

# Audiences and Marketing Proposals for Future Funding and Development

## Summary of the consultation and our response

### Introduction

Our Investment Review re-focussed resources on “front line” delivery – on those organisations directly involved with the creation, presentation and exhibition of the arts – rather than organisations providing services to arts organisations/individuals.

In respect of marketing and audience development services, Council decided to retain strategic funds for the commissioning of key services to ensure “flexible funding” is available to support audience development, programming and marketing initiatives. Council also proposed that some services would be considered for in-house development.

In November 2010, we published draft proposals for Audience and Marketing Development which set out the approach we were proposing to take with regard to future funding for this work.

The proposals covered:

- **Sector Leadership:** advocacy, development of knowledge and expertise within the sector
- **Advice and Information:** newsletters, providing access to specialist knowledge, research and guidance
- **Data management:** collection, analysis and interpretation of statistics and data
- **Training and mentoring:** the promotion of events and symposia, networking, continuing professional development and nurturing skills
- **Research consultancy services:** access to appropriate, affordable expertise
- **Public information services:** ‘What’s On’ web-based information, leaflet distribution

By the closure of the consultation period (21 February 2011) we'd received feedback from 30 people in response to the consultation. 12 of these were venues, 4 Producing Companies, 3 National Companies, 5 Support agencies, 2 Fora, 1 Local Authority, 1 Festival, 1 National Body( non arts) and 1 Individual.

**We'd like to thank everyone who responded to the consultation.**

We received a range of very full and comprehensive responses to our consultation document. Responses varied considerably in response to some of our questions and, in response to others, offered a common view. A number of the respondents also offered very helpful suggestions on how we might take particular areas of work forward. What has emerged is a very clear picture of what the sector feels are the priorities for audiences and marketing in Wales. This summary draws together the main themes and ideas that arose from these consultation responses and sets out our responses to them.

## 1. New portfolio of Revenue Funded Organisations

Our consultation document posed three questions:

- Do you agree that such a mentoring and advocacy role for National Companies and Key Performing Arts Venues will deliver a wider audience for the arts?
- If yes, how do you think this can be achieved – Is it possible within the revenue funded agreement?
- Should a target proportion of an organisations total expenditure (say 15%) be established as a minimum expected marketing budget for all Arts Council funded organisations?

We received a range of views on these questions, but the overall sense is that the National Companies and Key Performing Arts Venues should not take on a mentoring and advocacy role.

The venue respondents raised concerns about having the time and the resources to deliver this role over and above what they do already - "*marketing staff in many venues struggle to keep up with their own multi-channelled campaigns let alone take on mentoring work*". A number stated that they might be able to deliver this if additional resources were made available.

Other respondents questioned whether the National Companies and Key Performing Arts Venues have the skills to take on this role. Mentoring requires a specific skill set

and, being good at marketing and audience development does not translate into mentoring, *“an assumption should not be made that experience and knowledge of the sector will automatically translate into effective mentoring without prior training.”*

One respondent made the point that large organisations do not necessarily have the skills to support small organisations and that small organisations often have a more creative approach than large organisations anyway. *“Some of the smaller companies can be more experimental and creative in the use of marketing because they have the flexibility within their organisation in a way that a larger company or venue many not have.”*

Concerns were also raised about how the quality and consistency of the mentoring and advocacy work would be monitored. Who would mentor the mentors? One respondent questioned how this would result in wider audiences for work. *“While peer support, partnerships and sharing best practice are important development opportunities, the apparent belief that this in itself will deliver a wider audience for the arts appears to be a weak strategic approach.”*

A number of respondents saw this as useful but also questioned how it would be delivered on current resources. It was seen by some as the *“ideal situation”* but unachievable.

A number of respondents suggested that peer review and support already existed, through programmes such as Inventive promoter and Arts Marketing Association (AMA) events.

Sharing of arts marketing skills and expertise was thought to be important however and at least one respondent also offered an example of good practice in this respect. *“The Circuit already facilitates the sharing of arts marketing skills in mid and west Wales venues. This happens organically in regular meetings and more formally in study sessions appended to these meetings.”*

As the responses to the first question were predominantly negative it is unsurprising that the second question also received a largely negative response. The same issues were raised – lack of time and resources to deliver this. There was a suggestion again that we use existing models and structures.

