminars in which visiting arts professionals shared their expertise with local artists and producers.

- Collaboration and co-creation with leading international artists were core to developing talent and content for *Journeys Festival International*, in which European partners collaborated and co-commissioned festivals in Leicester, Manchester and Portsmouth. *Unlimited* established an R&D programme for six co-commissions with artists from the UK and one other country (via an open call) and made a selection of ideas from these to move into full commission (delivered in year two).
- *Culture Central's Transforming Narratives* project involved collaboration between practitioners across three countries.

We invited international artists to make and show work in a local context and to work closely with local partners and local communities which has been invaluable in building their learning and ambition.

Project Grantee

- Establishing best practice through the development of skills toolkits and training approaches, has been an important means of ensuring sustainability, especially for projects working with diverse artists and professionals. For example, *the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries* programme, an ongoing diversity development programme providing paid for bursaries for disadvantaged young people in leading institutions, has documented learnings so that these can be shared going forward and has developed a toolkit for existing hosts and new organisations wanting to join the scheme. *Cirque Bijou* worked with a think tank of circus specialists to create a toolkit to help develop the skills and expertise of circus performers.

10.2 A focus on development of local talent

- Most of the AfE organisations have included the development of local community artists and practitioners in their projects and in this way the development of talent has also supported the development of strong cultural places.
- Many grantee projects, including *Heart of Glass* and *The Eden Trust*, report increased confidence of local artists and practitioners as a significant outcome of the programme. Working with nationally and internationally acclaimed artists has helped to raise confidence, self-esteem and aspirations and the investment in skills development and large-scale productions has raised the aspirations and widened the horizons of many of the beneficiaries of AfE grants.

It made them feel they were good enough to exhibit in a world class context. **Relationship Manager**

- Boosting confidence is seen as having been a particularly important outcome for learning disabled performers, who have been supported by a number of funded projects:

The confidence and raising their own levels of what they can achieve and believing in themselves was so important. Realising that they could challenge people was empowering in a way that they never realised was possible. **Project Grantee**

- Workforce and talent development programmes have also been focused on improving the skills of other creative professionals such as producers, writers and directors as well as artists. Projects designed to build talent and capacity among under-represented groups have helped to develop skills to improve practice, inform future ways of working and build networks.
- A mentorship and training programme for a cohort of young female producers run by *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* has enabled many of these producers to develop their own projects and work with other organisations. The *Brighter Sound* gender equality initiative has supported women at all stages of their career through specific residencies, workshops and apprenticeships. It has resulted in much stronger and visible networks of women musicians and producers across the North of England and there has been increasing interest from organisations across the UK and internationally wanting to draw on the expertise and learnings arising from the initiative.

11. Create the highest quality new work, including for outdoor and festival contexts

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scale and scope of high-quality new work produced through the involvement in funded projects of a broad range of practitioners, from internationally renowned artists to those working at a local and community level, evidences the success of the programme. • The quality of work has been enhanced through collaboration and co-production, especially within outdoor arts, circus and festivals. • Excellent artistic output enabled organisations to increase their visibility and profile during the programme and AfE was a springboard for many future creative collaborations in the UK and internationally. • The majority of projects culminated in significant large-scale works or events. • The pandemic disrupted and on occasions forced the cancellation of a significant number of live productions which could not be adapted or translated into a digital format. It therefore reduced to some extent the quality and quantity of some forms of artistic expression. However, it also created significant new opportunities for creativity and exploration through digital working.

11.1 The scale and scope of artistic output is a testament to the impact of AfE

- The scale and scope of events, productions and artistic outputs funded through AfE is testimony to the success of the programme and the step change in practice achieved by many grantee organisations.

Ambition for Excellence was in my view a really excellent funding scheme it enabled a small organisation in a remote, rural region of England to step up and produce an ambitious and visionary programme that attracted national and international attention and praise. It was also crucial in supporting the establishment of a vibrant new centre for the arts. **Project Grantee**

The project was a three year focus for a region rather than a single locale, this meant that connections and shared themes were developed far more than might have been otherwise the project was a large scale learning experience for a large cohort of traditionally trained museum curators The international dimension was excellent and acted as a stimulus to the programming approach across the Humber museums partnership The quality of early work was excellent and subsequent work retained this level but in a scaled back way due to the financial pressures. **Project Grantee**

- It is impossible to tabulate exactly how many specific outputs were produced but analysis of available feedback from grantees (Table 4, Section 7) suggests that at least 1,169 new products or commissions and more than 5,300 exhibition or performance days were generated by projects funded through Ambition for Excellence.
- Many Arts Council England Relationship Managers praise the innovation and quality of work produced and recognise the positive impacts these have had on practitioners, organisations and artforms across the sector.

I think for a lot of really good organisations sometimes they lack the confidence in themselves and although they have the ambition to put this show on (...) So it's that confidence and raising their own levels of what they can achieve and believing in themselves and being able to challenge people (...). **Relationship Manager**

So the ambition for excellence programme, allowed them to go from what was a good offer, to an excellent offer, and make it visible, credible, but also capture that impact and elevate it. **Relationship Manager**

- The programme had a particularly positive impact on outdoor arts, circus and festivals, complementing the funding strands and opportunities already existing. Cross-sector working has generated innovative work, productions and events. For example, the relationship between art and nature informs the work of *Activate Performing Arts*, in the *Lifecycles and Landscapes Wayfaring* project which created a major landscape art commission for festivals, while art and tech is the focus of the installations and outdoor work of *Collusion*.
- Working with *101 Outdoor Arts* is increasingly recognised as a mark of quality across the outdoor arts sector, increasing opportunities for practitioners. The residencies and development programmes from *101* have had a lasting impact on the way that outdoor artists work, their ambitions and the cross-sector networks they have developed.
- The majority of funded projects culminated in a significant activity, be it a large-scale production, tour, event or festival and this was commonly identified as the critical opportunity for showcasing. *Mind the Gap's* production *Zara* was a much-praised example of multi-disciplinary collaboration addressing the challenges of learning-disabled parents.

[Zara].....ambitious, original and delightfully weird. The Telegraph

[Zara] shows what fantastic large-scale productions can be produced when communities, artists and designers come together. A Younger Theatre

- *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer's*, outdoor arts spectacle *Bridge* was showcased in different settings in Coventry and then toured to other locations. In each location the staging and wrap-around activities were adapted to the local context. As with many other projects, *Bridge* was a springboard for future collaborations in the UK and internationally. *Godiva Awakes/ Imagineer* also contributed to the programming for Coventry City of Culture 2021.
- Some artworks commissioned for funded projects were given permanent settings ensuring sustainability. For example, *The Eden Trust* commissioned 'Infinity Blue' "a huge, breathing ceramic sculpture" which is part of the *Invisible Worlds* exhibition and considers the origins of photosynthesis as a means of highlighting aspects of the environment through art. It is now a permanent exhibit along with a number of other outdoor works commissioned during the project such as work by internationally known artists Julia Opie and Ryan Gander.
- Commissioned sculptures exhibited for *Yorkshire Sculpture International* have also found permanent homes at the festival venues and another *YSI* is being planned in the next few years, building on the legacy of the AfE-funded festival. Formats developed for other projects will also be continued in the future. *ArtReach* has built on the annual *Journeys Festival* events in Leicester to develop *Journeys Festival International* in Manchester and Portsmouth, not only collaborating with new partners but also working with and engaging refugee and asylum seeker communities.

The establishment and continuation of all three annual festivals and the opportunity to build our European partnership to an even larger and more ambitious programme of work. There has also been a huge legacy in understanding for refugees and opportunities for refugee communities where we have worked. Project Grantee

11.2 Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

- The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the productions and events planned as a culmination of several projects which limited the scope for showcasing some specific artforms and talent. Some projects had to postpone their showcase and/or finale until venues reopened. As discussed above, others changed their delivery to online channels which stimulated other forms of creativity and innovation but which inevitably detracted from the scale and scope of output created for in-person exhibitions and performances.

*Some of our commissioning funds had to be repurposed due to Covid and reframed as more digital and written commissions. I think all in all the aims remained pretty solid though the routes to achieving them had to be renegotiated. **Project Grantee***

*The programme was extended by 3 months and money allocated to live activity was repurposed to create 43 x £1000 Response Pots to support artists and producers to reimagine creating and touring work in the light of the pandemic. **Project Grantee***

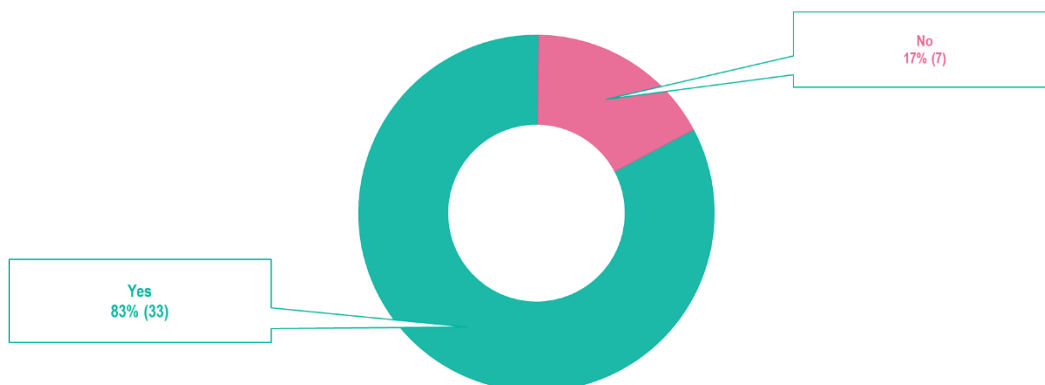
- Inevitably, some organisations were unable to continue their projects. *TIN Arts* was unable to take its ‘Talent Hub’ show ‘Helm’ to tour in venues nationally and then to showcase the work as intended in front of decision-makers at *The Place* in London. Similarly, *Jazz South*’s tour of the South-West was curtailed and outputs planned from the *Robert Pacitti Company* for *SPILL 20* as well as from *Culture Central*’s ‘Transforming Narratives’ have been postponed.

*We didn’t reach the south, and the people we wanted to become our advocates are not going to watch a 40 minute digital version of it. It’s not the same experience as seeing the artists live in front of you 10 metres away, showing that they are as professional and as capable as any dancers. **Project Grantee***

*The programme was based on attracting live audiences - we are still working out the best way forward, to deliver a hybrid digital/live programme, with distanced audiences - and/or to delay until social distancing restrictions relax to a sufficient extent to bring back mass audiences. **Project Grantee***

12. Give an international dimension to excellent work

Chart 3. Does/did your project have an international element?



Source: Survey for the evaluation of Ambition of Excellence (AfE) (2020/21). Fieldwork and analysis by In2Impact. Base: Project grantees of AfE (40)

Key Findings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of projects had at least some international element and for many grantees this was the first time they had worked with international partners. • The international dimension of AfE has helped to transform the profile and remit of several organisations. • Involvement with international artists and practitioners has brought fresh perspectives, expertise and ways of working to a number of projects and has made a huge contribution to their success. • Funding through Ambition for Excellence has enabled some organisations to leverage further large-scale investment from international organisations such as the British Council. Some grantees have strengthened these relationships post-project and have continued to contribute to the international agendas of these bodies. • Support from the British Council has been crucial in enabling grantees such as <i>Shape Arts</i> to achieve increased reach and impact and to build the <i>Unlimited</i> brand internationally. • The Covid-19 pandemic, while impairing international in-person work, has in fact enabled some organisations to increase their international activity and reach through increased digital working. Some organisations have shared training materials and run conferences online which has enabled them to increase access and reach and heighten their international profile. • As an important legacy of AfE, many organisations continue to work in the international arena, establishing and strengthening partnerships and relationships.

12.1 International engagement was central to a large majority of projects

- A large majority of funded projects had an international element. Feedback though the online survey suggests that more than 80% of the projects within AfE had an international dimension. *Birmingham Repertory Theatre’s, Furnace and Multistory’s, Blast* are among many examples of funded projects involving the support and expertise of international partners and individuals via collaborations, co-productions and commissions. As discussed above, international mentoring and collaboration was also central to talent development within a large number of projects, marking another important synergy across the four main aims of Ambition for Excellence.

