

Briefing transcript - National Portfolio Organisations 2023-26: activity template

11.30am-1pm, Tuesday, 15th March 2022

MICHELLE DICKSON: Hi good morning. Everyone. Thanks for joining us. We're just waiting for everyone to enter the virtual room. So we'll get started in a couple of minutes. Good morning, everyone. We'll just wait another minute or so for people to filter into the room and then we'll get started. I think we will make a start.

Good morning, everyone. Thanks very much for joining us. I'm Michelle Dickson. I'm Michelle Dickson, Director, Strategy at Arts Council England. I'm a white woman in my mid-40s. I've got dark brown hair which my children told me last night is going grey. It is tied up in a ponytail with a blue jumper on in front of a white wall with a picture of a minibus behind me.

So, this session is for organisations making an application to either the NPO or the IPSO Investment Programmes and it will be a practical session covering the activity plan template which is one of the templates that you're required to complete in your application. If you're an NPO applicant, it is the outcomes activity plan template and if you're an IPSO applicant, it is the investment principles activity plan template. There is another template that both NPOs and IPSOs need to complete, that's the investment principles plan and that one is about how your organisation will work with the investment principles itself, but we're not going to cover that one today.

There is dedicated session on that on Monday morning if you're interested. Today's session is live captioned and also has BSL interpretation. For the best experience, we recommend using the desk top version of the Zoom app.

The session is also being recorded and will be posted on our website afterwards. We have a maximum of 90 minutes for this session bringing to us one o'clock, but we might need all that time, we will see how we go. This session will run a bit differently from previous sessions that we've hosted. We won't have so many slides. Instead, I'll be sharing my screen with you and talking through the activity template and then taking questions if you have some after that. You can submit questions to us using the Q and A box and we'll answer as many as we can. So, before we start, I want to introduce who is taking part in the session today. We have BSL interpretation from Claire and Karen and live captions from Marea. Joining me to answer questions will be Jane, our Director of Funded Programmes and Alex, our Senior Manager in our Funded Organisations team. Hosting the questions will be, Daniel Smith, Head of Marketing and Communications. So, next slide, please.

So there, is what we're going to cover with you today. As I said, it is a practical session that's designed you to help understand how to complete the activity template in order to submit an NPO or IPSO application to our Investment Programme. We're going to focus on the template, but it is understand that we will assess it alongside the narrative answer about the contributions which you intend to make which you'll answer in Grantium and I'll talk more about that later on. We won't be going through

any other parts of the application process in this session, but we have a number of briefing sessions and they will be posted online by the end of this week and we'll e-mail you when they're live. So first up, we'll talk through how to navigate the testimony plate and then look at specific areas of the template that you need to complete so those are either the outcomes and elements if you're making an NPO application or the investment principles for IPSOs and then we'll look at adding activities, outputs and proposed targets and success measures and then we'll look at completing the location part of the form.

We'll take a ten-minute break after that and then come back to answer questions and before we go, we'll share some information if you that you might think useful. So feel free to ask questions as we go or during the break. We'll pick them up in the second half of the session. So, we haven't run a session like this before, a technical session. There is quite a large number of people joining us. So, bear with us. We'll do as best a job as we can to make this session as useful as we can, but if there is anything that you still have questions about, either at the end of this session or as you go away and complete your application, then please do look at the resources on our website or get in touch with our Customer Services Team if you have any remaining questions.

So, before I start screen sharing and open up the template, there is just some more hopefully useful information to cover. So, we published updated versions of these templates when we published the Addendum recently and the only difference is that it has the Levelling Up for Culture Places showing in bold along with the priority places and I'll show you that in a bit. If you've already started working on the old one and you don't want to transfer your content across, that's absolutely fine. If you haven't already started to complete the template, you will be able to download the version that has all the 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places highlighted in bold on it and I'll show you those on the screen. But it is fine as I say. If you've already started using the old one, we will still obviously be able to see where your activity is taking place and we will see if it is in a Levelling Up for Culture Place. If you're offered funding, the activity plan that you complete will become part of your funding agreement. We'll expect you to report on it during the lifetime of the funding agreement. If you're a current NPO, you'll have received a planning figure on which to base your application. Only include activity in this template that you can afford to do if you receive the planning figure level of funding. If you want to make an additional uplift request, put that activity in the additional uplift request box along with the breakdown of the cost. So don't include any activity in this template that's dependent on you securing an additional uplift. If you're not a current NPO, you don't have a planning figure and therefore, you don't need to complete an additional uplift request. So all of the activity that you're proposing should be captured in the activity plan. We'll score each application for the contribution to each outcome or if you're applying as an IPSO, for the contribution you're proposing to make to each of the investment principles. It could be one outcome or one investment principle or more, but we'll score each application for the contribution to each one and we'll take your narrative answer and your activity plan content into account. For each relevant outcome, or investment principle, we will score your application as either a strong contribution is likely or a good contribution is likely, some contribution is likely or a limited contribution is likely.

