

Persistence pays off

Artichoke raises £3 million for London's Burning



Image courtesy of Artichoke. London 1666. Photo by Oliver Rudkin

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



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Published 2017

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Artichoke produces extraordinary and ambitious events that live in the memory forever, transforming people's lives by changing the way they see the world.

You will find us working in the street, public squares, along the coast or in the countryside. From London to Liverpool, Durham to Derry~Londonderry, we have transformed people and places across the UK. Bringing communities together through our learning and participation work, we leave a legacy of skills and newfound potential behind.

Moving from city to city poses a significant fundraising challenge. Our events are free to attend so we don't have access to a vast corporate pool. We have to build relationships with new communities for each event and generate cross-sector support.

For London's Burning we had twelve months to raise £3 million from the City of London.



About London's Burning

London's Burning was a festival of arts and ideas, inspired by the Great Fire of London.

Artichoke invited artists and academics to respond to the Great Fire and consider the modern threats faced by world cities today: from climate change to conflict.

London's Burning was commissioned by the founding sponsor, City of London Corporation, who gave us a significant starting chunk of £300,000. Our challenge was to find the remainder of the £3 million budget.



How we began

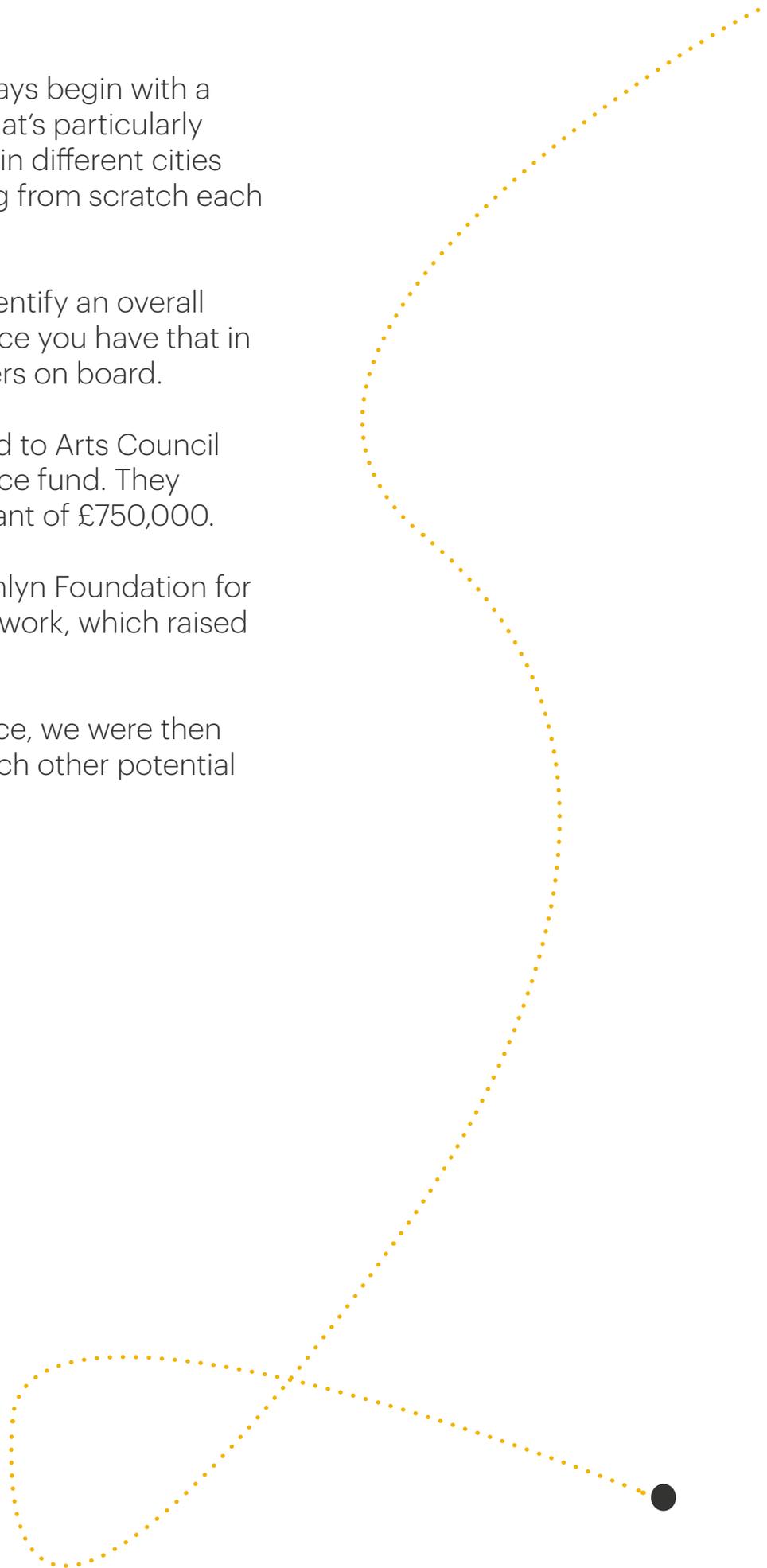
Our fundraising campaigns always begin with a thorough period of research. That's particularly important when you're working in different cities because you're basically starting from scratch each time.

