

re:generARTS

End of Project Report

re:generARTS
arts training and community capacity building



1 Introduction

Background

The re:generARTS Training Project was developed by St. Helens Council in recognition that the arts can impact positively on communities and their regeneration: creatively, financially and environmentally. This view is supported by both DCMS and Arts Council England:

“We believe that the arts can help individuals and communities by bringing people together, strengthening relationships between local residents, welcoming differences and removing social barriers.”

Department for Culture, Media and Sport, www.culture.gov.uk

“...art is intrinsically valuable...It is necessary for a successful economy, to our national prestige, to our mental health, to our social cohesion, to our sense of identity, to our happiness and to our wellbeing.”

Arts Council England, *Achieving Great Art for Everyone: A Strategic Framework for the Arts*, 2010

St Helen's recognised that the impact of arts activity is particularly strong when identified and developed by artists and organisations based in the area and embedded in local knowledge of interests and needs. Consequently, the re:generARTS Training Course was designed to empower St Helens' groups and individuals to develop arts initiatives by equipping them with the necessary tools to conceive, plan, fundraise and manage such projects. A brief was developed by the Council and put out to tender. Collective Encounters submitted a bid and was selected to deliver the programme.

Project brief

The brief dictated that the training was to be broken into 6 sessions:

1. Planning Your Project
2. Top Tips For Funding Your Project
3. Delivering Your Project
4. Marketing and Documenting Your Project
5. Evaluating and Monitoring Your Project
6. Sustaining and Developing Your Project

The brief stated clearly the key components to be included in each session (see Appendix 1). It was planned that St Helens arts team would deliver the fundraising session and would internally support participants outside the session to develop, fundraise for and deliver their own projects. Collective Encounters would deliver the remaining 5 sessions; and a specified number of additional support/development sessions.

Training was to be delivered to two cohorts of 10 participants, and it was agreed to run the first training programme in full before starting the second cohort.

While it was initially anticipated that participants would all be community workers it became clear through the initial recruitment process that a mixture of artists and community workers was more likely.

It was agreed that the success of the project would be measured by:

- Positive experience of learning from participants
- Good attendance on the courses
- Participants developing well planned, exciting and achievable arts projects
- Participants submitting funding applications

Delivery

The first round of training was delivered between May - September 2011 at 2 – 3 weekly intervals, with a longer break over the summer before the final session. Sessions lasted 3 hours (as per the brief) and were delivered on Tuesday evenings, in response to participant availability.

All sessions were delivered as agreed and covered all agreed components. On behalf of Collective Encounters, Sarah Thornton (Artistic Director) delivered 4 sessions and Annette Burghes (Executive Director) delivered 1 session. Karen Reliance delivered the funding session and Owen Hutchings supported project development and attended all except the last session.

14 participants embarked on the training programme, with 9 completing the course. Of these 9, 5 defined themselves as community workers, 1 as an educator and 3 as artists.

At the end of the first round of training participant and trainer feedback was written up and presented as a mid-project evaluation report. Along with general feedback on the experience on the training (which is now incorporated into this document), three recommendations were made in terms of revising the training for the second round:

- To revise session length and frequency
- Revise session content to suit the needs of a mixed cohort and to improve the training experience
- Increase practical and peer-led learning

Following discussions between St Helens' and Collective Encounters agreements were reached about a revised approach.

The second round of training took place between March - June 2012 at 3 – 4 weekly intervals. Instead of 6 sessions of an equal length, there were to be 1 full day session plus 5 slightly shorter sessions (2 ½ hours), which were delivered on Friday mornings, in response to participant availability. The session breakdown was now:

- 1 (whole day): Introducing the arts in communities

- 2: Fundraising
- 3: Delivering your project
- 4: Evaluating and Developing your project
- 5: Audience Development and advocacy

While these sessions covered the bulk of content for the first round, the level of depth was altered and some components were removed, some new components added. Details of the restructured programme can be found in Appendix 2. All sessions and components were delivered as agreed post-evaluation. From Collective Encounters Sarah Thornton and Mandy Redvers-Rowe (Creative Producer) co-delivered the first session, Karen Rylance delivered session 2 and sessions 3 - 5 were delivered by Mandy Redvers-Rowe. Owen Hutchings attended and supported all sessions, delivered one to one support and organised an additional programme of art activity as agreed following the mid-point evaluation.

Again, 14 people embarked on the course with 8 completing three or more sessions. Of these eight, two described themselves as community workers, and six as artists working in arts organisations.