The narrative box covers the three years of your application and the activity plan is just for the first year 2023/24. You might want to talk more widely or expansively in your narrative section, but you don't need to tell us everything that your organisation is doing. Focus about telling us about the activity that you think will make the strongest creation to Let's Create. So, let's get started with having a look at the activity plan. I'm going to use the outcomes activity plan. This is the one for NPOs.

The one for IPSOs is pretty much identical apart from here where we have the outcomes. On this one, there is the investment principles, but in every other way, it's the same. So I'm just going to move around this template so you can see what I'm talking about. I'm just going to zoom out by using this bar here so you can see the overall lay-out of it. But I'll zoom in as I go so it is easier to read. So the elements are over here if you haven't found them yet. But they're all listed there. I'll zoom in. I'll start here. So, name of organisation. So you need to put in the name, the same name as you put on your application. Then the project unique reference number goes in here. You get this when you start your application in Grantium and it begins with the letters NPIP and then there is a number that follows. So you need to enter that into that box. Just the coding here. So, the grey is column heading as you'll see. Yellow, explanatory notes. This is for information. Links are in blue. So, hyperlinks. So these here. Where there is just a white cell like this, it is for you to add free text. Then the brownish coloured ones show that there is a drop-down. So if you click on it, the arrow appears and you can select from the drop-down menu. So, starting over here. This is where the activities go. So, you can include up to ten activities in total. If you're applying as an NPO, you need to select for each activity which is the primary outcome that the activity will be contributing to. You may think that it is contributing to more than one outcome. But we can only look at the primary one. So, you need to choose the main one. You might want to think about how you group your activities so that you're putting things together where they make sense together from your perspective under different outcomes. Once you've selected the outcome or the investment principle, it will change to a bit of colour coding just so you can more easily keep track. You can contribute to one, two or three outcomes. If you're an IPSO, one, two, three, or four investment principles. For NPO applicants, if you're applying for less than £1 million a year, you don't need to deliver against all three outcomes. Over £1 million a year, we expect that you will, but it is not an absolute requirement. So, again, you just need to do what's right for you. IPSO applicants can contribute to any number of the investment principles. So that could be one, two, three or four. For more information on the outcomes and on the investment principles, do go back to Let's Create. There are more explanations on each of the outcomes and investment principles that you might find useful. And then in relation to outcomes, we've identified what we think are important elements to realise these outcomes and these are listed here. So, have a read of these and again, if you go back to Let's Create, you'll find a bit more information about these in the narrative sections relating to each outcome. So, when you come back over here, the next column asks you to select the elements of the outcome that your activity is responding to. So, with activity one, I've selected creative people. So, I should only be checking the creative people boxes so they're in blue to correspond with creative people. So you'll see activity three, Cultural Communities is in this greenish colour. So, you can check however many boxes might be relevant using the key which is over here. If you tick elements that aren't related to the primary outcome because

that is possible on the spreadsheet, we won't take them in to account. There is no point in ticking them so just untick again to uncheck the box. As I said, you can include up to ten activities. You don't have to have that many. One activity can gather together different types of sub-activity. It is worth spending a bit of time thinking about how you group and present the activity that you want to tell us about. So this activity column is where you put your narrative description of what the activity will be. Do tell us if it is aimed at particular groups of people. So, you will see from our balancing criteria that we're interested in widening the reach and public benefit of our investment. So, do tell us if it is a particularly targeted activity. Not all of the activity has to be public-facing. So, it could be development activity relating to any of these outcomes, but you will see when you get to Creative and Cultural Country there is quite a bit that is more sector-facing. So that's absolutely fine. You'll see that there is a character limit in the activity box. So if I start to type here, when I press, "Enter" you will see that the character count reduces so you can keep track of how much space you have left. As I said before, all the activity should be deliverable within the budget that you're submitting. You might also want to talk about who you will be working with or how you'll be working in partnership. You might not know these things at that point and that's fine. So, you might want to tell us about how you'll select partners if that's appropriate. Moving across to the Outputs column. So this is where you tell us about what will be produced. What will be the output as a result of the activity? So that might be things like a production, a book, concerts, workshops so you might want tell us about the number of outputs that will be produced and then we move to the proposed targets and success measures box. Targets might be numerical. Success measures might be the evidence that you'll be looking for of the impact. How will you know you've succeeded in what you set out to do? So, targets might be the number of people participating. The success measures maybe some aspects of change or impact that you might assess through evaluation for example. Then moving on to the final column for each activity, this is the link that takes you through to the location form. So for each activity that you complete on here, you also need to click through to a location form. So, specific to each activity. So again, the code is the same. Yellow has information for you. Let's work our way around the form. What we're trying to do here is see where the public-facing benefit of the activity that you're proposing will take place. So, there may be activity on your activity plan that isn't public-facing and that's fine. We'll explain what to do with that later, but this is to capture the number of days that will be publicly available. So, if it is an exhibition, the days that the exhibition will be open to the public. The workshops, performances, whatever it might be. So, I will just work my way through this. This grey box at the top, total number of days proposed for this activity calculates automatically. So you don't need to worry about that. You would check this box here. None of the activity is based in a physical location or has a digital output. If your activity is something like research or a publication, a book or something like that and you would check this box, this activity has a national reach if what you are offering is universal. So, if it is available and on offer to every single local authority that you'll see as we move down the form. So, although you might be a touring organisation, you might be planning a national tour, that's not what we mean by national reach unless you are absolutely taking it to every local authority on this list. Scrolling across to the right is the space where you can capture a digital offer. So with digital delivery, you don't need to capture the number of days that you're providing. You might want to talk about that on the previous sheet as an output or a target, but here if it is a digital activity, all you need