The responses provided two alternative ideas for how to take this forward: An Ideas in Action forum, or think tank and the establishing of Regional Marketing Ambassadors

Interestingly, there was an opposing expressed in this section that suggested that the expertise in larger organisations should be shared and this should be built in to the Revenue Funding Agreements, but this view was very much in the minority

The idea of 15% of an organisation's budget being set as a minimum for marketing was also largely rejected by the respondents. The few who expressed support for this proposal felt that 15% was either just about right or that it was too high.

Views against expressed a number of reasons why this was not a viable proposition:

- There were too many variables in each organisations budget to set a proportionate percentage
- Companies were too diverse for a single percentage to be set
- It was more important to focus on training marketers and address shortfalls in marketing departments than to set a percentage spend

Instead, respondents suggested we should encourage closer collaborations between organisations and sharing of marketing costs, and we should offer guidance, support and training. It was also suggested that we ask RFOs to show their marketing spend in their business plans and we monitor this and that we undertake a benchmarking exercise across all venues and touring companies to provide a context by which organisations can then measure their investment in marketing.

**Our response:** We need to listen to what our organisations are telling us and our ideas around providing mentoring and advocacy through our National Companies and Key Performing Arts Venues have not met the level of support we would have hoped for. We need to give more thought to how we can share expertise, knowledge and skills across the sector. There were suggestions presented to us in the responses and we will look more closely at these. It may be that mentoring, advocacy and sharing of skills/knowledge could be built in to regional networking events, as referred to later in the document.

The idea of a minimum spend marketing budget is also something we need to re-think. The suggestion that we examine and monitor marketing spend more closely in business plans is one that we will explore.

## 2. Sector leadership, advice and information

Our consultation document posed three questions:

- Which of the above services do you value the most and how would you prioritise them for delivery by the Arts Council?

- Is an annual arts marketing symposium necessary or would it be better to hold it biennially?
- Are there other audience development and marketing services you would like to see established?

We offered a range of services that we could deliver in the future and all of these received varying degrees of support from the respondents.

Networking clearly emerged as a top priority from the range of responses received, both regional and art form. There was also significant support for our Arts Marketing Symposium (*"a highlight on our calendar"*), although some respondents felt it was unhelpful to hold it too close to our national arts conference.

There was also broad support for an industry based web-site, e-newsletters and a bulletin but many respondents expressed the view that these services were already available UK wide and we should not seek to duplicate or replace this. Rather, it was felt that we should look at subsidising existing services to make them more widely available in Wales.

We received mixed views about the timing of the Symposium, with some respondents wishing to keep it as an annual event and others saying the timing is unimportant, but the content is *"key"*. One respondent felt the conference confused audience development and marketing, another felt it gave a very valuable focus to arts marketers.

One suggested that the conference could look at the different needs of arts marketers at different stages in their career, whilst another felt it could focus more on small voluntary organisations.

A question was raised about the difference between the Symposium and our annual conference, both in terms of the content and the attendees. The main concern expressed was the apparent lack of involvement by senior managers of arts organisations in marketing and audience development. *"Very few directors, administrators or chief executives attend the marketing symposium ... and very few marketers attend the main annual conference. It's as if the two are mutually exclusive."*

A small number of respondents did suggest that we consider holding the Symposium every two years and run regional networking events in between.

In terms of other services we could offer, the main point was that we do not duplicate, but provide services that are currently not available. Suggestions included:

- Help with specific projects and new developments – social media was referred to by a number of respondents
- Running a nationwide campaign to promote the arts and to promote Wales arts abroad
- More strategic support and advice – the idea of setting up a skills sharing pool
- Training for box office teams
- Set up a venue/programming/producer debate

**Our response:** We were pleased at the level of support received for our Marketing Symposium and our proposal would be to continue to deliver this annually. We would be interested in exploring further with the sector the topics that could be covered in the Symposium and how we might be able to target sessions for professionals at different points in their career.

We will also develop plans for establishing Regional Networking events. Our plans for these and the Symposium will seek to address the areas identified by respondents as needing our support.

We will have discussions with providers of existing services to see how we might be able to ensure a full range of these are available to organisations in Wales. We agree with our respondents that we must avoid duplication of existing services.

