

Grants for the Arts Case Study

Culture Works East

Engaging young people in the arts



Image by Steve Hunt, courtesy of Culture Works East

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Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Case Study Introduction

What will I learn and is it relevant to me?

Themes...

- Young People
- Festivals
- Engagement

Learning...

- Developing youth-led engagement and participation programmes
- Working with festivals
- Working with hard to reach groups

Relevance...

This case study is relevant to:

- Arts marketers and engagement teams working to engage young people in the arts
- Arts organisations looking to establish relationships with festivals
- Grants for the Arts applicants who want to find out more about funded projects

Culture Works East is a youth arts organisation that works with 8 to 25-year-olds from Norfolk, Suffolk and beyond. We have a particular track record of working with young people in challenging circumstances.

Background

Introducing Culture Works East

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Culture Works East (CWE) is an award winning youth arts organisation that specialises in the use of high quality arts, media and creativity to inspire children and young people to discover and reach their full potential.

Founded in 2009, CWE's vision is about long-term change for participants by finding ways to encourage progression so that they can develop a growing interest in the arts, sustain their new-found skills and use them to flourish.

Activities are developed by the creative team, bringing together inspirational professionals with experienced youth arts practitioners and specialists.

They mentor participants to develop a range of creative and media skills as well as personal, social and transferrable skills in a safe and fun environment.

Our audiences

CWE is a youth arts organisation that works with 8 to 25-year-olds from Norfolk, Suffolk and beyond.

We have a particular track record of working with young people in challenging circumstances and audiences considered to be hard-to-reach.

Our audiences are both rural and urban, with both having

many pockets of socio-disadvantage and isolation. One of CWE's key aims is that its activities encourage involvement from all sections of the community, ensuring everyone has equal opportunity.

We have a number of talent development initiatives where a key feature is that they are open to all young people with an interest or emerging talent. Examples include BFI Film Academy, Latitude Young Practitioners and CWE Young Arts Leaders programme.

Our long-term ambitions...

- To be one of the leading organisations in the delivery of youth arts across the East of England
- To provide a sustainable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for children and young people that takes them from volunteering to paid roles and encourages cultural leadership from an early age
- To be youth-led in everything that we do
- To support Latitude to develop a year-round engagement and participation programme

Latitude

Engaging 7 - 17-year-olds and their families

The project

We applied to Grants for the Arts for the development of a new participation and engagement programme at large-scale arts festival Latitude. The programme would support children and young people and their families to develop and deepen their relationship with the arts.

The programme was designed to enable platforming opportunities for emerging young talent alongside professional artists and local organisations.

We aimed to help partners, including a number of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations, to develop non-traditional ways of working. Involving them in the festival would increase their reach and the breadth and depth of engagement with different audiences. The involvement of local organisations would also help audiences identify opportunities to continue engaging with the arts beyond Latitude.

Background

Culture Works East has worked with Festival Republic, who deliver Latitude, since 2010.

We had developed a model of workshops and masterclasses in the Inbetweeners' Area that was really successful and they asked us to develop a programme for children and families.

We decided to develop a participation and engagement programme for 7 - 17-year-olds and their families to deepen engagement with the arts and represent the regional landscape.

The programme and process

The programme needed to represent all of our work. It needed to be youth-led, feature emerging and professional artists and provide talent-development opportunities.

It would have been impossible to do that alone so we reached out to new partners including Writers' Centre Norwich and The Roundhouse. We also established a partnership with media company Archant to run a news room at the festival and help young people become festival reporters.

We worked with IdeasTap (now Hiive) to issue three briefs that were either commission-based or experience-based.

One commission invited emerging artists to submit ideas of what they would do with a shed and an artist budget.

Most importantly of all, we worked with young people to develop the programme. No matter how much we think we know what they want, it is always important to ask young people.

The final programme included workshops in beat boxing, filmmaking, photography, ringtones, stop frame animation and writing horror stories. There were also performances by emerging artists right through to international artists.

Schools Day provides discounted tickets for children and young people who attend schools within a 20 mile radius of the festival. It enables them to access award winning theatre, dance, music, literature and visual arts. The programme can be used to support a range of curriculum including Art and Design, PE, Drama and Music.