- For many grantee organisations, funding through AfE provided the first opportunity and resources to work with international partners.
- Raising profile, attracting new audiences and growing reach internationally was a clear priority for a number of organisations, especially those involved in outdoor arts and festivals. The awareness raising and reputational benefits of working with international artists and partners has been immense for projects such as *CAST* and *Yorkshire Sculpture International (YSI)* which were able to include work by internationally renowned artists in their exhibition programmes.
- *The Eden Trust's* social media campaign for its AfE project was estimated to have reached a global audience of over 20 million. *101 Outdoor Arts* and *Unlimited* built brands internationally and *Unlimited*, which has grown to become an organisation and Arts commissioning programme independent of *Shape Arts*, cites the benefit of learning about different practice and experience around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in multiple countries by working with international artists:

We were able to capitalise on Unlimited's success extending our global impact by co-commissioning extraordinary touring collaborative work by UK and international disabled artists, raising the bar and transforming the cultural sector worldwide in relation to access and equality. Project Grantee

- The British Council, the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and education opportunities, played a key role in helping a number of grantee organisations internationalise. Some accessed further funding through the British Council as well as contributing to the British Council's international agenda.
- The British Council provided matched funding alongside Ambition for Excellence to *Shape Arts* to support *Unlimited's* international expansion and collaborations in a number of countries. *Brighter Sound* was funded to deliver a range of activities to amplify gender equality programmes. The British Council's 'We are Equal' Programme was a vehicle through which *Brighter Sound* could contribute its expertise to, and develop partnerships in, countries where gender equality is nascent. This partnership is a good fit enabling both parties to work towards shared goals and one which *Brighter Sounds* expects to lead to a sustainable legacy of AfE.

We have been working with international partners including the British Council to deliver a range of activities connecting Both Sides Now and advocating for gender equality in music. This has helped us to realise this ongoing area of specialism which we hope to continue as part of the legacy of AfE. Project Grantee

- The British Council part-funded the *International Literature Showcase* partnership which the *National Writers Project* contributed to in order to showcase outstanding talent from the UK and develop best practice exchange between UK and international practitioners and was a significant funding partner of *Culture Central's Transforming Narratives* which involved partnerships between creative practitioners in Birmingham with peers in cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

This is an international project – designed to be delivered for the mutual benefit of Birmingham and the cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is about creative and cultural exchange of artistic work, practice and ideas between all three places. Project Grantee

- The British Council also worked with *Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries* to facilitate an opportunity for students to attend the Avignon Festival and take up short-term internships in Europe.
- The pandemic led to a reduction in planned travel, touring and in-person activities. However, for many grantees it actually turned out to be an opportunity to increase international engagement and reach through the repurposing of activities and the production of new work online. *101 Outdoor Arts* ran its digital symposium and national conference online which had a host of benefits including gaining access to a wider range of speakers, larger numbers being able to attend and the learnings being more widely disseminated than had previously been envisaged.

- *Unlimited* was able to host its international festival from the Southbank Centre and the virtual format facilitated wider access for disabled practitioners and collaborators not just in England but internationally. In addition, *Unlimited* shared training materials online (Cards for Inclusion) which it reports have been downloaded in around 150 countries.
- A key legacy of the AfE programme will be the continued international focus of many grantee organisations. Many grantees have continued to develop and grow international partnerships and relationships. *The Eden Trust* has successfully brokered ongoing relationships with artists, galleries and cultural influencers to develop international projects. For example, it worked with artist Mat Collishaw to undertake the main commission for the Sustainability Pavilion for the Dubai Expo 2021.
- Following the *Bridge* project, *The Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* is now collaborating with practitioners from Indonesia and Malawi for the *Bridge2Bamboo* follow-up project and is also working with the international *Burning Man Festival*.

13. Support the Creative Case for Diversity

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and inclusion were a central theme of many projects and the focus spanned gender, ability, ethnicity and socio-economic background. • Grantees often regard AfE as having been catalytic in developing diverse-led and diverse-focused organisations. Funded projects have raised ambition and confidence and many grantees believe that the impact will be profound and long-lasting. • AfE has enabled diverse-led and diverse-focused organisations to achieve a step change and given them time and space to explore and experiment with different ways of working and training approaches. • Mainstream organisations have also been able to build their expertise and experience in diverse practice through the programme. This has been achieved through embedding training, skills and learning approaches within previously non-diverse organisations and through sharing best practice. • Community participation and collaboration has been integral to a number of projects and funded organisations typically expect to continue to emphasise that community focus in their approach going forward.

13.1 Diversity and inclusion was central to many funded projects

- Diversity and inclusion were central to many AfE projects. The aspects of diversity addressed were wide-ranging encompassing gender diversity, (e.g., *Brighter Sounds*, *Heart of Glass*), disability – across a wide spectrum and including neurodiversity and autism (e.g., *Unlimited*, *Extraordinary Bodies*, *TIN Arts*, *Mind the Gap*) – ethnic diversity (*Birmingham Repertory Theatre's 'Furnace'*, *Culture Central's 'Transforming Narratives'*, and *Pop Up Project's 'International Illustration Exchange'*) and socio-economic diversity (*Westwood Jerwood Creative Bursaries*).
- The AfE programme has enabled a step change in practice for a number of diverse-led and diverse-focused organisations. Several organisations point to AfE as having been pivotal in enabling them to establish themselves, collaborate, perform and gain influence and believe that it has raised their confidence and their ambition in this area. Typically, these organisations describe the impact as being catalytic and potentially long-lasting in terms of the way they see themselves developing as artistic organisations and practices in the future.

AfE has been the building block for everything that we do. The diversity-led practice is growing and growing. **Project Grantee**

AfE has given us the opportunity to prove that this can be done with outstanding results. Mainstream organisations can no longer pretend and give excuses for not including diverse artists and performers. We have shown that disabled artists have a huge amount to contribute and must be heard. **Project Grantee**

- Allowing time and space to explore and experiment has been one of the aspects of the programme which project grantees feel has helped them to bring about a step-change in practice around diversity, especially where understanding and learning has been built up during the project. Some projects built in this space for experimentation in their original planning, especially if they had previous experience of working with diverse practitioners.

They spent a lot of time looking internally at how accessible the processes and the venue organisations themselves are. They learnt a huge amount throughout the project about best practice and there has been time to distil everything and plan for what to do next. They have really thought about what they are doing and this has meant they are a very well thought of organisation. **Relationship Manager**

- Organisations such as *TIN Arts*, focused on developing diverse talent – and especially disabled talent – have recognised that they need to provide wrap-around support instead of just focusing on professional development. This has been an important learning from the programme and critical to the evolution of future development work. They have focused on the need to take into account the socio-economic context of artists and how the practical challenges that disabled artists face need to be addressed within projects, since these can have a massive impact on levels of engagement and participation. Diverse social factors addressed have included ensuring that individuals do not exceed a Universal Credit or Benefits threshold for time spent on the programme, being sensitive to barriers and triggers for neuro-diverse artists which could inhibit their participation and recognising difficulties in accessing computers and technology during the pandemic.
- Within *TIN Arts* the outcomes targeted were different for each individual and success was not measured by specific milestones, rather by the approach and learning developed which has been transferable and applicable in different contexts.

*We had to take small steps sometimes so that we really understood the context for our artists. If they needed their journey timetabled, then it was our role to help them; if we needed to visit them in their own homes when Covid struck to help them understand why they couldn't come to the venue, we would do that; our vision is about creating arts for all so we needed to identify, address and remove the barriers for them. **Project Grantee***

- AfE has been a springboard for organisations already working with diverse groups to upscale their practice and activities. *Unlimited*, *Cirque Bijou/Diverse Cities 'Extraordinary Bodies'* and *Mind the Gap* are among the many organisations which have exceeded their expectations and have been able to build capacity in their sector, work with other sectors and commission more widely.

*AfE changed the organisation and it will never work in the same way again. Developing the skills of the learning-disabled team members showed they were able to meet the challenges of working on a larger scale, they just needed the space to make that happen. A lot of the partners have changed their working practices now off the back of the learning they have gone through with this project. **Relationship Manager***

- Mainstream organisations were often able to use AfE funding as a vehicle to build experience and expertise in working in diversity practice and with diverse led organisations. They were able to collaborate with and provide support to diverse-led organisations and through this collaboration to improve their own understanding and learning around diverse practice. For example, *101 Outdoor Arts* worked with *Unlimited*; *Yorkshire Dance* worked alongside *TIN Arts* and *Inclusion North*.

*We were able to work with a wider range of cross-sector partners across different artforms but also chose to collaborate with new diverse arts and partners. **Project Grantee***

- Many projects involved cross-sector partnership working. *Tin Art's Talent Hub* is also a very good example of a partnership between organisations which already knew each other well, shared values and ambition and could each make their own specific contribution to the project. Clear roles and remits were established from the outset – *Inclusion North* brought its expertise in improving inclusion for disabled and neuro-diverse people, *TIN Arts* had experience in increasing access to dance and performing arts and *Yorkshire Dance* had strength and experience in dance training. Selected venue partnerships showed themselves willing to adapt their practice and physical environment to support the needs of participating artists.
- *Weston Jerwood's Creative Bursary* programme worked (and continues to work) with a wide range of partner organisations who share a commitment to increasing diversity and have agreed to take interns and to operate within the framework set out by the project; they have been invested in making the internships successful to meet their own criteria, to widen access and to adopt best practice.

- Community involvement in development and participation has been a key component of many projects; artists within *Heart of Glass* worked closely with women in the St Helens community to develop their stories and involve them in productions which were staged in community spaces. *Cirque Bijou/Diverse City's Extraordinary Bodies* included community workshops in the development of productions at performance venues and similarly, *Mind the Gap* undertook community engagement and talent development work:

*Working with community groups at partner venues was integral to the show's development and include themes of important to different groups. **Project Grantee***

*We worked with women in the local area and used their stories. Our venue spaces were community spaces and we consciously found performance spaces that our community knew and used. **Project Grantee***

- Developing leadership and building advocacy are important outcomes of the programme. This has been especially important for diversity-led projects in which talent is being fostered, in some cases for the first time. *TIN Arts* cites the example of George Webster, one of the dancers in the *Talent Hub*, as a particular source of inspiration. George has gone on to become a disability ambassador for partner *Yorkshire Dance* and the first Cbeebies presenter with Down's Syndrome.
- Fostering leadership is seen as proof of concept for the programme and many artists and practitioners who participated in AfE projects have progressed in their careers and become leading practitioners often on a national and international stage. Artists involved in the *East London Dance* company project have gone on to work on national productions; for example, one alumnus is currently in a production of *Cats*. Similarly, alumni of the *Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries* have been able to develop their careers through the bursary programmes and are now working in a number of national arts organisations and aiming for leadership roles.
- Some organisations, recognising that there was a lack of diversity in their leadership teams, decided to review the composition of their advisory groups so that inclusion can move beyond what is sometimes seen as a tokenistic approach to the effecting of real and valuable change in organisational structure and culture.

14. Longer Term Impacts and Legacy

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AfE funding has led to increased organisational confidence among many grantees. It has encouraged many organisations to look to create a long-term legacy for their projects and to widen their ambitions. • Ambition for Excellence has contributed to the development and strengthening of long-term partnerships and relationships, often within individual regions. There is widespread commitment to continue these relationships and collaborations which will strengthen sustainability and provide new opportunities for creativity in the future. • Cross-sector working facilitated best practice sharing and supported talent development and new ways of working. Many grantees expect to continue to work both across the arts sector and with organisations outside the sector such as in technology. Some grantees, especially those focused on diversity and inclusion, are looking to advocate for their approaches outside the arts sector in the future. • The programme had an especially positive impact on outdoor arts, circus and festivals. The investment has supported the development of longer-term strategies among organisations working in this artform and helped to improve the profile of the artform within the wider sector. • The development and documentation of resources for training and skills development is another important legacy of the programme. This has been especially important in supporting the mainstreaming of diversity practice. • Building capacity and developing leadership and advocacy roles for diverse practitioners and professionals is seen as being key to mainstreaming diversity. Spurred on by their AfE projects, several organisations are looking to build leadership networks to further embed good practice and to support the development of emerging talent. • Increased international activity and wider international reach enabled by AfE funding has supported some organisations, most notably <i>Unlimited</i>, to become international brands in their own right. In the area of diversity and inclusion, some are increasingly influential players internationally. • The close alignment between the aims of AfE and those of the new Arts Council England 2020-2030 <i>Let's Create</i> strategy¹³ puts many grantees in a strong position to support the ambitions of <i>Let's Create</i> in the next few years.

