

# Case study



# Involving participants in fundraising



Photo: TCFT Pilot phase by Robert Golden

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Published 2015

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## The Complete Freedom of Truth

*A large-scale international participatory arts project where everyone has the potential to become a fundraiser.*

### Background

Having worked officially as a fundraiser for only 14 months (although I have fundraised for many years as Artistic Director of Phakama), I have been very fortunate to be able to get involved in the planning of The Complete Freedom of Truth (TCFT), an international youth arts project led by Opera Circus ([www.operacircusuk.com](http://www.operacircusuk.com)).

The project's ethos deeply resonates with me, which makes my life as a fundraiser much easier. The opportunity to be very closely involved enables me to describe the project to potential funders and supporters with clarity and passion. The richness of ideas proposed by the young people, the integrity and quality of the arts produced and the commitment of all partners, make this complex endeavour a project that I am delighted to be helping to resource.

The project is designed to use the arts to provide skills training, cultural and social awareness for young people enabling them to stage small, medium and large-scale artistic interactions. The project aims to raise consciousness and encourage a vision of an equal, inclusive and truly democratic society. It is led through a process of youth exchanges and youth workers



Photo: TCFT pilot phase by Robert Golden

mobility, with non-formal learning at its heart. Combining the highest quality of cultural and arts practice, inspired and facilitated by highly gifted and experienced partners, practitioners and artists, TCFT aims to establish an international network of socially engaged young cultural leaders and organisations with lasting impact locally, nationally and internationally.

The 12 organisations involved in TCFT are from the UK, Serbia, Bosnia, Portugal, Romania, Italy and Georgia; ranging from youth centres, youth theatre groups, a university, leading international cultural organisations, a city and local authorities making TCFT a unique, exciting and robust melting pot of expertise, knowledge and disciplines. TCFT is working directly with 500 + young people, group leaders and youth workers from across Europe over a 5-year period (2015-2019) in a combination of face-to-face meetings and ongoing online exchanges.

TCFT grew out of Tina Ellen Lee's (Opera Circus' Artistic Director) years of experience developing partnerships and youth educational and engagement programmes both in the UK and internationally.

### **Funding the pilot phase and starting to involve participants in fundraising**

In 2014, Tina secured the first grant from Erasmus+ (European funds) to cover part of TCFT's pilot phase. Although incredibly valuable and instrumental in supporting initiatives such as TCFT, Erasmus+ only covers a portion of travel and accommodations costs and as such further resources needed to be found to cover the remaining of these two items as well as artists fees and all other costs related to producing an international youth arts exchange. Tina invited me to join the project as fundraiser / development consultant and we raised further resources from Arts Council England (ACE), Awards for All and the local authority enabling us to deliver a very successful pilot / planning phase.

The pilot phase saw an international group of 60 young people, artists, youth workers and group leaders from diverse backgrounds, experiences and abilities meeting in Dorset and spending a week getting to know each other, playing, exchanging knowledge and skills and planning together a 5-year programme of activities.

Photo: TCFT Pilot phase by Robert Golden



Artistic activities run alongside presentations from partner organisations, film evenings organised by the young people, debates about democracy and conversations about how to structure such a large project. I delivered a series of fundraising sessions for the young people exploring how we could think creatively and strategically about the resources needed for both

TCFT and young people's own initiatives back home. Daily conversations took place with each individual partner organisation to fully understand their structure, how they work, their capacity, contacts and approach to fundraising within their own context.

### **Developing the fundraising strategy as part of the project**

The ideas developed together with partner organisations and the young participants during the pilot phase now inform the project's overall fundraising strategy. Soon after completing the pilot phase, we applied for and succeeded in securing a further grant from Erasmus+ for €350,000, which will cover part of the project's next 24 months of activities (2015-2017).

The next 24 months will see young people creating large-scale events in Bosnia, the UK and Italy as well as small exchanges amongst youth workers and young emerging artists and producers from all countries involved.

To cover the remaining costs of the project, we are approaching fundraising very creatively aiming at involving young people, youth workers, communities, local businesses, local governments and an array of diverse partners. We are nurturing existing relationship with partners such as ACE as well as developing new relationships with other key funders and applying for funds through the more conventional routes. But we are also building on the ideas suggested by the young people and partner organisations during the pilot phase and a

number of alternative fundraising activities will be delivered across Europe, including: dinners hosted by individuals involved in the project; cabaret nights showcasing young people's work; auctions of items donated by local business people and artists; fundraising performances; cake sales; poetry evenings; and online campaigns to name but a few.

The idea is that fundraising becomes integral to the young people's training and a joint effort forging a sense of shared responsibility. TCFT, and myself as a fundraiser committed to young people's development, are keen to help everyone involved understand that a) fundraising should not happen in isolation and b) fundraising should go beyond a quest for only 'finding the money'. We are committed to making fundraising for TCFT about wider social engagement, the maximisation of knowledge, skills, resources and connections. It should be something fun, engaging and accessible to anyone who wants to have a go at it.

### Future plans and aims

At the end of our 24-months period, our plan is (working in close collaboration with partner organisations and young people) to apply for the Creative Europe (European fund) so that TCFT moves to its next phase of activities (a further three years) involving more young people and youth workers from Europe and beyond. The fundraising target for the initial 24 months itself is an ambitious one.



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However, we are confident that, with every single participant's potential to become a fundraiser, the target will be met (potentially exceeded). But the true success will be that young people and partner organisations better understanding how fundraising can become a powerful tool for social interaction, and become confident in their ability to operate within and outside conventional fundraising models.

**For more information on TCFT please visit:**

<https://vimeo.com/108551814>

[www.thecompletefreedomoftruth.com](http://www.thecompletefreedomoftruth.com)

### About CultureHive

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