2 Evaluation

This evaluation will be structured under the four measures identified in the introduction.

1. Positive experience of learning from participants

First cohort

During the first round of training unstructured feedback opportunities were offered to participants at the end of each session: either in writing, in person or via email. In addition, at three points in the training we asked the same 6 questions and so were able to gather accumulative data on the responses, and respond to this feedback in our planning of subsequent sessions. The questions were:

- How much did you enjoy the session?
- How much did you learn?
- How daunted do you feel by the training?
- How excited do you feel by the training?
- How likely are you to stay on the course?
- How accessible do you find the training materials?

In the final session participants were asked to complete a questionnaire pertaining to their overall experience of the training and the specific components that were most useful; and also inviting comments. The quantitative and qualitative data collected informed our understanding of how the training was received and enabled us to make appropriate recommendations for the second round of training.

There was an extremely positive response to the training overall. 100% of respondents considered *the quality of resources, quality of presentations, support of tutors, knowledge/expertise of tutors* and *support of the arts team to develop their own project* either good or excellent (with 88% considering knowledge/expertise and support excellent). There was room for improvement with regard practical activities with 75% considering them to be good, 13% excellent and 13% only adequate. The benefit of practical activity was brought out in other feedback, where learning from each other and training as part of a cohort was very much welcomed. Varied delivery styles were highlighted as a positive feature of the training:

“Worked best when a variety of delivery styles was used (PowerPoint, discussion, practical exercise)”

Participants also recognised the benefits of working in a mixed cohort, feeling that the range of experience they brought was beneficial and extended their thinking and understanding.

“People in this cohort came from all different backgrounds and I found this to be very good as their ideas made me look at things differently”

The two most useful components of the training, according to participants, were *developing a project idea* (86% found it very useful) and *engaging communities and stakeholders* (80% very useful). *Project planning* was another popular element (71% found it very useful); as were *gathering feedback* and *evaluation* (67% each found these very useful). Other elements of the training were more evenly balanced between very useful and quite useful. There were no elements of the training that participants found ‘not useful at all’.

“Even though I have lots of project management experience the training was good as it prompted discussion and introduced some new ideas”

The main negative feature as far as participants were concerned was that sessions were too long (50% of participants said that reducing session length would be the one thing that would really improve the training experience) and in informal feedback many said that by the end of a 3 hour evening session they were struggling a little, particularly as many of the participants were coming straight from work.

“Three hours was too long for an evening session”

88% of participants felt that the training *met their expectations*; 88% felt that they *learned something new*; 88% felt the training *better equipped them to deliver/manage an arts project in their community*; 88% *would recommend the training to a friend*; 71% felt that their *capacity as a professional has improved*; and 72% felt that the training was *a very positive experience*.

“It made me realise that I could, with support, do a project even though I constantly doubt my skills and capabilities, but after the course I feel more confident”

It is worth noting, however, that 57% were unable to say whether they felt the *training was pitched at the right level*; and 25% found it a little *too intensive with too much to take in*.

The experience of training delivery was also, on the whole, very positive. Participants were attentive, engaged, and hungry for learning and for the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. They responded well to training input and clearly relished the opportunity for practical activity and discussion. This peer learning was a very important component of the

training and was particularly beneficial because of the mixed cohort (so artists, project managers and community workers were able to learn from each other and share their expertise). However, the trainers felt that this aspect of the training could have been significantly enhanced and would like to have devoted much more time to practical learning. The trainers found this to be impossible, however, given the huge amount of material to be covered in sessions. Because of the breadth of information to be communicated training was overly dependent on a presentational format; and occasionally felt like a three-hour race through a huge amount of material. In addition, tutors were not confident that all the material was necessary or relevant: at times it felt like teaching a generic project management course as opposed to inspiring and exciting people to use the arts effectively in their communities.

Second cohort

During the second round of training feedback was gathered in two ways. Each training session began with asking participants to say what it was they hoped to learn from the training and at the end of each session each participant said whether they had learnt what they'd expected and were encouraged to add further comments or reflections. Participants were also asked if they would fill in a simple questionnaire containing the standard six questions, introduced in the first round, and the results of this data can be found in appendix 4. These methods of evaluating enabled us to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback, with a particular emphasis on the content of the training and enable us to analyse whether further changes needed to be made.

Session 1 Introducing The Arts And Communities: Participants responded well to the mix of presentation, practical group based learning and open discussion. Many people felt that the additional support offered by the information provided in the handouts would be very useful. The Case Studies, where both Sarah and Mandy talked about projects they themselves have helped deliver, were particularly enjoyed, stimulating group based learning where participants shared their own experiences of projects they'd been involved with. The Ethics exercise was also very popular and created some heated debates about what should be the primary motivational force behind the development of a good arts project.