14.1 Long-term benefit of partnerships

- Synergistic, collaborative partnerships have been integral to the creative ambitions of many projects. Examples include *Collusion's* work with commercial technology partners such as *Cambridge Consultants* and the cross-sector collaboration of *101 Outdoor Arts* with *The Place* and *Unlimited*. Many multi-disciplinary partnerships have been strengthened through AfE. For example, *Heart of Glass* has worked with multi-disciplinary company *ANU Productions* and *Idle Women*, a contemporary arts organisation.

¹³ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/our-strategy-2020-2030>

- Support for building cross-sector partnerships has been an important way in which AfE has contributed to the sharing of best practice and the development of new ways of working. Many grantees see cross-sector working as giving them scope to harness wider skills-sets and to provide more opportunities to diverse talent. Cross-sector working also provides scope for organisations, especially those focused on diversity and inclusion, to work more widely outside the sector in order to advocate for their sector and their ways of working. Many organisations have worked successfully within the arts and believe that they can do more to support other sectors. Based on their experience and learning to date, an increasing number of grantee organisations are being approached by peers outside the arts sector to share their experiences, to speak at events and to provide advice.
- Many grantee organisations continue to work through partnerships developed during the programme. Yorkshire Sculpture International's (YSI) partners collaborate on ad-hoc projects but also plan to run a second YSI festival. *The Eden Trust* has deepened its partnerships and collaborations with local partners such as the *White Gold Festival* and Falmouth and Exeter Universities.

*It has taken us from submitting project grant applications for individual pieces of work to close working between two companies and enabling us to develop things over a longer period of time in a more detailed, longer-term and focused way. It takes a long time to make this kind of work and AfE has given us the time to think about what is really needed. It has taken us to a new level and we now have the expertise to produce high quality work in different contexts. We have grown to the stage that we can employ help such as tour promoters and PR support. **Project Grantee***

- The building of these strong and lasting partnerships/relationships is among the most significant legacies of the Ambition for Excellence Programme.

14.2 Increased profile and representation for the outdoor arts sector

- The programme was open to all artforms including outdoor arts, circus and festivals. There was early consultation on challenges such as how the needs of the outdoor arts sector could best be addressed to bring about step change. The programme aims were closely aligned to the strategic focus that some of the organisations in outdoor arts already had and AfE has helped to provide a platform to organisations within outdoor arts to showcase their talent and creativity to a wider audience.
- Many grantees in the outdoor arts sector would like to see further support to build on the sector's higher profile and to respond to the increased appetite and engagement with outdoor arts which has come about in part because of the pandemic. There is more outdoor art happening and many grantees expect audience interest and engagement to continue to increase, post-pandemic.

*We have been able to adapt our outdoor work to create more engaging activities for people to see during the pandemic. The success of a touring event and installation has encouraged us to take this into a second phase and audiences are enjoying the experiences and feel safer in the outdoor context. **Project Grantee***

*They have created so much work that has flexed between both high-brow and low-brow and they really understand about community appeal; they have continued to partner with funders in disadvantaged areas as there is now a much better understanding of the cultural and tourism benefits as well as mental health benefits of their work. Outdoor arts is such a good medium for the public and there is increased recognition of this. **Project Partner***

14.3 Documented resources will sustain project learning

- Consolidating and documenting training and skills resources is a key output of AfE through which several projects have created a legacy across their sector and beyond. Organisations with projects focused on diversity have been especially active in this area.
 - *Brighter Sound's 'Both Sides Now'* produced a national skills training toolkit for the National Curriculum in KS2 and KS3 in order to embed gender equality in music in the UK education system,
 - *Weston Jerwood Arts* developed a toolkit for employers addressing socio-economic diversity and inclusion which is helping to shift approaches to recruitment¹⁴. The learnings have been embedded not only in those organisations taking part in the project but increasingly in other arts organisations and sectors which are using the toolkit to develop their own recruitment practices and ways of working.

They were able to give shape to the internship structure and really help employers to understand what they needed to do. They have really thought about the lifecycle of the role and helped to steward people beyond the placement. They have helped organisations to understand their recruitment processes better and change the way they recruit. Relationship Manager

- Other organisations are continuing to explore ways to document their learnings to create lasting impact.

There's a lack of understanding and training around different approaches and needs. They have achieved so much and there is so much demand for their expertise. It takes real investment and time to develop resources but they want to do this to ensure the learnings are captured. Relationship Manager

14.4 The mainstreaming of approaches to diversity will live on

- An important aim of the programme for many projects was to empower diverse practitioners and professionals to become leaders and advocates in their own right instead of being simply recipients of support. There has been much success through the programme in mainstreaming diversity and many grantees consider it to be a priority to continue to focus on empowering leaders and increasing representation and equality of opportunity in future

Some of the artists have really benefited from having this platform to build confidence, experience and networks. They have been able to go on to work with national players and have real influence. Relationship Manager

Alumni and current cohorts are speaking directly to major organisations to tell them about the programme and how it has helped them. It's active learning so that stakeholders really understand the impact of the programme and how it can help their thinking on workforce development. Relationship Manager

¹⁴ <https://jerwoodarts.org/projects/weston-jerwood-creative-bursaries-2017-19/toolkit/>

14.5 Several grantee brands have been strengthened or internationalised

- Several grantee organisations have seen their brand profile and perceptions strengthened through the success of their project within Ambition for Excellence. Others have successfully transitioned to become international brands and have ambitions to expand their international horizons even further. *The Eden Trust* wants to become a global platform for sustainable, inclusive world-class arts/creativity and continues to work with international partners. *101 Outdoor Arts* is seeking to influence outdoor arts practice on the international stage as is *Unlimited* in the field of inclusive arts practice.

We have massively raised our profile internationally and are working in more countries and with wider reach. The chance to make this a reality came about through the AfE funding. Project Grantee

We have done so much work internationally through collaborations, visits, attendance at international events and our own symposium have all helped to massively increase our international profile and reputation. Project Grantee

We are now seen as an international arts centre and artists and audiences recognise us for that. Project Grantee

One of our partners is an international organisation and that has really helped us to access additional funding and to collaborate in the future. Project Grantee

14.6 AfE supports future Arts Council England strategy

- The aims of AfE were very well aligned to those of *Let's Create*, the new Arts Council England strategy for 2020-2030. For many grantee organisations, *Let's Create* provides a new framework within which to build on the platform provided by Ambition for Excellence. Any future strategic funding will need to align to the *Let's Create Outcomes and Investment Principles*¹⁵ and AfE grantees (both NPOs and non NPOs) are well placed to support the strategic direction.

The outcomes of a Creative and Cultural Country are a good fit for organisations to build on national and international work and profile and Cultural Communities addresses placemaking and the opportunities around this. Relationship Manager

The investment principles of inclusivity and relevance are so relevant to this AfE project; we feel very hopeful that we are well placed to continue to meet the Arts Council England criteria when applying for future funding. Project Grantee

They were dynamic enough to try and shift and change the way that things were done and to support best business practice and now we are all thinking about that. This was completely in-line with the thinking of the investment principle of dynamism in Let's Create. Relationship Manager

- Environmental responsibility and sustainability is an increasingly important area for all organisations and there is scope for grantee organisations to take a leadership role in aligning artistic creativity and innovation with environmental responsibility. Again, given that environmental responsibility is one of the investment principles of the *Let's Create Strategy*, there is scope to build on the platform created through Ambition for Excellence.

¹⁵ **Let's Create Outcomes:**

Creative People: Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life

Cultural Communities: Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture

A Creative & Cultural Country: England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international

Let's Create Investment Principles:

Ambition & Quality: Cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work

Inclusivity & Relevance: England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that we support and in the culture they produce

Dynamism: Cultural organisations are dynamic and able to respond to the challenges of the next decade

Environmental Responsibility: Cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility

15. Lessons Learned/Challenges

	Key Findings
Securing funding to achieve sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects which were able to leverage the funding and reputation enhancement of Ambition for Excellence to achieve NPO status with Arts Council England or to develop other funding streams have made most progress towards achieving longer term sustainability. Other organisations which were heavily dependent on AfE funding have found it harder to achieve sustainability post-project. These include some grantees focused on smaller projects and some focused on work in disability and inclusion. Often, the challenge of sustainability has been compounded by the wider impacts of the pandemic. Some grantees feel that they would have benefited from more active support with ongoing financial management and in particular, greater support in developing follow-on plans and effective fund-raising approaches for the future. Mentoring schemes and the facilitation of best practice sharing were identified by grantees as examples of initiatives that could be valuable.
Importance of strong stakeholder management and cohesive partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More impactful projects typically had stronger stakeholder management and more cohesive partnerships. In these projects, partners had clear roles and responsibilities and a shared strategic vision of the desired project outcomes. Projects which faced the greatest challenges often involved partners who failed to align around a common vision or failed to agree individual responsibilities and funding clearly enough and as a result suffered from internal tensions and inefficiencies. Further, some projects risked reputational damage through association with partners and sponsors which some stakeholders regarded as being inappropriate. For example, a sponsorship agreement was proposed between BAE Systems and the key partners for the <i>Great Exhibition of the North</i>. Some of the artists objected and subsequently this support was not taken forward.
Stable leadership and personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects with a clear strategy, strong leadership and stable project management typically had greater impact. Projects with higher staff turnover and unstable management were more likely to encounter problems and required more intervention from Arts Council England Relationship Managers. Projects and partnerships which were already established or core to grantee activity when AfE funding was sought were often more successful than those which were established specifically to respond to the funding opportunity.
The role of Arts Council England Relationship Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light touch monitoring from Arts Council England Relationship Managers was found to be generally effective. In response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, Relationship Managers often responded swiftly, helping grantees to access additional funding sources and facilitating the amendment of project plans to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.
The need for community engagement pre and post-project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects in which key external stakeholders, most notably community groups, were appropriately consulted and engaged early in the planning process were also typically more successful and better able to achieve impact and sustainability. A small number of projects struggled because they failed to engage and consult external stakeholders and communities adequately at the outset, leading to a breakdown of trust and long-term to disengagement of these key stakeholders. Projects which are exploratory in nature and involve a high share of R&D need adequate time for stakeholder engagement and consultation. Some projects simply did not appreciate how necessary but also complex and time consuming this engagement process would be.

	Key Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were also some issues when projects finished and key stakeholders and communities felt 'abandoned' as key project personnel left. Having invested, practically and emotionally, some external stakeholders felt that their trust had not been repaid through an ongoing legacy.
Providing opportunities for cross-project learning and relationship building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More opportunities for peer learning and sharing of experiences and practice across projects within the Programme would have been welcomed by project grantees. Many projects, especially those focused on diversity and inclusion, were navigating uncharted territory and grantees felt they would have benefited from insights and examples of best practice from their peers. More widely, there was a sense of an opportunity missed to create a shared community of practice within the programme rather than simply having a funding stream for 67 independent projects. Many grantees would have valued opportunities to build contacts and relationships with like-minded and innovative organisations within the programme The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented, and some grantees suggest that Arts Council England could provide more help and guidance in managing projects post-pandemic as well as building the learnings from the pandemic, especially around digital working, into future funding programmes.