to do is check these boxes. One or more of these boxes. And that would be complete. If digital had one of these manifestations, you'd tick this box. Where the activity is happening in a place or more than one place, you need to come back and complete this part of the form. So, these are listed by local authority and they're grouped into Office for National Statistics regions. So London, Midlands, North, south-east and south-west. As I mentioned earlier, this version shows all of the 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places plus the five priority places in London in bold. So, you can see which they are and let us know if you're planning to deliver any activity in those places. You should calculate the number of days of activity that you're planning in a place and you can just fill it in numerically. Say two days in Bromsgrove. If you have a half day of activity, you can enter it using 0.5 there. You'll see it totals it up here. We only want you to include the days of activity as I say where there is an offer to the public. So, if you are preparing an exhibition, don't count those days. It is just the days that the exhibition would be open. Likewise if you're rehearsing a production, don't count those days here. Just the days of performance. If there is participatory work, typically a workshop is counted as a half-day of activity. If the public is involved in developing a piece of work, then there is public benefit throughout so then you should be capturing all of those days and showing us them here. If you don't know where your activity is taking place at this point in time, which is absolutely fine, at the bottom of each area there is an "unsure yet" box so you can total up the number of days of activity and put them in the "unsure yet box". We do ask that you do that in the area that you think it will happen. So, if you were planning a tour of the south-east and south-west, you would need to split those days across those two areas. And estimate at this point if it is not a fully formed plan is absolutely fine, but you would need to complete these days. Then it brings up the total up there. If you know the venue or the place that your activity is taking place in, in terms of the postcode, but you don't know which local authority area it is in, you can click on this hyperlink here which takes you to a government website and you can just type in the postcode and it will tell you which local authority the activity is happening in. So once you've completed that for the activity, you can return to your activity plan and move on to the next activity. It is worth just checking what you've put in your outputs and whether that correlates to the public-facing activity bit that is happening in the location form. There may be anomalies because some of it might not be public-facing as we've said already and that's absolutely fine but do just double-check what you put in and make sure it all makes sense.

I think I have shared everything on the slide. So I will stop screen sharing. We will pause now for a break and a chance for you to add any questions that you still have into the Q and A box. So we will reconvene at 12:10 and we'll get through as many of your questions as we can. Thanks.

DAN SMITH: Hello everybody. Welcome back. Thank you very much for the questions that you've submitted over the break. Before we start, I'll introduce myself. I'm Dan. I'm a white man in my mid-30s. I've got dark hair, dark glasses and I'm wearing a black shirt. I've got a window and a plant behind me. My pronouns are he/him. So we've got lots of questions coming in. We'll do our very best to get through all of them. We'll dive in right now. The first question is for JAN if you want to

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introduce yourself first.

ALEX MIDDLETON: Hello. My name is Alex Middleton. I am the Senior Manager, Funded Organisations. I am a white woman in my mid-40s with brown hair, also greying, and glasses and a black jumper sitting in a dark blue room.

DAN SMITH: Thanks, Alex. So the first question, is the scoring process available?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes. So Michelle mentioned that we score the activity template alongside the answer to your narrative question in the application form and the scoring system is published in the applicant guidance and also the list of questions that we will ask to help us to arrive at a score. So, I just checked and it is page 47 and 48 in the NPO applicant guidance. The scoring is we look at whether there is a strong contribution would be likely to the outcomes, a good contribution, some contribution, or limited contribution. But you can look at that in more detail in the guidance.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. Now I've got a couple more technical questions. So, this person said, "I've tried in various formats to get the check boxes in element column working. I cannot get them to work on lots of different programmes and versions of computers. Instead of the tick boxes, can you just write the relevant letters?"