Tutors enjoyed the co-delivery aspect of this session and felt that the room, equipment and refreshments provided by St. Helens Council were excellent, creating a good safe atmosphere to help establish the training group. The mix between presentation, practical task based learning and supported group discussion felt comfortable, offering participants a mix of approaches to learning.

Session 2 Fund Raising: was delivered and evaluated internally by St. Helens Council.

Session 3 Delivering Your Project: Participants really enjoyed this session. Many people commented that the project risk assessment and the approach to financial planning offered them a new approach to project management and thought it would be incredibly useful. The

'Milestone Planning' approach was particularly welcomed. One participant commented that she'd been planning projects for years but she'd never followed processes like those suggested in the training but that she could see how she could avoid many of the crisis moments she had come to expect if she took such an approach. Written feedback included comments:

"I've found today very useful. Although I've managed many projects, this gives me tools to use in the future"

"very good session again"

The trainer was happy with the mix of materials and the pace of the session although she had to work hard to fit everything in and worried that she may have rushed some of the delivery. The only negative feedback was:

"Just need extra half hour to time to avoid being rushed"

Session 4 Evaluating And Monitoring Your Project: This seemed a hard session for many of the participants. Many took the view that monitoring and evaluating your work was a chore and something that simply had to be done to please funders. Throughout the session we explored a variety of creative approaches to evaluating and monitoring, but it was hard to encourage people to move away from the more traditional form filling approaches to gathering information. Participants found the definitions offered to explain the differences between terms such as monitoring, evaluating, quantitative and qualitative, with the accompanying practical tasks designed to re-enforce the learning, very helpful. The feedback was generally good and the only negative point was:

"Excellent course again, reduced attendance is a worry"

The trainer felt that perhaps she needed more examples of alternative approaches to the subject, more films or visual examples of good practice to really enhance this session.

Session 5 Audience Development And Advocacy: Participants generally enjoyed this session, they were encouraged to consider marketing and promotion in a variety of ways.

"Thoroughly enjoyed, learned a lot more than I thought I would. Thanks"

Many participants particularly wanted to know and understand the digital market place better and gain a greater understanding of the methods required to engage effectively with the various digital platforms.

The trainer felt that although participants enjoyed the training and the mix of practical tasks offered more focus could have been given to digital marketing since this still seems incomprehensible.

General comments: Owen Hutchings said that the course was excellently delivered, was very person centred and that all participants gained greatly from attending the course.

2. Good attendance on the courses

Participant feedback from round 1 was that although the group had opted for evening sessions, many found that three hours after a long day at work tiring. Attendance dropped from the initial 14 and ultimately nine completed the course 64%.

Participant feedback from the second round was that they generally enjoyed the course, although it was noted by participants as well as tutors, that after the initial full day session where fourteen people attended, the numbers drastically dropped during sessions 3 to 5, averaging 5 - 6 per session. Mandy Redvers-Rowe, who delivered the majority of the second round for Collective Encounters, was concerned about the attendance but the absenteeism was not consistent in that it was different people missing at different times, and the reasons for absence seemed genuine. One explanation could be that because the delivery took place during the working week, that participants who were attending as a representative of an organisation may have had to take one or two breaks to deal with work related issues. Out of the initial group of fourteen participants a total of eight people completed more than half of the course.

The adjustment from the original course structure from six equal sessions to one full day followed by four shorter sessions in general seems to have been successful. However, there was a considerable fall out from the first session to the later shorter sessions. In the feedback from the first session no one stated that they felt overwhelmingly daunted by the training and all stated that they would probably attend future sessions. Participants were consulted on what day and time would be best for them regarding the further four sessions and two options were presented to Collective Encounters, that of either a Tuesday morning or that of a Friday morning. As Mandy Redvers-Rowe was not available on a Tuesday the Friday morning was agreed. It is possible that this didn't suit some people and when giving a group an option it is rare that a day and time to suit everyone can be easily identified. Also, as previously stated, the attendance was in most cases not consistent, with participants finding that they were unable to attend specific days but able to come to others. The lead trainer felt that this was not in response the subjects being covered but more to work related commitments. She always ensured that training packs were made available to those unable to attend.