15.1 Securing long-term funding is key to future sustainability

- Grantee organisations which have gained profile and confidence through AfE and have achieved NPO status are often the most secure financially:
 - 101 Outdoor Arts* and *Unlimited* have secured NPO status after their AfE projects. This means they have visibility to future funding through Arts Council England and are also well placed to access other commercial funding,
 - Through its success within AfE, *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* believes it has re-established itself as an organisation with the potential to regain NPO status in future.
- Even without achieving NPO status, some grantees have been able to gain greater stability by leveraging significant alternative investment or developing new funding pipelines, in part as a result of their AfE funding and successful projects:
 - The Jerwood Charitable Foundation* secured long-term funding for future iterations of the *Creative Bursaries* programme,
 - Heart of Glass* in St Helens was able to obtain further funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to support future talent development projects with young people, a new focus for the organisation. Further, a permanent venue and office space was secured post project through support from St Helens Council,
 - Collusion* and *Godiva Awakes Trust/Imagineer* have developed a pipeline of new work and partnerships.
- As outlined in Section 10, a number of grantees continue to work successfully with international funders and are helping them to achieve their own international agendas e.g. *Brighter Sound* and *Unlimited* are working with the British Council. *ArtReach* receives funding from Creative Europe (CAPP).
- Of course, some organisations have not been able to leverage their involvement in AfE to achieve greater financial stability and the end of their project has sometimes coincided with a crisis in the organisation resulting in the scale of activity and staffing profile having to undergo rapid downsizing. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been difficult for almost all organisations but for some it has added an element of existential threat.

- Overall, the financial benefit to the sector of AfE has been very significant but the experience suggests that alongside in-project auditing and control, some grantees believe they would benefit from more active support to ongoing financial management and in particular greater support to the development of follow-on plans and effective fund-raising for the future.

*It benefited from a period of strong financial support during the three years of the programme but it has since failed to rebalance its programmes and budgets to sustain a much reduced level of activity, greatly reduced staff team and higher capital costs. When we formed we had hoped to run this again but we have had to put plans for a second programme on hold. **Project Grantee***

*The opportunity was fantastic but the big challenge is what happens afterwards. We are not NPO-funded and our big problem is lack of certainty. We want to be able to continue to support new and emerging practice and placemaking but we need revenue funding to do this. **Project Grantee***

- As a specific point, some AfE project participants also struggled to manage their cashflow because of the funding model within which smaller projects were not funded directly and relied on a third party (such as a museum consortium) as the grant holder. The consortium could only release funds on the completion of work which put severe financial strain on some smaller organisations and, they feel, took away some of their agency.

15.2 Strong stakeholder management

- Challenges around stakeholder management were a significant factor impacting some projects. A failure to develop a strong cross-partner vision and ambiguous roles and responsibilities led to mismatched expectations and lack of cohesion and commitment across project partners. Loose regional or sectoral networks were often less invested in ensuring the success of the project than was required and problems occurred when partners saw their involvement primarily as a contractual one with relatively little emotional or strategic commitment to the outcomes. On occasions, there were tensions among partners around access to potential funders.

*None of the partners were thinking about the big picture and each treated their involvement as a project which was transactional. They didn't see the transformational leadership opportunities. They didn't really want to shift things which means there would be disruption, it took them out of their comfort zone. **Relationship Manager***

*The project is complex and nuanced and in the beginning there were often conflicting partner expectations - it took time to build relationships and allow the project time to grow and evolve. **Project Grantee***

*The decision-making approach really tested the partners and the way that this happened; for some organisations there was clearly a financial imperative and they saw their involvement as being a way of getting funding for their own organisation. We have now shifted the approach to make it more transparent and independent which has turned out to be a positive for us. **Project Grantee***

*Partners were reluctant to get involved in joint fundraising, especially if it involved approaching organisations that they had or wanted to have as funders of their own organisation. **Relationship Manager***

- Challenges around stakeholder management were inevitably heightened where projects were very ambitious and complex.

*We were perhaps too ambitious to try and deliver so many things. It was very challenging to build in the learnings and this meant that we couldn't move as quickly as we would have like to. We had to take the time that was needed and so it has taken much longer. **Project Grantee***

- There were also some sensitivities around the appropriateness of consortium partners, especially sponsors. Inappropriate funders can cause reputational damage and examples were cited where a funder was considered to be unsuitable by important stakeholders. For example, there were objections to the idea of defence contractor BAE Systems becoming a funder of the *Great Exhibition of the North* and some artists threatened to withdraw from the project. Pubs and bars were among the proposed funders of *NGI's Freedom City* project and other funders and community groups opposed this.
- Projects with partnerships which had been formed specifically to bid for funds were often less successful than those based around existing and established partnerships. On occasions, partnerships existed on paper rather than in reality and there wasn't the necessary shared expectations or clarity of roles to hold the partnership together. While there are examples of successful projects which had responded to the funding opportunity reactively, for some the strategic fit was less obvious and they struggled.

This was a very reactive response and in hindsight it was probably not a good fit for the project to address what it wanted to do. It might have been better if we'd been able to be a bit more prescriptive in saying what we were looking for from the sector. The team they put together was not really working together and you did not feel they wanted the same thing from it. **Relationship Manager**

- Successful projects with stronger stakeholder management were often better at choosing partners with a shared vision, who allocated clear roles and responsibilities and who were committed to partnership working. They consulted key community stakeholders appropriately and early enough to ensure the project addressed their needs and priorities rather than those of partners.

We worked with partners who shared our vision and brought different skills to the table in order to grow talent. They were committed to changing their venues and practice to embed the learning from the project. We also made sure throughout the project that we and our partners were able to adapt and learn in response to the needs of the community we were working with. **Project Grantee**

- Closer scrutiny of project plans at the outset would help to ensure good practice in stakeholder management. In particular there is a need to challenge the claimed coherence and alignment of strategic partners and check their shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and expected funding. Further, there is scope to provide best practice examples and to give more support to successful applicants in the early project stages to facilitate better community and stakeholder engagement.

15.3 Stable leadership and personnel

- Stable leadership has been critical to the success of projects and the outcomes achieved. Many projects had either organisational or project-specific leads who were able to provide direction and continuity. At *The Eden Trust* and *Yorkshire Sculpture International*, those individuals have subsequently retained responsibility for taking the work forward.
- Conversely, projects with inconsistent leadership teams and weak project management were more likely to encounter problems and delay. Indeed, among the projects which have been delayed or where legacies have not been realised, changes in personnel and leadership vacuums have been a common factor.

The programme was unable to secure a full time Project Manager [PM] from the beginning of the project and this was hugely disruptive to the project and resulted in lack of confidence in what we were doing. They brought in an interim, part-time PM and then I joined as PM soon after. We had a change in leadership with the Director leaving, an Interim Director stepping in for 6 months and then finally we got someone permanent. **Project Grantee**

- A specific issue has arisen in a considerable number of cases when the project has finished. In the absence of continuation funding, the lead individual(s) simply leaves and as one grantee put it - "*When individuals leave, the learning goes with it*"

- A project's learning legacy lies with individuals and in planning any future programme, consideration needs to be given to how to ensure learning and knowledge is captured in a systematic way. In the context of research for this evaluation, on occasions it proved almost impossible to find anything other than superficial information about certain projects, simply because nobody with direct involvement remained connected to the grantee organisation and learning had not been captured or shared.

15.4 The Role of Arts Council England Relationship Managers

- Most projects worked successfully with light-touch management from Arts Council England Relationship Managers and apart from regular reporting and involvement in meetings, little intervention was required. A few projects required a more hands-on approach and closer engagement whilst a small number went into crisis management mode.
- A strong relationship between the project partners and their Relationship Manager proved especially valuable during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both project grantees and Relationship Managers acknowledged the value of such a relationship at a time of unprecedented challenges and Relationship Managers were frequently praised by grantees for their responsiveness and constructive input on those occasions when they were specifically asked for help.

We were very grateful for their swift reaction when the pandemic hit. We were able to apply for emergency funding and that gave us a lifeline. **Project Grantee**

ACE has been very hands on and involved in some very challenging conversations. They were broadly very supportive and have been trusting. They have stepped back when they needed to. **Project Grantee**

- While some project grantees would have welcomed a closer working relationship with Relationship Managers, it was recognised that this was beyond the current scope of the Relationship Managers' role.

AfE is by its nature high risk but there is a difference between telling us what we want to hear to get the money and just being ambitious and striving to do something different. With some projects I was really confident that they had done all the research and knew the potential risks and even if it didn't work and the outcomes were not right, it wasn't due to lack of preparation. But with other organisations, they said they would do X, Y and Z and then just didn't do it. **Relationship Manager**

The scale of the project was far too large for the resources available. And the outcome of the audit - received towards the end of the first year of operation - was crucial in ensuring that we could respond to need rather than simply plough on with plans without any consideration of what the level of interest was, or its suitability. It would have been good if we had worked more closely with the Relationship Manager. **Project Grantee**

15.5 Community engagement at an early stage

- In a few cases there was insufficient engagement with relevant communities at the pre-planning and R&D stages of projects. This lack of consultation and involvement led to mistrust and disengagement among some of the very groups which the projects were aiming to support and ultimately led to reduced impact.

We already had very good community links and they should have consulted us much earlier in the process and they would have achieved so much more in community engagement programmes with schools etc. If they do it again, we would be very happy to help them get this right from the outset. **Project Partner**

The consortium had not been well managed and there was a lack of representation on the steering group. There was no engagement plan with the people who should be consulted. This should have been the most important and the earliest thing that was happening. The project became toxic before it had started and different community groups wanted nothing to do with it. **Relationship Manager**

*Funder requirements came ahead of stakeholder needs so we were being driven by timescales and milestones we hadn't signed up to. All the funders and partners really needed to get together earlier in a collaborative spirit and we should have been driven by what the community and practitioners told us. A trust deficit that was there already was exacerbated. **Project Grantee.***

- On occasions, projects didn't recognise how much time they would need to undertake the relevant level of community engagement to shape their projects. One respondent reflected on the fact that this had been a key learning from the previous *Creative People and Places* programme but this learning had not been sufficiently taken into account within AfE.

*Large scale funding programmes such as this need to build in the allowance for organisations to have longer preparation periods (to build and define solid partnerships) and more flexibility of resources to continue work after the initial stages - adapting to the experiences and learning by the arts organisation and its partners and participants. Notions of excellence and ambition can then be shaped with those communities rather than for them. This kind of community participation and the long-term commitment it takes is well documented and evaluated in the Arts Council's other programme - *Creative People and Places* learning. It has already been evaluated and reported that there needed to be greater connections between the learning available there and the NPO portfolio. **Project Grantee***

- A few projects were also criticised for failure to continue to engage diverse artists and communities post-project and for not planning for the sustainability of engagement and relationship building with communities. Sometimes this has been a result of the point made above that at the end of a project the key people often simply move on which can leave a vacuum and legacy of broken trust with communities.

*Local community groups felt very let down that they were expecting continued involvement post-project but it didn't happen, especially as all the people involved in the project left. There had been so much good-will but now they probably won't want to engage again and the trust has gone. **Project Grantee***

- There is also some frustration that individuals/organisations are often expected to provide free advice to projects which focus on diversity and inclusion. Increasingly, this is seen as unacceptable and there is an expectation that experts in whatever field should be adequately recognised and rewarded when consulted.

*Diverse artists and organisations get fed up with being approached for help or advice and not seeing any follow through. It has been quite common for artists to share their expertise and not get paid for this. It was very much normalised in the past, and although there is now a greater awareness about this, it still happens. **Project Grantee***

15.6 Opportunities for cross-project learning

- Feedback suggests that within such an imaginative and transformative programme as Ambition for Excellence, an opportunity was lost to share ideas and approaches across projects. Many project managers would have welcomed opportunities to learn about other projects, to network, share ideas and possibly address shared challenges. This would also have created a sense of a programme which was greater than the sum of its parts.
- In practice, for grantees Ambition for Excellence was simply their own project and few had any sense of what else was happening with other projects or how what they were doing supported a wider initiative. The earlier *Creative People and Places* programme had included peer support within different sectors and several project grantees said that this could have been a valuable added benefit of AfE,

*It would be great to interact with other projects, especially those in the same sector and learn about what they did well and what we could learn from them. There was no opportunity to do this but we all could have benefited. **Project Grantee***

- Some of these projects are working in new areas and are undertaking pioneering work in their sector. This is especially true of some projects focused on diversity and inclusion. Grantees can often see real benefits from opportunities to gain insight and share best practice within their sector and also potentially more widely as they transition their practice into the mainstream arts sector and beyond. Longer-term, many grantees believe that Arts Council England can play a more active role in helping to share learnings and best practice across its portfolio of funded projects.
- The specific circumstances of the pandemic were completely unpredictable and unprecedented but having peer-to-peer networks in place within the Programme might have helped some grantee organisations cope better when faced with the very difficult challenges that arose.