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes. First of all, just to note that we republished the templates on 22nd February when we added in the highlighting of the Levelling Up for Culture Places. Those new templates do have a much smaller file size. So any issues first of all, try and check that the new templates. But yes, if there is a compatibility issue which means the check boxes aren't working, you can write the letters in, instead.

DAN SMITH: Another follow-up. As well as not being able to check boxes in the element column, the check boxes on the activity pages also don't work, so can I just write "yes"?

ALEX MIDDLETON: That's on the location form. Yes, write yes instead and we'll pick that up in our reporting.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another one for you. Who do you contact if you have having problems with the functionality of the outcomes and investment principles spreadsheet? Our IT department had a look and said they found issues, but they were the old versions before the Addendum.

ALEX MIDDLETON: Hopefully the new versions will be working for everyone. If you are experiencing issues, you can contact our Customer Services Team and they will do what they can to help and refer to colleagues as needed.

DAN SMITH: Great. A different topic now for you and then you're out of the hot seat for now, Alex, around funding agreement negotiations. How strictly will we be held to the detail of the activities we put in the plan particularly the number of workshops we run and number of participants? Much of our activity will depend on raising other funding and working with other partners and cannot be confirmed two years in advance?

ALEX MIDDLETON: We know there will be a lot of unknowns. Other income is one, but also other things that mean your plans might need to change. So, for successful organisations we make a conditional offer of funding. We will negotiate a funding agreement and that funding agreement negotiation will include negotiating an updated version of this activity plan. So at that point, you can say, "Our plans have changed due to this or that. " We will look at an updated version of the activity plan for the first year and then each year there will be a new activity plan. There might be elements as well where on the basis of our conditional offer, we might suggest

changes in terms of being realistic or where we want to see more stretch potentially.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you very much, Alex. Michelle, do you want to come back on now?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Hi.

DAN SMITH: Hello. So we've had a question on touring specifically which outcome or elements should an applicant use for touring shows for children and families? We've had another one about work being intertwined across Cultural Communities and a Creative and Cultural Country?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Shall I just share the screen again and then we can have a look at them. That might help. There is more information about the outcomes in Let's Create, but let's have a quick look at them now. So, Creative People, it is about everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life. It is about creative experiences for the public, so any age from babies through to older people. So, it is about being creative. That's distinct from having cultural experiences. So, attending a show. So, touring. If it was touring where the audience watched a performance, that would be sitting within Cultural Communities. If it is touring something where the children were participants in some way, that would be Creative People. You can see this is where you really need to think about why you are placing activities and then which elements they might respond to.

I should make clear, you don't have to respond to elements. So, there are ways to contribute to the outcomes that sit outside of the elements that we've highlighted here. We've highlighted the ones that we think are particularly important at this moment in time. But it is absolutely for you to tell us about things that you're doing that don't sit within any of these elements. Don't feel obliged to be ticking the boxes where they don't fit. Creative people, people's own creative lives. So, participating, doing, being creative in and of themselves and that's the public. Cultural Communities, and touring, improving access to a full range of cultural activities wherever people live. Scrolling down, a creative and culture country focuses on the cultural sector. This is where artist development and activity like this might sit. This is the professional part of the cultural sector as distinct from the public who are covered by creative people and Cultural Communities.

I recognise that it might be tricky and some of your activity might legitimately respond to more than one output, but that's why we think primary outcome. You can touch on the other outcome in the narrative if you want to or where you explain the activity and you can really think about whether you can group the activities so that they do all sit more fully under one outcome and the relevant elements.

DAN SMITH: Lovely, thank you. Another question for you. I can't find a natural place for artist development CPD to go in terms of outcomes. What would you suggest?

MICHELLE DICKSON: I think that a creative and cultural and have a look at the elements and see if any of those respond to what you are doing and/or think about whether they could and if not then just tick a Creative and Cultural Country and then continue to explain your activity.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another one for you for now, Michelle. What if we are planning to do something, but not in Year 1, for example, international touring? Do we therefore not reflect these in the activity plan and not include those elements?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Yes. So, don't put them in the activity plan. The activity plan

is just for activity that's happening in 23/24, but you can talk about it in your narrative section, in the application form. If you think it is a particularly important aspect of your planned activity and something that you want us to be aware of. So, you know, it is a limited box. You're going to have to make a choice about what you talk about and how you talk about, but if there is significant activity that you've planned in Years 2 or 3 then that would be the place to put it.

DAN SMITH: Lovely. Thank you. Jane, do you want to come on and introduce yourself?

JANE DAWSON: Thanks, Dan. I'm Jane Dawson the Director of Funding Programmes. I'm a white woman in my 60s with grey hair and I'm in a white room with black and white pictures on the walls.