We worked in partnership with the Norfolk and Norwich Festival Bridge and Latitude Festival to develop this initiative. We could all see the potential challenges in the local area, including the festival falling within term time. Suffolk is very rural with huge pockets of deprivation. CWE undertook advocacy work with Festival Republic so that they could see the benefits of Schools Day and how their international programme was on the door step of many but accessed by only a percentage. This initiative only worked because of the support of Latitude Festival.

Schools Day tickets were £8 (now £10) each for primary school children and £55 (now £50) for secondary school and college students - both with free teacher places. With the tickets they received two workshops linked to the curriculum, a theatre performance and access to the festival. They also had the opportunity to complete Discover Arts Awards. With help from the local authority Arts Development Officer, we sold all tickets to 19 Suffolk Schools.

Cost

The project cost £20,795, with an additional in kind contribution of £20,015 from Culture Works East and partners that included staff time and kit.

£16,045 came from Arts Council England through Grants for the Arts. That included £1,200 of access costs for me as a disabled artist. Without those access costs covered, the project would not have been possible. The remaining funds came from our fee from Festival Republic and a small amount of income from other partners.

The Results

Changing the world one piece at a time

The results

- 1,350 children and young people participated in the programme
- 2,250 live audiences
- 180,000 people engaged online
- 19 schools attended on Schools Day
- 200 crew members attended, including staff from Culture Works East and partner organisations and young people aged 18 and over
- 17 artists were involved in the programme, ranging from emerging artists to international award-winning artists
- 12 partner organisations contributed to the programme in some way, from pre-production right through to evaluation
- All paid artists and contributors were from the region, feeding back into the local economy

How the organisation has benefited

Culture Works East has benefited from the external evaluation of the programme, which has helped improve and develop the programme for next year. As an organisation we're not afraid of learning and involving everyone in the evaluation process.

We have deepened our relationship with participants aged 16 and over. That can also be a challenge because talent development and progression takes a long time and funding is limited. Schools Day has also helped us develop our relationship with schools.

The strength of our partnership with Festival Republic and the trust they place in us has also allowed us to try out ideas that may or may not be successful. That is incredibly valuable for any programmer.

How audiences have benefited

The programme gave young people access to really high quality arts that they may not otherwise have been able to afford.

The external evaluation stated that 'parents reported that their children tried new activities and learned new skills. Parents also reported that their children are more interested in the arts after the workshops.'

How Latitude has benefited

The Grants for the Arts funding enabled us to do a lot of advocacy around Latitude as an engagement tool.

Initiatives such as Schools Day have strengthened the festival's relationship with local people. We have helped Latitude become the first UK festival to register as an Arts Award supporter and to be awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge.

'I owe a debt of thanks to Elli Chapman for guiding me through the difficult process of forming a new relationship with the local school community, teachers and students and for creating a schools programme worthy of our high ideals.' Sharon Reuben, Head of Artist and Guest Liaison at Festival Republic

Latitude has now picked up the funding of Schools Day, making it a sustainable programme for the local community.

My access costs funded through Grants for the Arts have also enabled us to develop appropriate access with Latitude for my disability.

Recommendations

Our top tips for engaging young people through festivals

Top tips

- Develop partnerships to complement your strengths - young people are difficult consumers to engage so find organisations who share your passion and work together to create a compelling offer
- Show festivals what you can offer - festivals are often seen as a closed shop but if you can demonstrate what you have to offer, such as building relationships with the local community, they are far more likely to welcome your proposals
- Listen out for opportunities that fit your specialism and leap on them - our relationship with Latitude began because someone heard they wanted to develop their offer for young people and tipped us off
- Go above and beyond expectations for clients and they will take risks with you in the future - the space we originally had at Latitude was very steep and difficult to know what to do with; we turned it into something special and that really strengthened our relationship with the festival
- Share your vision and ask for ideas - in a creative team there will be so many brilliant ideas so just share the overarching vision and wait and see what comes back

Find out more

<http://www.cultureworkseast.co.uk/>

<http://www.latitodefestival.com/schools>

<http://www.latitodefestival.com/schools/learning-outside-classroom>