Case Study 1: 101 Outdoor Arts Talent Development and Innovation Hub

Organisation: Corn Exchange Newbury

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: South East

Grant Awarded: £750k

Projected Start Date: 01/03/2018

Projected End Date: 30/03/2022



Greenham by Ceschi + Lane - a Seedbed residency at 101 Outdoor Arts - National Centre for Arts in Public Space. Photo: Camilla Greenwell

Project Overview:

- A series of funded research and development residencies for outdoor arts practice with specific focus on cross art-form collaboration, new partnerships and developing work with diverse artists.
- A programme of talent development aimed at diversifying outdoor arts practice, raising quality and ambition, and developing strong and representative leadership in the sector.
- Investment in the development of resources and expertise for to support the specific needs of artists working in public space.

Key elements of success/challenges:

- Development of 101 and its programme created a step-change in the creative quality, ambition and diversity of outdoor arts practice.
- Their approach met the need to grow the sector allowing time and space to develop a strong infrastructure, 'think big' and create exciting possibilities.

"We were able to create and test drive a vision for a future of the centre and managed to demonstrate the impact that we could have through working with a far greater range of artists and organisations"

- The time taken to secure planning permission for the expansion of 101 at the start of the project meant that there were significant delays to completing the capital work and start the planned programme of activity.
- A key challenge of their AfE project was breadth vs depth as it was important to both provide support to large numbers of artists as well as to build relationships over time.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- Their AfE project expanded and improved the facilities and accommodation on offer to artists- doubling the number of residencies available to 40 (around 250-300 artists a year) and increasing the capacity of technical and artistic support.
- Seedbed research and development residencies were created with specific focus on cross-art form collaboration, new partnerships, developing work with diverse artists and exploring technology.
- A professional development programme for artists and producers working in public space was created, with some resources repurposed from their R&D programme to labs and symposia to meet demand.
- The project developed long-term partnerships with a wide range of arts organisations including Watershed, Punchdrunk, Certain Blacks, Unlimited and Without Walls.
- Widening reach to new and existing audiences.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- Simon Chatterton is regarded as an inspirational leader with a clear-sighted vision of where he wants to take 101 Outdoor Arts.
- The organisation developed entirely new areas of work around talent development.
- Provided knowledgeable support, including technical expertise to artists and producing expertise to artists and producers to improve their practice and inform future ways of working.
- Talent development programme helped to achieve extended impact and reach of organisations and artists.
- Improved training opportunities for the team at 101 were developed to support their professional development and strengthen their contribution to ongoing work.
- 101 is seen to have a huge impact on artists practice, especially for those without experience in the sector who will work more in outdoor arts going forward.

“101 has a leading role – it sets the pace and raises the bar for what is needed.”

- 101 are developing education offers through Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) with FAI-AR in France, discussions on a Masters course in outdoor arts with Winchester University and an Outdoor arts course for producers to establish a career development path for professionals wishing to work in the sector.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- Working with 101 is recognised as a mark of quality which increases new opportunities for artists and organisations wanting to do outdoor work.
- 101 have had a lasting impact on ways of working and the ambition of outdoor work delivered by cross-sector arts organisations/artists.

Increase Diversity:

- 101 have a specific focus on developing work with diverse organisations and artists from beyond the core of existing outdoor arts practice - supporting them to respond to commissioning and creation opportunities e.g., residency for Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse circus artists, partnership with Unlimited to support disabled artists and workshops with neuro-diverse artists.
- 101 have:
 - Hosted events in partnership with diverse-led organisations for groups including black women circus artists, black and minority ethnic puppeteers, organisations making work for audiences with special needs.
 - Supported diverse leadership and practice through training programmes.
 - Increased activities, partnerships and collaborations planned on an ongoing basis.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact:

- The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated the complete suspension of 101’s residency programme and all public-facing live activity including international exchanges, symposia and lab events for three months during lockdown periods in 2020/2021 outside which residencies carried on with additional safety measures.
- Some lab and symposia events put online or made hybrid and some resources were repurposed from physical residencies to digital R&D grants for artists to work digitally.
- The timeframe for the delivery of their AfE project was extended until March 2022.

Digital:

- Throughout their project, artists were supported in developing and integrating new technology and approaches that can enable and enhance artists work resulting in increased commissions and partnership opportunities.
- Developed online resources to support practitioners making outdoor arts work online sharings for residencies and online action learning activities (principally during the pandemic); enabling them to expand reach and increase engagement.
- Delivered live symposium on digital work and creative lab focused on new technologies as well as online symposium on Outdoor Dance with The Place (April 2021). Online delivery enabled both events to increase capacity and impact. One edition of Leadership programme delivered online due to pandemic – leading to plans for future international leadership initiative online.
- Worked with The Space to develop online public engagement in 101 and its residency programme and creative lab focused on new technology.

International:

- Hosted residencies with international artists and supported UK artists to work internationally including digital residencies. Focused on the relation of collaboration opportunities between UK and international artists and visits to creation centres abroad.
- Establishment of international networks leading to creation of international leadership programme.
- Other 101 activities included;
 - joint working with international partners including on online learning resources,
 - attendance at professional international events.

Legacy:

- AfE has been phenomenal in terms of the way 101 has been able to work and it has been game-changing for the organisation's activity, reach and impact. 101 expect to be able to sustain long-term support for the sector but require additional investment post-AfE.
- Investment in facilities, staffing and developmental programme has added value to their role as a residency centre and are now well placed to develop practice and evolve a mixed economy.
- 101 plan to continue to build partnerships and collaborations in the wider arts sector to produce high quality work, evolve talent development schemes, explore new technology and increase working with new diverse artists.

“What we’ve done is like rock strata – the sub soil is now there in the building and core staffing and we can now create a rich layer of lovely loamy top soil in which artists and ideas can be supported to germinate.”
- 101 is now regarded as an international arts brand with a growing international reputation and reach.
- 101 are actively contributing to the development of national strategy including commission of report Outside the Conventional and Into the Mainstream: Arts in Public Space in England and thinking for the sector and next steps needed to achieve long-term sustainability.

Case Study 2: Extraordinary Bodies

Organisation: Cirque Bijou/Diverse City

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: South West

Grant Awarded: £719k

Projected Start Date: 01/10/2016

Projected End Date: 01/10/2019



Photo by Extraordinary Bodies

*“It was one of the best things I’ve ever seen actually,
it was absolutely brilliant.”*

Audience member

Project Overview:

“The project had the overarching aim of making permanent and positive change in the way circus is taught and produced with disabled artists, by developing a solid, skilled, sustainable and high quality national integrated circus company who innovate, advocate, challenge, support and inspire.”

Key elements of success:

- The relationship between Cirque Bijou and Diverse City has developed into a long-term partnership and the two organisations are committed to continue to collaborate and co-produce in the future.
- Strengthening of existing partnerships and creating of new partnerships namely with Plymouth Theatre Royal, Glasgow Life / MCF, Bristol Old Vic, and the National Theatre.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The showcase performance ‘What Am I Worth’ was toured across outdoor venues and arts festivals in England in 2018.
- Integrated touring practice was explored with venues/touring partners and communities.
- Strong partnerships developed with venues, places and communities across the UK and international partnerships have resulted in ongoing collaboration and co-production.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- A ground-breaking R&D residency took place with world class circus partners – Circus Oz. Integrated circus technique and practice was explored enabling disabled and non-disabled artists to develop their skills and understanding of what is possible in integrated circus work.
- Programme of talent development through the Talent Development Thinktank involved partnership working and collaboration with national circus schools and training experts. This resulted in the creation of a new document on integrated practice and training toolkit for disabled artists.
- The organisation now works with a strong list of performers and creatives and are continuing to develop and mentor talent in collaborations and co-creation.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- An ambitious national touring show – “What Am I Worth?” was developed and produced featuring an integrated cast of disabled and non-disabled circus performers following Community Creative Exploration workshops.
- Indoor and outdoor work is being created with high production values and at scale which adds confidence, status and importance to the work, for example through support provided for integrated practice at organisations such as the National Theatre, The Point, The Lowry, Theatre Royal Plymouth, The Mighty Creatives, National Centre for Circus Arts (NCCA), Circomedia and other partners.

Increase Diversity:

- The organisation worked with 10 marginalised communities across the UK engaging people in the creation and performance of the work. This ‘in residence’ approach enabled them to set standards of best practice in inclusive circus training and refine integrated techniques.
- Inclusive auditions have opened up casting and enabled the talent development work to progress enabling partners to find diverse performers and creatives.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact:

- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to take “What am I worth” on an indoor tour to venues in Rochdale, Plymouth and Poole.

Digital:

- Development of a digital document on training with NCCA and Circomedia for professional and social circus teachers to train disabled artists in circus.
- Current indoor show ‘Human’ is a hybrid live/digital performance. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic has encouraged a more creative approach to exploring use of digital in performance and delivery of work. This show can also be viewed online (<https://www.extraordinarybodies.org.uk/our-work/human/>).

International:

- R&D collaborative project with international circus company circus OZ in Melbourne around shared learning / exploration of circus technique for disabled circus artists.
- Extraordinary Bodies toured in Ireland.
- Through the British Council, the team have given talks in Taiwan and through its own networks work has been performed in Hong Kong and Taiwan while opportunities are being explored in China.

Legacy:

- A new national integrated circus company - Extraordinary Bodies has been created which is now an NPO with a higher profile which is touring new shows to indoor as well as outdoor venues.
- The national informal network of companies, schools, trainers and individuals are changing the way circus is made and by whom.
- Continued support and development of talented young disabled artists through commercial work and informal mentoring and progression routes is increasing the pool of disabled artists in the sector. In the future, the organisation plans to expand recruitment outside the sector.

Case Study 3: Diverse Actions

Organisation: Junction CDC

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: South East

Grant Awarded: £499k

Projected Start Date: 01/04/2017

Projected End Date: 31/03/2020



Rachel Young, Nightclubbing. Photo reproduced from <https://junction.co.uk/artist-development/diverse-actions>

“We run from day to day just making ends meet. To have the resources to do something especial was really important to the organisation. It’s not only important in terms of delivering that project but it was important for the organisation to know it was being ambitious and could achieve something bigger”

Project Overview:

- Three-year programme delivered by Live Art UK (30 venues) and led by Cambridge Junction.

“Diverse Actions champions culturally diverse (BME) ambition, excellence and talent in live art. Its strands of professional development, new work, leadership and legacy provide a framework to enhance live art’s vital role as a practice of artistic innovation and a space to express complex ideas of cultural identity.”

Key elements of success:

- Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse artists were able to deepen and enhance their existing development and presentation opportunities. The artists were able to create excellent work in their own right and build relationships and partnerships with venues and organisations and their audiences. This was due to Diverse Actions, for example, not putting restrictions on the type and scope of work and allowing artists to work on something that goes beyond tokenism.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- A new generation of artists was attracted, encouraged and supported to work in Live Arts. This was achieved through the provision of nine bursaries over a three-year period, including those specifically targeted towards Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse artists and they were able to focus as performance makers on development, presentation and touring.
- Artists were self-directed to develop their bespoke journeys. They had the support of a mentor and access to a range of activities and outputs as appropriate, including residencies, retreats, workshops, masterclasses, critical writing, documentation and touring.

“an opportunity for artist development set and led by artists themselves. It allows for experimental, radical work to challenge one’s practice and bring in others via a residency, retreat or workshop. It is led by artists for artists, not an organisation taking them on a journey.”

- Six Leadership Bursaries were created for the first time within Live Art Development Agency (LADA) in order to empower new leaders across the arts.
- Deeper engagement with Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse artists have been facilitated through the project whilst also strengthening the national network for the development and presentation of live art.