The duration of the shorter sessions, in the initial course this refers to the duration of the standard session and during the subsequent course it relates to the duration of the second, third, fourth and fifth sessions, was questioned by both groups of participants. In the first round of training the overwhelming feed back was that the three hours was too long, it was consequently recommended to be shortened to 2.5 hours. During the second round of training, the overwhelming feedback was that the sessions needed to be half an hour longer. Therefore the recommendation from the first group of participants was directly opposed by that of the second group. On reflection, it seems that this is probably due to the timing, the first group met during the evening, participants attending after a day of work and for them

three hours seemed too long, during the second round of training participants met in the morning and were fresh and easily able to undertake a longer session.

3. Participants developing well planned, exciting and achievable arts projects

After the first round of training five groups developed new arts projects with the support of Owen Hutchings. He states that the quality of the arts projects proposed were excellent, the ideas were exciting, innovative, appropriate for the community of St. Helens and most important, achievable.

The second round of training was completed at the end of June and four groups are currently developing arts projects with Owen's support. Once again, he states that the quality of concepts and ideas is excellent and he believes that this is in direct response to the quality of the training they experienced when undertaking the re:generArts programme.

4. Submitting funding applications

After the first round of training 5 groups submitted bids to various bodies to deliver arts projects – these projects varied in size from £500 to £10,000. None of the groups had previously applied for arts funding. Owen Hutchings stated that the quality of ideas, planning and budgeting were excellent. The successful bids applied for by the five groups brought national arts funding into the St. Helens area empowering local communities by developing and delivering their own arts activities.

After the second round of training, four groups are currently preparing bids. Once again none of these groups have previously applied for arts funding, and once again Owen states that the standard of the projects being developed is extremely high. He fully expects that they will be successful and bring more funding into St. Helens.

Additional Evaluative Comments

Apart for the contact time during the delivery of the training course, further elements of the course included attendance at arts events and one to one support sessions with Owen Hutchings. The theatre trips have been successfully taken up and a many of the participants who have used the opportunity expand their horizons and to see productions that they wouldn't normally have attended. The one to one sessions with Owen have also been popular and participants have welcomed the opportunity to talk through ideas on a one to one basis.

In Summary

- The course was delivered successfully over two rounds
- Collective Encounters delivered all components and successfully managed to deliver flexibly, on dates identified and agreed by participants
- The changes identified by the first group were successfully implemented during the second round of training
- Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive
- Fourteen participants embarked on each round of training, nine completed the first round (64%) and eight the second round (57%), and although there was a drop off in each course from the first session, as the numbers embarking on the two courses vastly exceeded original expectations, ten per course, the ultimate number of participants who completed is better than originally anticipated.
- Five groups from the first round have developed exciting, innovative and achievable arts projects as a direct result of attending the training programme
- Four organisations from the second round are developing new projects which are also identified as exciting, innovative and achievable
- 5 participant groups from the first round of training, who have not previously applied for arts funding, have already developed projects and have been successful in gaining funds
- Four groups from the second round of training, who have not previously applied for arts funding, are currently developing funding bids

3 Learning and Recommendations

1 Long term recommendation: attach project delivery costs to training

This recommendation was made in the mid-term project report:

Following reflection on the training by both trainers and commissioners, we believe that future training would be much more successful if a small amount of money (£1,000 per head minimum) be attached to the training to enable participants to conceive and deliver their own small starter project. The costs would need to be sufficient to pay a professional artist to deliver a small programme of work, and to ensure the quality of any arising product. Without a practical project to deliver the training remains hypothetical and abstract, and although beneficial, we believe that significant added value would be found through initial seed funding.

Subsequent Action:

The extra finance suggested as a stimulus for fund raising in the mid-point evaluation, is currently being identified by St. Helens Council and they are expecting to be able to offer a small seed fund to those four organisations that completed the second round of training.

2 Development and progression should now be considered.

It has been proven that the re:generArts course has been successful in the terms originally set out, but now the course has been run twice we should look at long term progression and build on the successes of this project. We therefore recommend that a post course session for each participant group be planned (or potentially bringing the two groups together). This would have a three fold purpose:

- enable participants to jointly reflect and share experiences of having now successfully run a project
- reflect on were was the most useful aspects of the training in enabling them to run the project, and what additional aspects do they now know would have been useful to be included (this will help to inform similar training and capacity building programmes in future)
- consider what their on-going and long term training and support needs might be if they are to continue delivering arts projects in St Helens