### 3. Data management – box office data

Our consultation document posed three questions:

- Is the central collection and external analysis of box office sales data of use to you in your work?
- Is there an alternative to the Knowledge project to easily collect and analyse this type of ticket sales data?
- What would encourage more organisations to use a service like the Knowledge to analyse and share their data?

This set of questions received the widest range of responses, from affirmative no's to resounding yes and everything in between.

Those who supported the central collection and external analysis of data expressed very strong views on how useful to their work this was. Views from venues support agencies and producing companies included the following:

*"Absolutely vital for assisting us in targeting resources, spotting trends and opportunities, identifying gaps in audience profiles, providing important information when developing marketing and business plans, invaluable to promoters, distributors, producer for targeted marketing campaigns."*

*"Sharing of this data across the venues we work with has led to the identification of what works and what doesn't in terms of programming".*

*"The personal services that...has received in the delivering of the Knowledge has been phenomenal."*

Respondents who did not support the central collection and external analysis of data expressed equally strong views: *"The Knowledge needs reviewing: as it stands it doesn't deliver"*. A number of venues felt that their own systems worked better than the Knowledge and when combined with their own knowledge of their venue, provided more effective results: *"we can extract sufficient information that is useful in our marketing activities from our existing system."* There was a view expressed that the system created particular issues for rural venues, as comparisons with other like venues were more difficult. The cost of the system was also put forward as a barrier to signing up to use it and concerns were also expressed about the quality and reliability of the analysis *"the accuracy of the data collection and analysis has been questionable"*.

It was interesting to note, however, that even amongst the dissenting voices, there was a recognition that the central collection of data would be useful to Arts Council of Wales and possibly to the sector as a whole, providing all venues were signed up to use it. *"We can see that the data produced by the Knowledge, if all venues did participate, could be very useful to ACW and potentially to audience development agencies, but as individual theatres looking to save money in hard times it is not a priority."*

There were no clear suggestions for an alternative to The Knowledge and a number of very helpful suggestions were put forward on how we could encourage more organisations to use it. These included:

- Help with the cost of purchasing the licence and software
- Providing training, mentoring and support on how to apply the data
- Ensuring data entry is consistent across the sector
- Making it a condition of grant for Arts Council funding
- Bring the sector together to discuss the benefits of all using the system and providing training in how to use it

- Addressing the perceived shortcomings – ensuring the analysis of the data takes account of each venues operating context, distrust of the analysis and improving the central analysis and interpretation of the data

**Our response:** This topic prompted a great deal of debate. We are convinced of the value of central collection and analysis of box office data and the responses have not persuaded us to change our view on this. As so many respondents said, the value of this to the arts in Wales is clear, but it only has value if all venues are signed up.

We will therefore, work to address the concerns raised in this consultation exercise and address the barriers to participating in the Knowledge, including the possibility of helping with costs. We are concerned that there seems to be an apparent lack of confidence in the analysis of the data and this is something we will look in to.

We will also ensure that training is available in use and analysis of the data collected.

#### 4. Training and mentoring – annual training programme

Our consultation document posed four questions:

- Is it necessary to undertake a training needs analysis or are the needs of the sector already identified?
- What would you consider the priorities should be for a future training programme?
- How do you think future training programmes should be delivered in Wales?
- How can we ensure training opportunities are taken up by arts workers across Wales and within all sectors?

Views around training and mentoring were also mixed. Some respondents stated that undertaking a training needs analysis was necessary or a good idea *“as needs vary across the different sectors.”* Of these, some suggested we should be working with SkillSet and the Creative Industries sector to do this whilst others felt we should work with the Museum, CADW and CCW

Other respondents felt that training needs in the sector are already known and that the problem is low take up and we therefore need to focus on addressing the barriers that prevent people from accessing the training. *“The issue is addressing those organisations that are not willing to invest either the time or money in their staff.”*

A range of issues were identified as barriers to training. *“Cost time and location are often barriers.”* A number of respondents suggested that we should take more

advantage of existing training on offer, specifically that provided by AMA and one respondent asked whether distance learning models could be explored.