“Trying to enhance organisation’s engagement with diversity and difference”

Increase Diversity:

- The project was based around developing the Creative Case for Diversity.
- The steering group for Cambridge Junction was diverse-led which was key to the success of the project; future projects will need to ensure that diverse stakeholders are integral to the planning and delivery in order to better access key participants and audiences.
- LADA has used the funding to better understand the challenges faced by Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse artists and identify areas where they can improve support to artists and to help DIY host organisations by providing training and development.

Legacy:

- “Vanishing Point”¹⁶ was published post the Covid-19 pandemic and speaking opportunities have arisen as a result of publication for project managers.
- A symposium ‘Skin in the Game’ was positively received and helped to progress the agenda on diversity areas such as power and governance structures identified in the project.
- The leadership team at Cambridge Junction has become more diverse and is continuing to develop its own diversity practice and line management approach to be more inclusive.
- Cambridge Junction will continue to stimulate and disseminate discourse and dialogue about cultural diversity and performance across the sector.
- Ongoing commitment through placements, training and partnerships to support organisations across the cultural sector to become more diverse and inclusive.
- Three artists, all of whom received bursaries, led the new Compass festival 2021. A key priority of the festival is to increase representation of Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse leaders across the cultural sector to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Diverse Junction is reaching out and sharing best practice lessons with the Arts Council England to support the ambitions of the ‘Let’s Create’ strategy and help create the systemic and structural changes needed to develop a more diverse cultural sector.

¹⁶ [Vanishing Points | Unbound \(thisisunbound.co.uk\)](https://thisisunbound.co.uk)

Case Study 4: HELEN

Organisation: Heart of Glass St Helens Ltd

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: North

Grant Awarded: £488k

Projected Start Date: 01/09/2016

Projected End Date: 31/08/2019



Photo reproduced from <https://www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/helen>

Project Overview:

- A women only initiative project involving a partnership between Heart of Glass (www.heartofglass.org.uk), idle women (www.idlewomen.org) and ANU Productions (www.anuproductions.ie) working with the women of St Helens.
- It aimed to address violence against women and focus on work opportunities in sectors in which women are traditionally under-represented such as plumbing, electricals and mechanics.

“Helen took its inspiration from the women of St Helens and was a multi-faceted programme of work, taking place over three years and creating opportunities for women with a range of experience, skill sets and interests”

“To create a series of new ambitious artworks bringing all female teams of UK based and Irish artists and women from across St Helens together to tell their stories through digital, theatre and public art. To create opportunities for talent development for women across the arts sector through CPD and the creation of women only creative and production teams.”

Key elements of success:

- The partnership’s relationship with St Helen’s council led to securing a three-year lease for permanent premises.
- Partnerships with other regional organisations enabled the project to extend its impact and reach and facilitated working with issue specific organisations such as Torus (www.torus.co.uk) and Domestic Violence Refuge (www.refuge.org.uk).

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- Work was created and exhibited and performed in the St Helens area which included a series of artworks in the public realm, a large-scale theatre work, and a digital programme.

“This programme of work gave Heart of Glass the opportunity to engage with a highly diverse range of audiences, through the creation of the work and the public dissemination of the various facets of the work produced.”

- A hub was established post project which encompassed an event, space and community venue and offices.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- The project was run and designed for women to promote arts and trade skills experience and opportunities. Local women have been able to learn DIY and construction skills valuable in their everyday lives.

“Heart of Glass also had significant team development, with individuals gaining on the ground experience of working with projects at such a scale, with complexities beyond anything we had managed previously.”

- The project enabled Heart of Glass to collaborate with a wide range of organisations, individuals and audiences that they would have been unlikely to have done so otherwise. Some practitioners have continued to collaborate and work within the arts sector.

“This programme of work gave Heart of Glass the opportunity to engage with a highly diverse range of audiences, through the creation of the work and the public dissemination of the various facets of the work produced.”

“This has been really successful as these individuals have found new collaborators and have gone on to work together on new projects.”

Digital:

- A digital element was integral to the project and a number of digital programmes were created in the duration. These included a series of Youtube videos ‘PowerTools’ covering DIY skills with idle women; a fortnight-long takeover of Idle Women’s social media channels achieved over 200k impressions via three platforms; a film of “Torch” (the theatre piece produced) was made with ANU Productions outside the funding framework which was shown at digital and arts festivals in Manchester and exhibition in Liverpool. Similarly, a film “The Truth and Nothing but the Truth” was taken to various festivals and exhibitions nationwide.

“The digital development of ANU’s work has continued to grow through this programme of work and it has not only been a development opportunity for ANU but also a number of other practitioners.”

International:

- A partnership with Culture Ireland developed through the collaboration with ANU which provided additional funding for the project.
- It was a key project within the Creative Europe funded Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme (CAPP) which also provided an international profile and facilitated partnerships with European arts organisations supporting a learning programme around collaborative and social practice.

Legacy:

- Heart of Glass was recognised by the local authority of its role within the wider arts and cultural ambitions for the borough of St Helens and this helped to secure their permanent premises.
- Strong relationships have been developed with arts partners as well as local communities and regional stakeholders and they continue to collaborate beyond the end of their AfE project.
- Heart of Glass is committed to working with the women’s support sector in St Helen’s to continue to devise and develop programmes for women and to allow their voices to be heard. A legacy programme has been funded by Paul Hamlyn focusing solely on young women in commissioning and producing a series of new work.

Case Study 5: in_collusion

Organisation: Collusion

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: South East

Grant Awarded: £325,000

Projected Start Date: 01/09/2016

Projected End Date: 30/05/2019



'Claire Haigh photography'. Photo taken at 2017 Mixed Reality Lab, held at Cambridge Junction. The artist is Marcia X

Project Overview:

- Arts and technology development project which aimed to achieve a step change in the production of interactive digital work by catalysing Cambridge, Europe's leading technology innovation hub, as an R&D centre for the development of artists, interdisciplinary collaboration and production.

Key elements of success:

- Collusion worked with artists, creatives, technologists and academics to create experimental new work, share knowledge, strengthen networks and skills and develop new practise.
- They received pioneering support from funders such as The Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP recognising the economic and health and wellbeing benefits of culture. This helped to leverage further support of public and private sector funders and partners.
- The continued success in the hub was dependent on Collusion's relationships with key individuals to plan activity and achieve matched funding.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The project achieved a significant impact in the East region and established a dynamic national profile for arts and technology work both in terms of its practice and the quality of its work.
- Collusion embedded arts-led cross disciplinary practice within Cambridge's academics & technology industry; for example;
 - a partnership with Cambridge's Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence has enabled artists to connect with academically based societal and ethical debates about emerging technologies, informing the development and creation of new artworks.
 - partnerships with key tech partners, such as Cambridge Consultants and ARM, have been mutually adding-value.
- The benefits of the Cambridge hub extended to five additional hubs in the surrounding areas including King's Lynn, Bury St Edmunds, Huntingdon, Peterborough and Wisbech helped develop the cultural ecology including new audiences for the arts.
- The project created six new public events which successfully engaged people across the broader cultural and creative industries in skills development and knowledge transfer work, supporting placemaking and increasing cultural capacity.
 - Activities included meetups, workshops, and longer-term activities such as R&D Challenges and labs.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- The project supported talented artists who understand and are skilled in working with technology and who create excellent interactive work in public settings. For example, 25 artists took part in labs series (covering VR/AR and AI) and seven of these were awarded small bursaries for R&D, giving them time and support to work up ideas emerging from the labs.
- Six projects were commissioned and 14 artists worked as producers on a 12 month period of R&D leading to the creation of new art work for the Collusion 2019 showcase.
- Public art exhibition of interactive artworks explored relationship with emerging technologies including a party set in a 2030 home hosted by a virtual assistant and a multi-narrative animated film driven by music and artificial intelligence.
- The project helped artists to realise their ambitions beyond the AfE project through mentoring sessions to support the development of new work, scoping ideas, developing bids and connecting to expertise. There was also a sharing of knowledge and learning outside of the project at national and regional events including Hello Culture (Birmingham) and Nesta's national conference in Bristol, and regional events such as the Norfolk Arts Forum.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- Immersive way of working stretches participants comfort zones in a way where they feel challenged but comfortable and this approach has accelerated outcomes for artists, places, and partners. This has created a significant portfolio of new work that is highly accessible to audiences and suitable for touring across the UK.

Increase Diversity:

- Collusion worked with national networks e.g., Disability Arts Online to increase reach and support.
- Strong creative networks developed across the region including in hub areas with low cultural capacity/engagement/investment such as Wisbech, King's Lynn, Peterborough, and Huntingdon.
- Expertise in delivering accessible creative projects within the public realm e.g., Pacman projections onto buildings in Kings Lynn, Wisbech: Made in Minecraft.
- Three sector events engaged broader cultural and creative sectors.
- Brought local stakeholders together - councils and businesses - to realise potential of local areas, specifically community and economic benefits.
- Outreach to schools, especially in rural areas, has enabled pupils to explore new technology and supported teachers to consider how to incorporate it in their teaching.

International:

- International artists engaged in partnerships and collaborations.
- Relationships developed with international bodies including British Council and FCO involving cultural exchange and consultancy.
- The British Council brought a delegation of 30 visitors from Eastern Europe (culture, digital, HE/FE) to meet Collusion to hear about our work around creative enterprise.
- Collusion was consulted on a Foreign & Commonwealth led project Antarctica 2020.

Legacy:

- Collusion have a growing reputation for unique and exciting work among artists, organisations and partners which has translated into interesting interactions and demonstrable new activity beyond the AfE project.
- They are continuing partnerships and collaborations with existing partners e.g., Cambridge Consultants, Dance East and Babylon, and are developing relationships with industry partners e.g., BT and 5G Investment in Essex.
- The project has opened new doors and new ventures are being stimulated by the project, such as Hack Space in Peterborough which have potential for huge impact on communities.
- Well placed to extend reach to consult and collaborate on national projects.
- Collusion have an ongoing partnership with King's Lynn Council and since their AfE project a £215k major series of projects have been developed and delivered which builds on the relationship and work of their original AfE project.

Case Study 6: Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries

Organisation: Jerwood Arts

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: London

Grant Awarded: £250-£500K

Projected Start Date: 30/03/2017

Projected End Date: 31/10/2019



Outroslide Photography, 2018

Project Overview:

- National and international training and residency opportunities for talented recent graduates from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.
- The project invested in their creative and leadership potential and supported arts organisations to build their capacity for outstanding artistic production and expand their approach to diverse recruitment and workforce development.

Key elements of success:

- Professional development programme relevant to a cohort of participants, helped to support and boost participants' careers in the arts.
- The project developed a toolkit and framework for thinking about diversity in the workplace which has benefited the hosts and wider arts sector.
- The project built in scope to support closer working between funders and partners, especially in early stages of each edition to give greater focus and increase impact.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The project created 40 new placements for participants from lower socio-economic backgrounds at the start of their career in the arts.
- Participants and their Host organisations were provided with wrap-around support to develop their leadership skills and ensure that there was a pipeline of talented individuals from under-represented socio-economic groups heading towards leadership roles in the arts.
- 80% of these roles were outside London, contributing to the development of strong cultural places across the regions and across art forms.
- Networks of participants were created across the country and across art forms, and strong networks/partnerships were developed with host organisations who were able to build links with international organisations providing placements for participants.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- Participants have established themselves in roles in the arts e.g., Reece McMahon has now set up as a freelance dance and theatre producer following his placement with The Place.
- Jerwood continues to support, mentor and guide participants in their journeys towards leadership roles. Their aim is to increase opportunities for participants through placements in a wider range of organisations to achieve greater reach and impact in future editions.
- Participants have benefited from informal networks providing peer support and enabling them to share learnings and advocate for the programme.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- A number of placements were with Hosts working in outdoor and festival contexts (e.g., Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival, Bradford Literature Festival and In Between Time in Bristol) with participants supporting these organisations in creating high quality new work.