Appendix 1

Session Outline: First Round of Delivery

	St Helens original brief	Additional components post planning/development
Planning Your Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a project brief • Choosing an art form and artist • How to successfully book and recruit artists • Where to stage activity • How to make your project inclusive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and Imagination • Understanding need and possibility • Developing a project idea • Understanding Aims, Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes • Getting plugged into the arts scene
Delivering Your Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgeting • Assessing and Managing Risk • Developing A Project Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting Milestones • Project management systems, processes and tools • Job descriptions and contracting
Marketing and Documenting Your Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to market your work • How to write a good press release • How to market to online audiences • How to document and photograph your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Stakeholder engagement • Reaching non-traditional audiences
Evaluating and Monitoring Your Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to record numbers of people attending your activities • How to record improved skills/developments of participants • How to evidence your budget • How to use monitoring to evaluate your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the difference between feedback, evaluation and monitoring • Non-invasive information gathering • Qualitative and quantitative analysis • Evaluative frameworks and inclusivity
Catch Up		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owen Hutchings ran an additional session which acted as a refresher for participants on the sessions that had come before, but also gave the group time and space to develop their own ideas for programmes of work that they might develop and seek funding for.
Sustaining and Developing Your Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to plan your work in advance. • Develop funding bids whilst working on current programmes • Spreading workload • Attracting new members to support the delivery of your work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and responding to changing need • The project cycle • Review of learning • Final evaluation

Appendix 2

Session Outline: Second Round of Delivery

Session One (whole day) Introducing the arts in communities

What are the Possibilities? Lots of case studies presented in different ways to participants – as well as sharing of own experience – artists on the course invited to bring in examples/ images of their own work and be prepared to talk about it (1hr)

What are the benefits and impacts? Presentation of key research findings (introduction to useful documents that highlight social impact and personal benefit of arts activity); as well as discussion and anecdotal storytelling from participants. (½ hr)

What are values and ethics that underpin high quality work in communities? Some presentation leading to facilitated group work (½ hr)

Understanding need: creative research and stakeholder engagement Some presentation incorporating peer sharing and group work (½ hr)

Working lunch: sandwiches and drinks over discussion of arts activity in St Helens, what people know about how to get plugged into what's on etc. (40 mins)

Developing a project idea: where do you think the need is in your community? How might the arts address this – practical work in small groups to support each other to come up with individual ideas – write a brief synopsis of the project idea (1 hr)

Turning ideas into plans: Understanding and using Aims, Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes – presentation followed by practical group work to apply AOOOs to their preliminary project idea (½ hr)

Sharing ideas – feedback of project outlines (½ hr)

Moving forward – template given which will form a 'project brief' which they can either further develop their existing idea for (and which will include their project synopsis and AOOOs) or revisit the process they've used through consultation with their group to develop a different project in advance of the meeting with the arts development team

+ supporting handouts for all aspects of today's session are distributed (½ hr)

Close. Informal opportunity to ask further questions of the tutor post session.

Additional Activity before next session:

- 1 x arts trip
- 1 x one-on-one consultation

Session Two: Fundraising

Based on an understanding of the values and ethics of community based arts activity, and the fact that all participants have developed a project idea, the fundraising session sits well here and will enable participants to progress their project ideas.

To include preparing a budget.

Additional Activity before next session:

- 1 x arts trip
- 1 x one-on-one consultation

Session Three: Delivering your project

Presentation will cover: Setting and monitoring milestones (and monitoring spend); project management processes and tools; recruiting and managing volunteers and professional artists

Facilitated discussion will enable people to share their experiences of project management

Practical activity will look at: engaging participants and stakeholders

Supporting handouts for all aspects of today's session will be distributed

Additional Activity before next session:

- 1 x arts trip
- 1 x one-on-one consultation

Session Four: Evaluating and Developing your project

Presentation will cover: understanding the difference between feedback, evaluation, monitoring and advocacy; non-invasive monitoring; qualitative and quantitative analysis; measuring impact; effective documentation

Facilitated discussion will enable people to share their experiences of and concerns about evaluation

Practical activity will look at how to use evaluation and feedback to inform the improvement, development and extension of the project

Supporting handouts for all aspects of today's session will be distributed

Additional Activity before next session:

- 1 x arts trip
- 1 x one-on-one consultation

Session Five: Audience Development and advocacy

Presentation will include: Marketing your work through traditional channel; digital and on-line developments; reaching non-traditional audiences; reaching funders and stakeholders

Facilitated discussion will explore participants' experiences of how they find out about events/opportunities and what makes them decide to go along

Practical activity will look at what makes print/digital designed materials effective

Additional ½ hour: recap of learning and evaluation of the programme.