DAN SMITH: Thanks, Jane. So, the first one for you, can you clarify about non-public facing activities? Does it have to have some element of delivery or output outside the organisation even if not for a public audience or would internal organisational development work, count?

JANE DAWSON: Where we're talking about public-facing activity it definitely has to have an element of working directly and engaging with members of the public. So, outside of the organisation. Thinking about organisational development work, you may want to think about whether that fits better with embedding investment principles or possibly in the context, depending on what it is, of Creative and Cultural Country where you might be looking at improving skills for artists and practitioners in a way that Michelle was just describing.

DAN SMITH: And when you mentioned investment principles then, it might be worth just clarifying what involvement all applicants have in investment principles, not just IPSO applicants for activity, but what we mean by that?

JANE DAWSON: Yes. So, we've identified four investment principles. I'm now going to be tested, ambition and quality, inclusivity and relevance, environmental responsibility, and dynamism. So, organisational development could potentially sit under dynamism, but again it depends on what it is. All organisations are expected to work towards embedding investment principles in the way they work. So, do make sure that you have a look at the information that we've published about that to help you think through. So this is not essential, but helpful information, to help you think through how you can embed those and how you can report on how you're embedding them to your board or advisory group and therefore, to us at the Arts Council.

DAN SMITH: Thank you, another follow-up on public facing activity. Someone has asked does workshops in schools qualify as public-facing?

JANE DAWSON: Yes, they do.

DAN SMITH: Great. So the next question as a small NPO we have been advised that we should focus on one or two of the outcomes rather than all three, however, there is one activity in the plan that would make more sense to be classed as the third outcome. Do we then need to talk about this outcome in the narrative even if it is only for one activity?

JANE DAWSON: If you really feel that you can address all three outcomes then you can do so on the activity plan. But really think through whether you really are able to deliver against those in real depth. I think it has already been said, if not in this presentation, in previous ones, we are looking for depth of contribution. So we don't need to know about everything that you do, but what are you doing in particular that will support us in achieving the outcomes set out in the strategy and to which you

can really make a significant contribution? I hope that answers the question.

DAN SMITH: Thank you very much, Jane. Alex, do you want to come back in now? Can you confirm if the targets and success measures are only for one year?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes. So everything in the activity template is just for the first funding year.

DAN SMITH: Do you need to include three years of activity in the narrative box?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes. The narrative box that's in the application form, that's for the three years. So, essentially there you give less detail, but we get your kind of broader, longer-term plans whereas in the activity template, we're homing in on the detail for the first year.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another technical one. Are there character limits for output and proposed targets in the success columns?

ALEX MIDDLETON: There aren't character limits within the template, it won't cut you off or anything, but I'd advice looking at the example mock templates that we've provided and you can see the level of detail that we're expecting in response in those examples.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. I think I'm going to bring Jane back in now if I can. I've got a question around location. So, we're based on the border between south-east and south-west. Are there any restrictions to applying for activity to take place in a different region to that where we are based?

JANE DAWSON: No. It is a really simple answer. There is no restriction.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another quick one. Should you include days of delivery that are being provided by others as a consequence of your training and support?

JANE DAWSON: You might want to consider including those within success measures rather than in activity per se. So, that I think probably the better way of dealing with it because it is a success measure would be that other people have then used the work that you've delivered to them if that makes sense. Does that make sense, Dan?

DAN SMITH: It does to me.

JANE DAWSON: Good. I'm sure whoever asked the question will come back if it wasn't clear.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you, Jane. Now, Michelle, I'd like to bring you back if I can. I've got two questions on book publishing to start with. The first one, as a book publisher, do book launches in different locations count as an activity?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Yes. They will be open to the public. So, yes, we should capture them on the location form.

DAN SMITH: Great. And another bit of a longer one. If you're publishing a book and it is publish nationally, so available in bookshops as e-books etcetera, it might also have a launch in a physical location. In these cases, can you tick national reach, and add the local authority where the launch takes place, can you both?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Yes, you can. So that would be an example where you're grouping connected activity together, but part of it has a national reach and part of it has physical location. So you can tick both those, you can show both of those on the template. That's absolutely fine.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. And then some more on location around live activity and also digital output. So, I'll read the longer one which should cover the others. What if your activity is being delivered in a certain low caution, but is open to participants nationally, a workshop is run in Basildon, but it is open to participants

from anywhere, not only local participants so its reach is national. Do you tick the activity has got a national reach?

MICHELLE DICKSON: I'm not sure that one is about digital.

DAN SMITH: As I was reading it, I realised I had grouped it work.

MICHELLE DICKSON: In that case, the location would be Basildon because that's where the physical activity is taking place, but you could tell us when you describe the activity that you will be making it open to participants from across the country. So that's fine. If it is digital, if there is live and digital, things going on at the same time, again you can check the digital box and then you can also tell us about the live locations of the activity. So just try and make sure that in the activity description you've explained. So that makes sense when it is being assessed so they understand why there is the digital component and a physical one.

