

## Case Study

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# Youth participation: Slam Cymru



Image courtesy of Literature Wales

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Wales joined the international Slam Movement with ten poets delivering creative writing and performance workshops to 200 young people from across Wales.

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# Case Study Introduction

## What will I learn and is it relevant to me?

### Themes...

- Young people
- Slam poetry
- Participation
- Project funding

### Learning...

- Adapting international initiatives
- Engaging young people in literature
- Funding literature projects
- Making your ideas happen

### Relevant for...

- Education, outreach and engagement teams keen to engage young people in literature
- Directors and Chief Executives wanting to join international initiatives
- Artists working with young people
- Anyone with a great idea who wants to make it happen

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# Literature Wales

## Young People’s Laureate, Bardd Plant Cymru and Slam Cymru

### Literature Wales

Literature Wales believes that literature belongs to everybody and can be found everywhere. We work collaboratively, bilingually, and in a wide range of communities to make sure literature is a voice for all.

We believe in empowering people, groups and communities by supporting them and giving them the tools to develop the literature programmes, events and schemes they want and need in their own local area.

Fundamentally we believe that literature is good for you. It can change, improve and enhance people’s lives. It contributes to better skills, employability, health and engagement with society.

### Young People’s Laureate

The Young People’s Laureate initiative aims to inspire self-expression and increase literacy and communication skills in young people. By using a wide range of disciplines the project has been developed to engage the next generation with literature in new and innovative ways. The initiative was launched by Literature Wales in October 2011 with Catherine Fisher appointed as first Laureate. It has been developed by performer and poet Martin Daws who has been Wales’ Young People’s Laureate since 2013. Poet and educator Sophie McKeand will take up the post of Young People’s Laureate in April 2016.

### Slam Cymru

Slam Cymru was Wales’ first ever National Youth Slam. The project began with creative writing and performance workshops, leading to regional heats and a national grand final.

Youth Slam teams from across Wales battled it out to be named National Youth Slam Champions 2015.

Slam Cymru was coordinated by Literature Wales with funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation.

### Bardd Plant Cymru

The Bardd Plant Cymru (Welsh-language Children’s Poet Laureate) initiative is a collaboration between Literature Wales, Welsh Books Council, Yr Urdd, S4C and the Welsh Government.

The project aims to engage children in the writing and appreciation of poetry and each year works with over 4,000 children across Wales.

The initiative was launched in 2000 with Myrddin ap Dafydd appointed as the first Bardd Plant Cymru. Since then there have been thirteen poets in the role, including Aneirin Karadog (2013 - 2015).

Writer, musician and TV presenter Anni Llŷn is the current Bardd Plant Cymru (2015 - 2017).

‘Each group received four sessions in which they had to create two poems under two minutes in length and learn how to perform them.’

# Slam Cymru

## Introducing the project

### The inspiration

Lleucu Siencyn, Chief Executive of Literature Wales, visited America during the Dylan Thomas 100 celebrations.

During her trip Lleucu learned more about Slam, the global spoken word poetry movement that originated in the USA.

She made connections with organisations out there and returned inspired by the movement.

### Preparing for the project

Young People’s Laureate Martin Daws received a Creative Wales Ambassador Award from the Arts Council of Wales to work with Literature Wales and Urban Word in New York to learn about Slam poetry. Martin received mentoring from Hip Hop artists and attended the Preemptive Education Conference led by Urban Word.

Martin was accompanied by Bardd Plant Cymru Aneirin Karadog, who shares his interest in spoken word.

I joined Martin at Brave New Voices Festival, which draws Slam teams from across America and internationally to learn and compete.

We returned to Wales determined to apply what we’d learnt and create our own Slam project. Our Chief Executive had recently met with the Garfield Weston Foundation and that seemed a good fit. We submitted an application for Slam Cymru, which was successful.

### The project

We issued a callout for poets. They had to apply and say why they wanted to be part of the project.

Martin and Aneirin trained eight poets who would work with them to coach Slam poetry teams across Wales.

We asked the poets to approach groups locally. If they were interested Literature Wales would then take it forward.

The Prince’s Trust also supported us by suggesting groups and providing rooms for the workshops.

Each of the poets was then allocated a group to work with. These included Young Carers, Schools and Prince’s Trust XL Clubs.

Each group received four sessions in which they had to create two poems under two minutes in length and learn how to perform them.

The workshops were followed by two regional heats. Six groups competed in Wrexham and another six in Cardiff. Two teams from each region then went on to compete at the grand final at St David’s Hall in Cardiff.

### The cost

The project cost £20,000. That included training of the artists, artist fees for workshop delivery and venue hire for the events. It also included transport costs for the groups if they weren’t able to pay for it.

£10,000 came from Garfield Weston Foundation and that was matched by in kind support from Literature Wales.

# Results and advice

## Changing the world one piece at a time

### The results

- 200 young people aged 14 - 19 took part in the workshops
- 10 poets were trained in delivering Slam workshops and coaching teams
- 2 regional heats were attended by 80 - 100 people
- 100 people attended the final at St David's Hall
- An outstanding level of poetry and performance

### Who has benefited?

The young people who have taken part have developed communication, group work, literacy, creativity and general participation skills. They have also increased in confidence throughout the process.

The poets all received training and benefited from the opportunity to network and learn from each other.

Literature Wales has benefited from working with 14 - 19 year olds, a group which we're committed to engaging with further.

### Successes

The young people really appreciated having their voices heard. The teachers absolutely loved the project and one was a special needs school, which provided a great opportunity for integration. A group of disaffected young people got to the final.

### Challenges

We would have benefited from more contact sessions to build confidence in the groups. One of the young carers' group didn't feel confident enough to perform.

### Learning from the USA

We were blown away by the warmth and friendliness. The young people involved were astonishing and completely dedicated - many of them from marginalised groups. The whole Slam movement is incredibly well organised.

Martin and Aneirin developed skills on their visits to the USA that they were able to bring back and share with artists in Wales.

### Advice for making ideas happen

- Talk to colleagues and your CEO to sense check your idea
- Don't be afraid to fail
- Feel confident enough and go for it
- Work as a team and with partners to identify potential funders and groups you could work with
- When applying for funding, read guidelines carefully and ask colleagues for support
- Always get someone else to read your application - if you're close to a project or idea it may make perfect sense to you but miss vital information for someone coming to it for the first time

Watch videos and find out more:

[www.literaturewales.org](http://www.literaturewales.org)

[www.youngpeopleslaureate.org/tag/slam-cymru/](http://www.youngpeopleslaureate.org/tag/slam-cymru/)