From that research, we try to identify an overall major sponsor or supporter. Once you have that in place it's far easier to bring others on board.

For London's Burning we applied to Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence fund. They awarded us an extraordinary grant of £750,000.

We also applied to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for funding towards our education work, which raised a further £150,000.

With those major funders in place, we were then in a stronger position to approach other potential supporters.



Adapting our plans

During the planning stages of the campaign, we had thought that the majority of the money would come from insurance companies. It seemed a good fit with the history of the Great Fire of London and indeed RSA came on board with early sponsorship of £50,000. After numerous further approaches, however, our only other insurer was Aon, whose later sponsorship helped us to realise our target at last.

We adjusted our plans and started focusing on banks and investment companies. JP Morgan sponsored our final reception and we eventually secured £30,000 from Natwest's Skills and Opportunities Fund.

We worked with the BID to reach out to their network. We raised approximately £50,000 from their members but that required a lot of hard work and persistence.

Our other major breakthrough was working with the Livery companies. They were initially sceptical about this project but, after much persuasion, 38 of the companies showed incredible support for London's Burning with donations totalling almost £100,000.

We held a lot of networking dinners to get people excited about the project. Our Development Board played a vital role in opening up contacts and hosting those events.

Our final breakthrough came very late in the campaign in the shape of £1 million from the DCMS. The project was scalable in case we didn't get the money but that final grant enabled us to achieve our full ambitions for the event.

Creative fundraising initiatives

As well as traditional sponsorship agreements, we negotiated creative partnerships with local businesses.

Fuller's created a Great Fire pint and donated a percentage of every pint sold to the London's Burning campaign. They raised £10,000 for the event.

As the Great Fire started in a bakery, we wanted to work closely with the Bakers' Livery Company. Sales of their commemorative biscuits provided another boost to our total.

We used the story of the Great Fire of London to build connections across the city and generate excitement for the event. The theme played a really important role in our fundraising efforts.



Recommendations

Start early — we gave ourselves a full twelve months to raise the money and started researching thoroughly before that.

Do your research — learn about the city you're working in. Find out who the key players are in the business community, talk to the BID and to other arts organisations, and find out what else is going on in the local area and what people are charging for sponsorship.

Talk to the BID and other networks — reaching out through established networks helps you build trust quickly.

Establish a Development Board — our Development Board played a vital role in opening up contacts and hosting networking events. Make sure you have people who are well connected advocating for your organisation.

Be prepared to change your plan — we planned to raise a lot of money from insurance companies but we soon realised that wasn't going to be achievable. We had to adapt our plans and focus on other sectors to achieve our target.

Treat every project like a capital campaign — we always start by looking for a major sponsor or supporter and then everything else gradually slots into place.

Be persistent — the London's Burning campaign was hard. There was no sense of community in the city and we took a lot of knock-backs. We just had to believe in what we were doing and carry on. Persistence was key.



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