DAN SMITH: Great. And thanks for unpicking my jumble of questions there. And another one for you. If grouping multiple projects is one activity, how is it best to represent this in the form?

MICHELLE DICKSON: So, I guess we've talked about this a little bit already. I think it's about looking at the outcomes and what do you want to do and how do you best set them against their outcomes? We hope that you will want to do activity that really strongly responds to the outcomes rather than I've got my activity, how do I shoehorn it into the outcomes? I would encourage you to start with Let's Create and really read it and think about what you have to offer as an organisation that can respond to those outcomes and to the elements that sit within them. And then work out how to most coherently bundle those up if you need to. I mean, you might not need to. Ten activities are quite a lot. That might cover what you are doing, but if you do need to start grouping things together then that previous question was quite a good example of that really. You have got a book launch and a book and you might have workshops going on alongside it. You can put all those things together if it was connected. If it was me, I would be doing a mind map of all the activity and then working out how to put it together.

DAN SMITH: Great. One last one for you for now. By depth of contribution, do we mean large numbers reached?

MICHELLE DICKSON: No. No. I mean it might be, but it might not be. So, you know, we recognise that working deeply, particularly in a participatory way or in terms of co-creation, co-design, working with people who have not been involved in creative or cultural activity as much as others may all mean that the numbers are smaller along with the with the financial constraints that everybody is working with. It doesn't mean large numbers. It can be a very deep, but discreet piece of work with a smaller number of people.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you, Michelle. Alex, do you want to come back in?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes.

DAN SMITH: So, we've said that we don't need to tell - we said that applicants don't need to tell everything they're doing, but just the aspects that will make the strongest contribution to Let's Create. Do we mean on the activity plan or in the narrative?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Well, essentially both. So, we want the narrative and the activity plan to be focused around your contribution to Let's Create, and here it is about the outcomes, but as I said earlier, in the narrative, you will be providing more context about your organisation's plans, but we still want it to be focused on Let's Create if that makes sense. So yeah, both and both focused, but the narrative is slightly broader.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. I've got one for Jane now if you want to come on.

This question is around the level of detail. So how granular should we be in the output section and then how granular should we be in the target and success measures section?

JANE DAWSON: I think you really need to use your judgement to tell us what you feel the important things we need to know in order to help with our scoring as to whether contribution is strong for example. The example template that Alex mentioned earlier will be really helpful to look at, I think. So I definitely suggest having a look at that if you have any concerns at all about, you know, is this too much information or not enough? Ultimately, it is your choice.

DAN SMITH: Lovely. Thank you, Jane. Alex, I'll bring you back. We're flying around now. So we've got a couple of questions here on location and when people aren't quite sure of the detail yet. So the first one, if you have an idea of where an activity will take place, but not 100% confirmed, e.g. because it is based on which schools sign up, what should we do? Should we put down where we think it is going to be or click the unsure button.

ALEX MIDDLETON: It is fine for you to put down where you think it will be, so based on your previous experience of work or what you're planning on doing. We know that not everything will be 100% or even 90% confirmed at this point. We want to hear about your plans and then as we have said previously, this template will then flow through into funding agreement negotiation and at that point, we'll look for you to firm up your plans a bit more. So this is about us getting a sense of where you think your activity will be happening at this point.

DAN SMITH: Great. Connected to that a bit. So if we've got yet confirmed any local authorities for 22/23 and select unsure where yet for all days, would that count against us?

ALEX MIDDLETON: No, it won't count against you. I mean, this is something we will be looking at as we go through the balancing process as we look at the spread of activity overall. If you really don't know then that's fine. If you, as I said with the previous question, if you've got plans that aren't confirmed then tell us what those plans are even if they're not 100% sure.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another one for you. If we are successful, will we have to fill in separate activity plans for future years later on?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Yes. So this first plan will be agreed in funding agreement negotiation and that will cover the first funding year and then we'll obviously can you to monitor and report on that activity throughout the year and then there will be a new activity plan for the second year which we will ask you to submit in the April of that year and then again for the third year and of course, you will have some discussion with the Arts Council about what would be in that plan based on your monitoring of activity in the first year.

DAN SMITH: Lovely. Thank you, Alex. Jane, do you want to come back in now for a few? This is a bit of a long one. I'll read it out. We work in community arts. The first few days of activity in a project will be open and advertised to the public to recruit participants. Then once the community performance group is formed, rehearsals will not be open to new members. Are all of their subsequent rehearsals considered to be public activity days because the members are from the public and not professionals or is it considered non-public because it is not open to new members of the public until the audience is invited for the performance?