New media and social networking emerged as a clear priority for future training programmes and other areas felt to be of importance were:

- Marketing skills and strategic marketing
- Data analysis and interpretation/segmentation
- Basics of marketing for new staff/non marketing staff
- Ticketing

Alternative suggestions included offering funding to each individual organisation to develop and deliver their own training programmes and report on these to us.

We received a range of responses to how future programmes should be delivered in Wales. A number of respondents suggested regional clusters, most asked that training include a mix of trainers both from and external to Wales and people who attend training should pass the learning on to the sector in some form.

At least one respondent suggested that Creative Wales should be opened up to include marketing professionals, thus raising the profile of this important work and again there was general agreement that we should avoid what is already available.

A number of suggestions were put forward on how we might ensure greater take up of training opportunities. Amongst these, offering financial support appeared as the most prominent – subsidised places and travel support being referred to specifically. Training needs to be affordable, good and relevant were also mentioned and the need to change perceptions, within the sector about marketing generally was referred to by more than one respondent.

Marketing needs to be recognised as a core business function. One respondent expressed a concern that we referred to the workforce as transient, stating that we have a cohort of very experienced staff in Wales. Future training needs to take account of both the needs of these staff and staff in the early part of their careers.

**Our response:** We will give more thought to what would be gained by undertaking a training needs analysis. We will also increase our knowledge of what is currently being offered by other providers. We do not want to duplicate provision and we will explore the possibility of subsidising the provision of training in Wales.

When we establish our Regional Networking events we will look at how these could incorporate a training element.

We propose to draw up a training plan for the sector that will address the needs identified, through a mix of pre-existing programmes and new initiatives.

## 5. Public information services

Our consultation document posed four questions:

- Do you agree that Wales needs a publicly funded one-click arts events listing web site or are there commercial alternatives?
- Are shared social marketing services a priority for arts Council investment and how can they complement arts organisations that are developing their own skills in these areas?
- Is the continuation of a 'prospects database' still considered of value to the sector?
- Is it correct to consider leaflet distribution services for the arts as a low priority for public sector investment?

This section of our proposal document received an almost unanimous response. With all but a handful of organisations stating the view that Wales does not need a publicly funded one-click arts events listing – *“we do not believe that this is how people search for what they want to see/go to”*. The majority of respondents felt that this should not be a priority when resources are limited and that visitors are more inclined to use social media to find events or to visit individual organisations web-sites.

The opposing view put forward was that this is important because it is the only arts dedicated, bi-lingual web site and a recognisable brand. It also provides a service for small venues with no web or social media.

There were mixed views expressed around sharing of social marketing services, though once again more said no to this than yes. The most common view put forward was that social media reflects and “individual” voice so sharing would be inappropriate.

A number of respondents commented that whilst not supporting a shared service they would appreciate training in effective use of social media and one respondent commented that “sharing ” should focus on one central campaign for arts in Wales.

One respondent pointed out that Arts Council should be leading the way on social media and that any future development around this should be part of a pan-Wales digital strategy, that would address problems of access and reach.

We received mixed responses to the question around continuation of a 'prospects database'. Those in support suggested that it is a useful means of encouraging potential customers, whereas those against felt that it was of limited use.

One strong argument against its continuation was that social media allows contact with potential customers at a fraction of the cost. Concerns were also raised about whether the database was up to date enough to be useful (*"we have not seen much evidence of the current database being kept up to date"*) and a handful of respondents expressed surprise that such a database existed. Whilst respecting the views of those who offered their thoughts on this we are at the same time mindful of the fact that the database is updated annually and the lack of awareness of the database could be due to the fact that it operates in South East and South West Wales only.

Those in support of the database suggested it was useful to touring companies and organisations who do not have databases and information was shared with us that showed the database had provided 65,000 'prospects' in 2009-10.

The majority of respondents who responded to this question agreed that leaflet distribution should be left to commercial organisations and not be publicly subsidised.

**Our Response:** There were mixed responses to the question of whether we should be prioritising public funding to support a One-Click arts events listing, leaflet distribution or the continuation of a prospects database. The majority of opinion was against us providing continued public funding for any of these.

It is not a matter for us as to whether these services should continue to be made available to the sector. However, with competing priorities for public funds, Council has made the decision that we will no longer prioritise these services.