Increase Diversity:

- Host organisations developed their Creative Case for Diversity, not only in supporting socio-economic diversity of their workforce but also in understanding the intersectional nature of barriers and disadvantages that prevent some individuals from accessing jobs in the arts sector.
- Jerwood created and published a 'Socio-Economic Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts: A Toolkit for Employers' (<https://jerwoodarts.org/projects/weston-jerwood-creative-bursaries-2017-19/toolkit>) at the conclusion of the third edition of their project. The aim was to share the experiences of Host organisations and give others in the sector practical guidelines about how and why to increase the diversity of their workforce.
- This has been widely shared within the sector and the Programme Director took part in Arts Council England's webinar on socio-economic diversity in December 2019 as part of the dissemination process and to support NPOs to measure the socio-economic diversity of their workforce.

International:

- In partnership with the British Council, Jerwood created an international training event for the entire cohort of participants at Avignon Festival in July 2018. The aim of this was to give all participants an understanding of how to produce work in an international setting through a series of talks with the organisers (including the Festival Director) and with those presenting work at the Festival.
- Jerwood have established 14 international residencies in partnership with the British Council for 2-4 weeks duration which all participants were eligible to apply for during their residency to gain international experience:
 - Placements were created in arts organisations in Italy, Turkey, Germany, Montenegro, Poland, Ukraine and Romania
 - This has become a standard option within residencies in future waves.
- The international element of their AfE project helped to create important links with organisations across Europe for the UK Host organisations and gave valuable international experience to all of the participants in the early stage in their careers.

Legacy:

- The fourth edition of Jerwood's project is currently running, with on-going support from Arts Council England's Transforming Leadership programme and learnings from A4E continue to inform their work.
- The project continues to facilitate leadership pathways into the arts and develop advocacy roles for participants.
- Hosts are using their Creative Case for Diversity to inform recruitment and practice going forward.
- Long-term, Jerwood are looking to increase sustainability through embedding best practice within a wider range of organisations across the arts sector and beyond.

Case Study 7: Daughters of Fortune: Zara

Organisation: Mind the Gap

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: North

Grant Awarded: £425k

Projected Start Date: 01/04/2018

Projected End Date: 31/03/2020



Photo reproduced from ZARA - Mind the Gap (mind-the-gap.org.uk)

Project Overview:

“ZARA is the third instalment of the Daughters of Fortune project, which explores learning disability and parenthood.”

“A giant outdoor theatre event for the whole family, which tells the epic story of one learning disabled mother and her fight to protect her baby.”

“Production included giant (7m high) baby puppet, 3D projection mapping, original costumes/props, aerial work & a giant quilt, high quality lighting & sound design, live streaming both on-site and online - raising the bar for outdoor performance.”

- The production was led by around 20 Learning Disabled artists in a range of roles including performing, producing and heading up creative engagement sessions. Two separate community casts of around 100 people were selected in each of the locations (Halifax and London).

Key elements of success:

- The project was built on an existing partnership between Mind the Gap and Walk the Plank and was a co-production with Emergency Exit Arts. The project developed new partnerships with learning-disability (LD) and community organisations in Halifax and London from grassroots and amateur groups to aspiring and professional companies.
- The show has put LD people firmly central on a large and internationally recognised stage, raising the profile of talent and the subject matter.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The project helped to strengthen the identity of Calderdale and Southwark as hubs of excellent practice in LD arts by reaching mass live and digital audiences, uniting the skills of communities, venue, and arts partners to develop individual talents and showcase brilliant work.
- The community cast development in both areas helped raise confidence amongst people of all ages, with and without disabilities in their ability to perform. Each performance had a strong local connection aiding audience development.
- There has been ongoing community engagement with LD and community groups to build skills and confidence effectively.

Increasing Diversity and Growing and Developing Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- The project was able to increase the representation of LD practitioners within the outdoor arts sector, not just as performers but also in producing, writing, directing and practical workshop facilitation through workforce and talent development.
- Specifically, four paid internship opportunities were opened up for LD workers – Assistant Director, Assistant Producer, Creative Engagement Facilitator and Researcher and these roles were filled through a competitive, accessible recruitment campaign.
- Mind The Gap artists who worked on the ZARA project continue to work with Walk the Plank.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact:

- The Covid-19 pandemic partly derailed plans for the project but the organisation committed to finding innovative ways to overcome the barriers it has created, specifically through the creation of additional digital outputs.

Digital:

- Digital projection mapping was a central artistic element of the project which increased due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The live events were live streamed from Halifax and London for online audiences – with over 2,178 people tuning in to stream the performance. A recording of the show “ZARA in your living room” was made available on Youtube reaching an audience of 7.3k viewers plus over 570 for the Audio Described version.
- In addition, a film of the live events has been made available online since the project ended.

International:

- The project worked with international artists from Europe and Asia and received widespread international press coverage of the events – as far as Singapore and Mexico - putting Mind the Gap and its partners on the international stage. The digital elements of the projects helped to increase the reach to international audiences.

Legacy:

- The project has helped to raise expectations, increase confidence, and improve programming commitments to LD arts within the outdoor arts sector, leading the way and providing an example of ground-breaking practice for the wider arts ecology.
- The relationships with partner organisations and individuals have endured the project and continue to develop with collaborations and co-productions continuing.
- The success of the Community Cast learning is leading to the creation of future work in collaboration with communities, although the pandemic slowed the progress of this ambition for Mind the Gap.
- Learning from the project is informing cross-sector working with LD colleagues particularly in context of raising voice and profile of LD artists. The aim is to build a more cohesive network jointly supporting LD arts sector development, with LD artists at centre driving this. A key objective is to secure financial & other investment to enable better integration of early career/emerging talent.
- The project realised a key aim to raise the profile and improve services for learning disabled people who are pregnant and/or parents. The Daughters of Fortune series is being continued beyond Zara and has received funding from new sponsors.

Case Study 8: Unlimited International

Organisation: Shape London
Main Artform: Combined Arts
Location: London
Grant Awarded: £750k
Projected Start Date: 01/04/2016
Projected End Date: 29/03/2019



Photo by Rachel Cherry

Project Overview:

- Unlimited International was delivered in partnership with Shape Arts and Artsadmin.
“Unlimited is an arts commissioning programme that aims to embed work by disabled artists within the UK and international cultural sectors, reach new audiences and shift perceptions of disabled people.”
- In order to capitalise on Unlimited’s success and extend its global impact, UK and international based artists were co-commissioned to produce touring collaborative work with the intention of raising the bar and transforming the cultural sector worldwide in relation to access and equality.

Key elements of success:

- Creation of new partnerships and relationships with international artists and organisations.
- Development of R&D programmes has contributed to bringing awareness of access and equality and further knowledge among both UK and international artists.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- The project funded four international disabled artists to create work to tour in eight locations in England sharing expertise and skills and inspiring UK artists.
- Six R&D initial co-commissions between pairs of UK and international artists were funded with five having moved into full co-commissions where artists were able to increase their experience, skills, and the quality of their work.
- All productions were showcased at Southbank Centre’s Unlimited Festival in London and Tramway’s Unlimited Festival in Glasgow.
- UK disabled artists and producers were able to learn from other cultures and perspectives, learn new skills and good practice and reported increased confidence and ambition as a result of the project.
- Funding and commissions supported through the project increased the number of high quality disabled producers within the cultural sector.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- The project was recognised for the ‘groundbreaking’, disable-led work created.

Increase Diversity:

- The project produced an animation linked to the Social Model of Disability and a card game – Cards for Inclusion – focusing on access issues and a small publication was also produced describing work and practice.
- These skills and learning resources were designed to share the learning from the programme without language barriers and to expand reach and increase engagement.
- The commissioned team were able to travel where existing funds were limited (e.g., to hard to reach locations and to cover costs for access, mitigating current issues with Access to Work).

Digital:

- The animated film by disabled artist Joel Simon on the Social Model of disability 'Removing Barriers' has become the second most watched video on *Unlimited's* Youtube channel.
- The Unlimited Symposium was delivered as a physical and online event in 2018. The online aspect was designed to increase international and national engagement and reduce the need for travel due to environmental concerns. The event helped to hugely expand the reach and access of the event with speakers, artists and attendees from 42 countries. The event was livestreamed throughout the UK, and in venues in Australia, Canada and Singapore.

International:

- With AfE funding, Unlimited was able to extend its international reach and recruit non-UK based disabled artists from Australia, Brazil, Japan and USA.
- In 2018, artists from Brazil, India, Japan, Palestine and Singapore were co-commissioned to work with the Unlimited, selected from applications from 15 different countries.
- Successful international producer placements from Cambodia, South Africa, Uganda and USA/Taiwan have been a precursor to building relationships with international organisations.
- Through partnership with Watershed, Unlimited joined the cohort for Creative Producers International (AfE-funded project) in which a disabled producer gained training, built networks and received project support and in return provided input around disability, inclusion and access.
- Some international tours planned as legacy to the project could not go ahead due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, online access to work has increased and enabled some international touring to go ahead in a different way. Long-term international partnerships developed as a result of the AfE project have funded this activity.

Legacy:

- Unlimited is now uniquely positioned to share 'world leading' knowledge, expertise and best practice in disabled practice globally. It has raised the profile and expanded reach to become a global brand for innovative world-class art by disabled artists.
- Reach in 141 countries has enabled Unlimited to continue to develop sustainable relationships and partnerships with venues, festivals and promoters both nationally and internationally.
- UK based artists are increasingly able to develop their practice through learning about international perspectives and ways of working.
- Unlimited provide ongoing support to embed disabled artists within mainstream festivals and events as well as dedicated disability / arts activity. They continue to focus on promoting social shifts and changing perceptions of audiences and the public of disabled people as key contributors to cultural life.
- Their long-term relationship and investment from the British Council continues with, for example, bursaries to send UK disabled artists/producers to International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM), events and micro commission activity to enable disabled artists in England to partner with disabled artists or collectives in Official Development Assistance countries to make links and trial new ways of remote working.

Case Study 9: The Talent Hub

Organisation: TIN Arts

Main Artform: Dance

Location: North

Grant Awarded: £390k

Projected Start Date: 01/10/2017

Projected End Date: 30/09/2020

Actual End Date: 31/12/2021



Photo by Camilla Greenwell

“the vision is all about creating access to the arts for all. And then the mission of Tin Arts is to identify, address and remove barriers, Look at all the things that get in the way of people who don't get to access the arts.”

Project Overview:

- Collaboration project between TIN Arts, Yorkshire Dance and Inclusion North, where an ‘Impact Group’ of interested individuals and organisations worked with the core partnership to monitor and reflect upon progress.
- The project focused on professional development across the North East of England and Yorkshire for talented dancers with a learning disability or who are autistic.
- The project identified, developed and established bespoke support required to enable dancers to progress professionally into dance companies or to emerge as independent dance makers or community practitioners.
- 10 individuals were selected, who did not have previous dance experience but who had “*something that made them watchable, some kind of spark or engagement*”.
- The project was due to finish in September 2020, however, the pandemic meant activity stopped and the original show could not be toured across venues in England.

Key elements of success:

- The project strengthened the relationships between the three core partners as sector leaders in working with artists with a learning disability or who are autistic.
- The project supported the dance sector to become more inclusive and to open up opportunities for artists with a learning disability or who are autistic.
- The massive disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic meant the project needed more time to regain momentum and realise its legacy.

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The Talent Hub is recognised for its leadership role in supporting and developing artists with a learning disability or who are autistic across the North East of England and Yorkshire and advocating across the dance sector and beyond.
- Project and venue partners are embedding best practice in terms of access and inclusivity in their own organisations.
- Regional and national dance organisations are increasingly consulting and exploring routes to improve inclusivity.

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms

- The bespoke personalised programmes created for each dance artist helped to develop individual skills and talent.
- Understanding and learning about inclusion enablers and barriers evolved throughout project lifecycle, with co-production and soft learning informing the approach.
- Pioneering learning-disabled artist, George Webster, has become a visible ambassador and advocate for learning disabled dancers through their role as a presenter on CBeebies and role on Yorkshire Dance's Artist Steering Group.
- Artists with a learning disability or who are autistic are increasingly their confidence to engage, participate and advocate for increased representation and inclusion.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- A choreographer with an international reputation worked with artists to create a new piece of dance for touring to venues across England.
- Participation of new talent has facilitated the creation of more relevant and richer work, contributing to a shift in the cultural landscape celebrating difference.