JANE DAWSON: That's a really interesting question. I would say the first few days are public-facing. It is then as the person asking the question, it is then a closed process during the rehearsal period. So that's not public-facing, but the

performances at the end are public-facing. So, you've got a sandwich basically.

DAN SMITH: I'm hungry, I'll have that sandwich when we're done. A couple more for you. Should core activity with the organisation example fund-raising be included in this plan or does it only apply to projects and programmes?

JANE DAWSON: The short answer is probably no and I think it goes back to an answer I gave earlier in that what we want to see in the activity plan is very much the activity that delivers against the outcomes in Let's Create where you might want to put, not necessarily fund-raising, but depending on how you approach fund-raising, you might want to think about putting some of that activity into the investment principles plan when that's about embedding investment principles in your organisation and looking at new and innovative ways of doing things for instance, but no something like fund-raising doesn't go in the activity plan.

DAN SMITH: Okay. And again on activity, the examples of activity given are for single organisations. How do consortiums distil activity to suit the template?

JANE DAWSON: Consortiums like a very large organisation will have a range of activities, strands of activity. Again, it is about thinking what are the elements of the programme that really deliver against the Let's Create outcomes in a meaningful way and then selecting those. It doesn't have to be proportionate to how you're allocating the funding. It doesn't have to be equal across all partners. So really think about issues around the depth of the contribution to the outcomes and focus on those.

DAN SMITH: Great, thank you, Jane. That was great. Michelle, do you want to come in now? So, the first question for you. As a disabled-led organisation our community is deaf, disabled and neuro divergent people based across the country. With the big focus on Levelling Up for culture, how can we make sure this doesn't adversely affect our scoring?

MICHELLE DICKSON: So, you need to make sure you tell us about who is benefiting from your activity and don't worry in this case about where the activity is taking place. So, in the activity, it is really important that you tell us who is going to be participating in that activity and using the narrative to do that as well. You will see in the balancing criteria how important that is to us. So, it won't be overlooked if you tell us about it.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. I've got a few more here for you. Is it possible to split an activity into sub-activities? I.e., working with children to make a show, creative people and then touring the show, Cultural Communities?

MICHELLE DICKSON: Yes, that would be fine. So, if you have got enough space within your ten activities to do it that way, you can split one activity across two outcomes. In there is, you know, if you think there is a strong contribution to both, you could do it that way.

DAN SMITH: Great. Does that mean that touring and or main stage productions goes under communities or does it go under world-class culture in Creative and Cultural Country?

MICHELLE DICKSON: So, it goes under Cultural Communities because it is about making an offer to those communities and there have been a few questions about the world-class offer and I think we will write an FAQ on that because what we mean by that is bringing international work to England and it is not clear because a number of people have asked about that. So, it wouldn't be world-class culture in that example. So, yes, we'll publish an FAQ on that. Don't worry too much. As long as you're telling us what you are doing, you know. It is not entirely clear-cut. We've tried

to come up with a schematic approach and it will not suit everybody that's trying to fill it in and we will take everything you tell us into account so don't worry too much.

DAN SMITH: The last one is in community led activity the outputs are often not known at the start. How do you anticipate that we input outputs and targets?

MICHELLE DICKSON: That's a good example of where you might prefer not to be telling us about what you're planning through this template, but we need to be able to take a sort of consistent and standardised approach to assessing these applications. So, just tell us. Tell us that you don't know what the output is or estimate what it might be. Tell us that you think it will be this, but it might not be. If we make you a funding offer then we can revisit the plan with you and you'll report on it and you can update it. It is a plan. We know that it might change and that's absolutely fine.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you, Michelle. Alex, do you want to come in? I think maybe for the last few questions before we wrap up. The first one in NPO year one, we will be out of our building in a small temporary space whilst it is being renovated and equipped. So, as well as some delivery in year one, we will be planning and organising for a huge range of things to happen in year two when we aim to re-open the building. We can pick that up in the narrative, but can we count all the development and prep work as activity days. As hopefully ACE funded staff will be working on that prep?

ALEX MIDDLETON: Of course, like you said, tell us about the delivery that you will be doing in year one whilst you're in the other space and you can, in the activity template, you can talk about development work in so far that it clearly contributes to the outcomes and elements. In terms of the location form as we said earlier, the days are just around the kind of public-facing activity. So don't include any development time in that, but you could talk about any specific development projects that directly contribute to the outcomes or as part of an activity.

DAN SMITH: Another one, if there is difficulty to estimate how many days of activity, is it best to put less days and then report more if we manage to do more? Or instead do we put, "Unsure yet".

ALEX MIDDLETON: I'm going to repeat what Michelle said about estimating and what we said previously. Give us your best estimate if you have an estimate on the number of days. So it is like with the locations really. So yeah, that's absolutely fine.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you. Another one for you. Would you be able to clarify around what to include in the activities if you're not an NPO already, when listing activities should they reflect the amount we are asking for or should the activities reflect organisational goals as a whole that would ultimately depend on future income funding.