Social media clearly emerged as a priority for the sector and we now need to develop plans to expand its use.

## 6. Flexible grant scheme funding

Our consultation document posed one question:

- Should audience development schemes only be funded if they include collaboration and partnership between a minimum number of organisations?

The majority of respondents were against this idea. All the respondents were fully supportive of partnership working and collaboration but felt that this should be encouraged not forced – *“you can’t shoehorn organisations together when there’s no natural fit.”* One respondent suggested that we could be more pro-active in this as we have an overview of projects and developments and could therefore bring organisations together. Examples of successful collaborations and partnership working were shared in the responses and we were encouraged to use these as we move forward. There was a strong feeling that schemes should be flexible.

One respondent suggested that it was more important to build skills sharing outcomes in to the development schemes and to ensure that the results of such schemes are disseminated to the sector. Another respondent suggested that development schemes should be funded for longer than 1 year, ideally 3, if they are to be given a chance of success. There was also a suggestion that we should allow multiple applications from that take the lead in partnership projects.

**Our response:** We will give more thought as to whether we should only fund audience development projects that include collaboration and partnership working. We agree that we need to be pro-active in encouraging collaborative working and in our view the application of funding is an effective way of achieving this. We may need to consider taking a more strategic approach to how we manage the funds available for this area of development. We agree that it would be beneficial to build skills sharing and dissemination of the results into the awarding of funds.

## 7. Other Comments

Many of the respondents offered a range of additional comments and thoughts on our paper. Several commented that they would have liked us to have more clearly defined what we meant by audience development, marketing and publicity, commenting that at times they felt we oversimplified the sector or confused these very different areas of work.

It was also suggested that we could have offered a more detailed analysis of the current situation, drawing on some of the very detailed research and data we have compiled over the last year/eighteen months. One respondent also expressed an interest in knowing and feeding in to the development of research strategy, stating the view that there was a natural link between audience development and research.

There was a view offered that the proposals could have been set more clearly in the context of a bilingual Wales – Welsh language and culture having distinct issues within audience development.

One respondent suggested that we could have more of a focus on sustaining and retaining audiences, feeling that our proposals lean more to developing new audiences. Another suggested that we should be doing more to promote marketing as a profession within the arts sector in Wales.

Partnership was a key theme that respondents returned to many times. There were suggestions that we could develop more collaborative working between the private and public sector. Sharing resources across the sector could help address issues around low pay and qualifications. We were pleased to receive a number of offers of help, support and ways in which we could work in partnership with others in the sector.

One respondent also suggested that we could look beyond our own role in terms of taking this agenda forward and develop a strategy that encompasses Local Authorities, commercial sector, Universities, amateur and community bodies and the non-funded sector.

**Our response:** We agree that the consultation paper made certain assumptions about our common understandings of the sector and it would have been helpful had we more clearly defined audience development and marketing. We will take this into account when we publish our final development plans.

Judging by the very detailed and informed responses we received, we are not convinced that the paper would have benefited from the inclusion of a detailed analysis of our current situation. We will consider sharing our research plans.

We accept that the paper did not address issues around Welsh language and we will take this into account as we develop our final plans.

We are very keen to work collaboratively ourselves and to promote partnership working across the sector. We have some very helpful suggestions and models that we will incorporate in our plans. We do not however agree that we should expand our development plans to incorporate the wider sector as proposed. The purpose of the consultation was to share thinking around our development work going forward.

## Concluding comments

We received a very comprehensive response to our proposals for the future development of audiences and marketing which included a number of helpful proposals, working models and partnership opportunities for us to consider.

There are areas of agreement across the sector, with only one or two dissenting voices, that have clearly shown the direction of travel. This is particularly the case with the role of national companies and key performing arts venues, the events listing, the prospects database and leaflet distribution.

We have some very clear messages about priorities for future training and support for the sector and will now build a training plan based on these. The plan will take account of the equally strong message that we work with existing providers and do not attempt to replace or duplicate provision.

We will continue to hold our Marketing Symposium annually and will complement this with a programme of Regional Networking events.

The section on data management was perhaps the most contentious in terms of the range of responses we received. However, we do feel that we now have a sense of affirmation that this is the way forward although we accept that we will need to work very closely with the sector to make this work.