Increase Diversity:

- The project has supported dance artists with a learning disability or who are autistic to realise their ambitions for professional progression within the dance sector and beyond.
- The understanding and learnings have helped to foster better representation and inclusivity in organisations across the dance sector.
- Culture organisations are exploring ways to open up new opportunities for the development of cultural leaders with disabilities.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact:

- The Covid-19 lockdown prevented the show 'Helm' from touring to venues across England and importantly, they were not able to showcase the work to key decision-makers in London and gain wider exposure.

"We didn't reach the south, and the people we wanted to become our advocates are not going to watch a 40 minute digital version of it. it's not the same experience as seeing the artists live in front of you 10 metres away, showing that they are as professional and as capable as any dancers."

Digital:

- The shift to digital working created barriers to access and participation for some artists.
"Pandemic has caused extra barriers as our dance artists have had less access to digital tech to engage and interact (Zoom etc) and also these platforms do not suit many of the dance artists due to the nature of their disability"
- Curated / contributed to online gatherings and conferences to share the Talent Hub Dance Artists' perspectives and learning from the Talent Hub on practice, engagement and leadership were shared however through online gatherings and conferences.

Legacy:

- The Talent Hub is using the learnings gathered to advocate for a better, more informed and inclusive dance sector where talented dance artists with a learning disability or who are autistic will thrive.
- It will support these artists to become ambassadors and advocate in their own right.
- Project partners have embedded learnings in their own practice and the wider sector is increasingly reaching out for support and advice to adopt best practice and change ways of working.

Case Study 10: Eden Project – Growing Ambition and Excellence in the Arts

Organisation: The Eden Trust

Main Artform: Combined Arts

Location: South West

Grant Awarded: £350k

Projected Start Date: 01/03/2018

Project End Date: 30/01/2021



Photo by: Hufton + Crow

Project Overview:

- To establish Eden as a major hub for the arts in Mid and East Cornwall of international significance by creating a platform for great art, generating opportunities for participation, building regional reputation and cultivating new relationships and ideas.

Key elements of success:

- Demonstrated a sector step-change regarding the delivery of a cross-disciplinary programme of the highest calibre in a rural setting, showcasing internationally significant artwork, reaching and engaging broad and diverse audiences and introducing innovative contemporary artforms to new and existing audiences (including generative artwork created with AI technologies) while also celebrating creativity across educational and community programmes.
- AfE built on existing arts and culture offer central to Eden's mission around being an environmental education charity and brought coherence to all the strands of activity already taking place.

"It was a significant investment that allowed genuine transformation over a longer period ... it allowed them to go from what was a good offer, to an excellent offer, and made it visible and credible, and captured the impact and elevated it"

Contribution to the Development of Strong Cultural Places:

- The AfE project repositioned Eden as a destination for contemporary art through exhibiting artwork and artists of international significance, through supporting the development and visibility of the arts in Mid and East Cornwall.
- Eden enabled opportunities for artists to engage with broad audiences on topics of social-environmental imperative, test sustainability practice within artistic processes and encourage consideration of the environmental impact of materials and methods e.g., commissioned "Infinity Blue", a large scale sculpture of the first lifeform that produced free oxygen on Earth.

"it is so accessible and put Eden on the world stage; it has exceeded all expectations of audience reach and shows how culture and creativity can be used to hopefully save the planet. There was even a decommissioning plan"

- The project forged new partnerships and collaborations including with Zabłudowicz Collection, Serpentine Gallery, White Gold Festival, Fieldnotes, Falmouth University and the University of Exeter, and attracted asset investments and ongoing funding.
- Eden reached and engaged with broad and diverse audiences and introduced innovative contemporary artforms to new and existing audiences (including generative artwork created with AI technologies).

Grow and Develop Talent and Leadership in the Regions and Across Art Forms:

- The AfE project enabled Eden to provide leadership, inspiration and development opportunities to creative practitioners in Cornwall and nationally.
- Fostered the careers of local creative practitioners through commissions, exhibitions and workshops and increased their confidence.
- Bursary placements for local and national artists and producers on leadership courses were provided to support and develop leadership skills. This included a 'women's leadership retreat' that specifically addressed challenges for women working in the creative arts sector.
- In-house skills were developed, and new professional leadership roles were created, including a new permanent role of Senior Curator, aimed to bridge Eden Cornwall and Eden International teams together.

Create the Highest Quality New Work, Including for Outdoor and Festival Contexts:

- The project influenced the cultural ambitions of Eden with emerging international projects.
- Commissioned work through the project plan to remain on-site long-term.

Increase Diversity:

- The project supported cultural engagement for those at risk of social exclusion and supported the Creative Case for Diversity through artists and audiences. LGBTQIA+, disabled and Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse communities and artists have been represented through the project.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact:

- Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund grant to the Eden Trust in May 2020 enabled the organisation to retain senior curator personnel.
- The organisation delivered arts programme outdoors and online, including a digital arts trail on site, when re-opened. Eden Trust are looking to continue and expand their digital programme.
- Funding provided through the Cultural Recovery Fund enabled Eden to re-build its production and performance team, continue to care for its collection, adapt and re-open exhibition galleries, and deliver a number of diverse partnered performance projects.

Digital:

- Several small films were created that were hosted online and also fed into a digital piece that the projects lead artists And Now: created.
- Exhibition and commissions, including of international new media artists explored the relationship between AI and creativity, involved partnerships with Falmouth University and a residency with MetaMakers Institute.

International:

- Brokering on-going relationships with artists, galleries and cultural influencers have contributed the on-going artistic developments with Eden's international projects e.g., Artist Mat Collishaw undertaking the main commission for the Sustainability Pavilion for Dubai Expo 2020 (now 2021).
- Media campaigns reached global audiences of over 20million putting East Cornwall on the international map as a destination for high-quality art.

Legacy:

- The project has developed Eden's confidence in continuing to raise the cultural ambitions with regards to world-class arts, celebrating creative communities and cultural learning, building diverse audiences and establishing Eden as a global platform for sustainable, inclusive, world-class arts/creativity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Projects funded through Ambition for Excellence

Organisation	Project Name	Main Artform	Location	Funding provided by AFE
Shape London	Unlimited International	Combined Arts	London	£750k
Jerwood Charitable Foundation	The Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries	Combined Arts	London	£499k
Mind the Gap	Daughters of Fortune: Zara	Combined Arts	North	£425k
Heart of Glass	HELEN (With The Past In Front Of Me I Walk Into The Future)	Combined Arts	North	£488k
Northern Ballet Ltd	Leeds Dance Partnership	Dance	North	£750k
Cirque Bijou Productions	Extraordinary Bodies	Combined Arts	South West	£719k
Junction CDC Limited	Diverse Actions	Combined Arts	South East	£499k
Collusion	In Collusion	Combined Arts	South East	£325k
Corn Exchange (Newbury) Trust	101 Outdoor Arts	Combined Arts	South East	£747k
Robert Pacitti Company	On Time and Place	Combined Arts	South East	£160k
Cornubian Arts and Science Trust (CAST)	Groundwork	Combined Arts	South West	£500k
The Eden Trust	Eden Project	Combined Arts	South West	£350k
Activate Performing Arts	Life Cycles and Landscapes	Combined Arts	South West	£367k
ARC, Stockton Arts Centre	Future Arts Centres - Euro-Vision	Combined Arts	North	£389k
Artichoke Trust Ltd	London 1966	Combined Arts	London	3750k
ArtReach (Events) Ltd	Journeys Festival	Combined Arts	Midlands	£655k
Bath Spa University	Paper Nations	Literature	South West	£410k
Battersea Arts Centre		Combined Arts	London	£360k
Birmingham Repertory Theatre Limited	Furnace	Theatre	Midlands	£750k
Blackpool Grand Theatre (Arts & Entertainments) Limited	Absent and KongLive!	Combined Arts	North	£379k
Brighter Sound	Both Sides Now	Music	North	£595k
Capsule Events Ltd	Home of Metal	Music	Midlands	£450k
Creative Foundation	The Folkstone Triennial	Combined Arts	South East	£750k
Crying Out Loud	Circus250	Combined Arts	London	£592k
Culture Central	Transforming Narratives	Combined Arts	Midlands	£660k
Culture Squared	Bradford Literary Festival	Literature	North	£495k
East London Dance	East Wall	Dance	London	£102k
FACT(Foundation for Art & Creative Technology)	Aurora	Combined Arts	North	£250k
Freedom Festival	Suramedura	Combined Arts	North	£156k
Future Everything CIC	Fault Lines	Combined Arts	North	£450k
Hull City Council	Invisible Dust	Visual Arts	North	£547k
Hull UK City of Culture 2017		Combined Arts	North	£750k
Lincoln Arts Trust Limited	Power	Combined Arts	Midlands	£690k
Liverpool City Council	Sgt Pepper at 50th	Combined Arts	North	£750k
Manchester International Festival	Manchester International Festival	Combined Arts	North	£640k
Metal Culture Ltd	Estuary 2016	Combined Arts	South East	£278k
MK Gallery	City Club	Visual Arts	South East	£750k
Multistory	Blast!	Combined Arts	Midlands	£418k
New Art Exchange Ltd	Africa/UK: Transforming Arts Ecologies	Visual Arts	Midlands	£650k
Newcastle Gateshead Initiative	Great Exhibition of the North	Combined Arts	North	£750k
Northampton Theatres Trust	Royal & Dergate New Musical Theatre	Theatre	Midlands	£684k
Pavilion Dance South West Ltd	Surf the Wave	Dance	South West	£674k
Plymouth Culture	Horizon	Visual Arts	South West	£635k
Pop Up Projects CIC	Pop Up Creators	Literature	South East	£342k
Project Art Works	EXPLORERS – Illuminating the Wilderness	Visual Arts	South West	£574k
Sheffield Culture Consortium	Making Ways	Combined Arts	North	£550k
Site Gallery	City of Ideas	Visual Arts	North	£750k
Situations	The Tale	Visual Arts	South West	£300k
Stoke-On-Trent and North Staffordshire Theatre Trust Limited	Circus: Past, Present and Future	Theatre	Midlands	£747k
Studio Wayne McGregor	Free Space National Hubs	Dance	London	£274k
Sunderland Culture	BELIEVE IN ME: CATHEDRALS TO CREATIVE CITIES	Visual Arts	North	£745k
The Godiva Awakes Trust	Bridge	Combined Arts	Midlands	£600k
The Good Agency	The Good Literary Agency	Literature	South West	£582k
The Henry Moore Foundation	Yorkshire Sculpture International	Visual Arts	South East	£750k
The Lowry Centre Limited	The Movement	Dance	North	£750k
The Whitworth Art Gallery	New North and South	Visual Arts	North	£730k
Tin Arts Ltd	Talent Hub	Dance	North	£390k
Tricycle Theatre Company	Approaching Empty	Theatre	London	£70k
Turner Sims, University of Southampton	Jazz South	Music	South West	£316k
University of Reading	Reading International	Visual Arts	South East	£495k
Urban Development	Urban Development	Music	London	£350k
Watershed Arts Trust Ltd	Creative Producers International	Visual Arts	South West	£361k
National Centre for Writing (previously Writers' Centre Norwich)	East Out	Literature	South East	£465k
Wysing Arts Centre	New Geographies	Visual Arts	South East	£600k
Young Vic Company	Young Vic Directors Program's Future	Theatre	London	£450k
Young Vic Company	Young Vic Directors Program	Theatre	London	£250k

Note: A second project led by the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative was not completed and is not included in this table

Appendix 2: Ambition for Excellence Project Portfolio

Art Form	Combined	Literature	Theatre	Music	Visual arts	Dance
All grantee projects (67)	34	5	5	4	13	6
Survey completes (35)	17	3	2	3	6	4
Region	London	Midlands	North	South East	South West	
All grantee projects (67)	11	10	22	13	11	
Survey completes (35)	4	8	7	10	6	
Grant value	<£250k	£250k-£500k	>£500k			
All grantee projects (67)	6	25	36			
Survey completes (35)	1	15	19			
NPO Status	NPO/MPM		Not			
All grantee projects (67)	43		24			
Survey completes (35)	21		14			

Source: In2impact analysis of Arts Council England internal data / Evaluation survey (2020/2021)



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