ALEX MIDDLETON: If I've understood the question correctly then yes, the activities that you're telling us about should reflect what you as an organisation will be able to do with the funding that you're requesting from the Arts Council and any other funding that you are projecting. So it is not just about what you do for the Arts Council funding. That said, remember that we want to hear about activities that focus on our outcomes and elements and our strategy.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you, Alex. I think you may be done now. We've got a few more that have come in before we reach the end. Michelle, do you want to come back on? I've got come for you. The first one is a clarification, can you have less than ten activities for the proposed investment figure suggested in light of increased running costs, energy, etcetera.

MICHELLE DICKSON: It is a maximum of ten. You don't need to use ten. Remember, there will be organisations applying for £50,000 a year and organisations applying for many millions. So, yeah, whatever works for you which is why I think there will be some organisations who can think about, "I'm going to split what might be one activity into different activities. " And others who need to do the opposite and bundle things together. You're going to have to work out what it is that you want to offer in return for the investment that you're asking for and how best to show it.

DAN SMITH: Great. Another one for you. We're a festival, do we group everything we do into one activity line or can we pull out different elements across different activity lines?

MICHELLE DICKSON: So if you are a festival and all you're going to be telling us about is your festival then you're fine to break that down and use that to make up different activities. So, if you put all of your festival activity in to one activity then you'll limit the space that you have to tell us about it so that it is up to you, you're fine to break it down and divide it across more activities if that gives you more space to talk about the different aspects of the festival.

DAN SMITH: Great. A final one for you, Michelle. Following your comment that CPD goes against outcome 3, creative country, do we separate out elements of CPD that are part of activities which fit better under creative communities or people, i.e., repeat the CPD element under outcome 3?

MICHELLE DICKSON: So you can do that if you have got room. So if you're not going to use all of your ten activities then you might choose to keep one for talking about the CPD which is attached to one of the other activities that responds to a different outcome. If you don't have room to do that and it is only a minor part of the offer then you could just mention it in the activity, but accept that you're not going to be able to tick the element box. The reason why we're asking you to tell us about the elements is because we are interested in the spread of our investment across the outcomes and events, but as I said, plans change. It is not going to be perfect. We're not going to be able to capture everything.

DAN SMITH: Great, thank you, Michelle. You are free to go! I think Jane, I'd like to bring you back in just for one quick clarification before we wrap up. This comment says, the clarification Jane provided on workshops". Is this a hard and fast rule?

JANE DAWSON: Nothing is hard and fast, but there is a distinction there between workshops with people and with members of the public which we would say were public-facing and the example I was addressing earlier, which was a community theatre company going through a rehearsal process, having undertaken workshops at the beginning then rehearsing and then putting on performances. So, there was a bit of a difference there in that the bit in the middle, the middle of the sandwich. It could be said not to be public-facing, but it is not hard and fast. Use your judgement really. As to how far you want to go on that. Whatever you put is going to be right for your organisation and we'll then look at that in the context of how we're assessing all of the activity plans and the full applications against the criteria and against Let's Create.

DAN SMITH: Great. Thank you very much, Jane. I think we've come to the end now. Catriona, if you want to put the slide back on the screen. There we go. So, before we go, we just wanted to remind you of the steps that you can take now as you prepare your applications before submitting them. Obviously, the deadline for applications is 12pm, Wednesday 18th May. We strongly advise you don't leave submitting your

application to the very last minute - try to get it submitted at least a week before the deadline.

A summary of the support available to you now is on our website, but in brief it includes 5 steps that you can take first. So let us know if you have any access requirements, if you haven't already done so. Take a look at the background reading and get set-up on our application portal, Grantium. If you have a profile, make sure it is up-to-date. Introductory conversations, if you've not booked one, you can do so.

A reminder these are mandatory for new applicants, but optional for current NPOs. Making your application, take a look at the essential documentation including the Guidance for Applicants, the Addendum to the Guidance and, of course, the application templates alongside the templates we also have video walk-throughs, completed examples templates for building and non-building based organisations and a record of today's session which will be made available afterwards and the supporting documents that are available include information sheets, blank templates of the application form. So remember, if you have any questions, please do visit our FAQ page online. We update this after every series of briefings that we host and they contain a wealth of information on specific queries. If you still need support, feel free to get in touch. Our Customer Services Team are here to help. Finally, this week, we will be in touch with everybody that has joined us for a briefing asking you to tell us about your experience today. We would be really grateful if you took a few minutes out of your time to complete that just so we can improve the service that we're delivering for you and that's it. Thank you very much, everybody for coming. Have a good rest of week.