

**Year of the Artist – Evaluation of the programme in England
Research report 26, by Lucy Hutton and Clare Fenn**

Executive summary

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Background

Year of the Artist ran from June 2000 to May 2001. Over 1,000 artists were commissioned to work in residencies in 1,000 places. It was the first such national project run collaboratively by all 10 Regional Arts Boards (RABs).¹

The objectives of Year of the Artist were:

- to deliver a national promotional vehicle demonstrating the contribution of artists to the creativity and well-being of communities
- to increase public awareness of the positive role played by the artist in society
- to introduce the arts and artists to new sectors, partners and locations
- to enrol the media as partners as well as commentators
- to deliver lasting opportunities for artists creatively, structurally and financially
- to extend opportunities for artists to experiment and replenish their creative energy
- to help expand the arts economy and support attempts to create new opportunities for employing artists, including campaigns to improve the economic status of the arts and artists

An important principle agreed for Year of the Artist was a rate of pay for artists of £150 per day. 'Artists' were defined as 'professional practitioners... involved in the creation of work in any art form' and 'residency' was defined as 'an artist or group of artists... working in or responding to a particular place or context'.

Nationally Year of the Artist was managed by the 10 RABs, who set up a separate company, Arts2000, to manage the year on their behalf. Arts2000 was responsible for the national promotion of YOTA. An Artists' Think Tank put forward artists' viewpoints to the Board of Arts2000. The Arts Council of England was represented at meetings of the Board of Arts2000 and at planning meetings between the national office of Arts2000 and the YOTA coordinators. At a regional level YOTA was run by coordinators and supported by Regional Artists' Advisory Groups (RAAGs).

The Year of the Artist's management framework was designed by the RABs as an attempt to work beyond regional boundaries in the interests of the artist. As such, it was the first time that RABs had tackled the management of a specific project on a national basis.

¹ On 1 April 2002 the Arts Council of England and the 10 Regional Arts Boards joined together to form a single development organisation for the arts. All the evaluations used in this report refer to before 1 April 2002, so we have used the term 'Regional Arts Boards' when referring to that period.

Regional variations in the way the RABs ran Year of the Artist were seen as both a strength of the year and as making effective national coordination more difficult. RABs devoted different levels of funding and staff resources to the year as well as building in their own regional priorities.

The opportunity for artists at a regional and national level to get involved in planning Year of the Artist was seen as enormously positive and adding credibility to the year. The regional coordinators were able to devote a large amount of time to working directly with, and for, artists. Artists and administrators were very keen that this level of support and advice be continued in the future.

Surrounding context

The 12 months from June 2000 to May 2001 saw some of the worst weather experienced in recent times, with widespread flooding in parts of the country. A crisis in the train network following the Hatfield crash led to an 'emergency timetable' being imposed across the country and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth among livestock saw travel to and within rural locations prevented in a bid to prevent the spread of the disease. These setbacks prevented some projects from starting on time and in many cases made travelling to meetings or residencies very difficult.

However, some artists were able to overcome these pitfalls to continue to produce excellent work. In doing so they demonstrated the value of the arts in involving communities, engaging a wider audience and playing their part in processes of regeneration (Review, 2001).

It should also be noted that in 1998 the Arts Council was involved in an internal restructure. In March 2001 the announcement was made that the arts funding system as a whole was to be restructured, integrating the Arts Council and RABs into one organisation. This development may have influenced opinions expressed during the evaluation process. On 1 April 2002 the Arts Council of England and the 10 Regional Arts Boards joined together to form a single development organisation for the arts.

The application process

As much information as possible about Year of the Artist was given to the artists before applying. Regional seminars and workshops were held by a number of RABs and a £30,000 advertising campaign was run by Arts2000.

- Overall, 2,587 applications were received, of which 32% were given funding
- The successful projects were drawn from all art forms
- A third of awards went to visual artists

There were mixed views about the language of the application form among those involved in coordinating the year. Evaluation of the application process commissioned by Northern Arts reported that two-thirds of artists found the form difficult to fill in. Individual artists were less likely than organisations to be

successful and were more likely to suffer problems as a result of delays in the application process. Findings from this interim evaluation suggest that more support needs to be given to individuals throughout the application process and that application processes need to be up and running as early as possible. A clear lesson from the evaluation of the year was that the application form could have been much clearer and easier to fill in.

In terms of overall selection of residencies, the RABs retained flexibility to allocate funds according to their own priorities. In individual RABs, therefore, selection was led by priorities such as geographical spread or cultural diversity. Each RAB also employed different selection processes – some RABs used a system of lead officers for each project and some allowed applicants rejected in the first round to reapply following feedback from assessing officers. A positive aspect of the application process was the active involvement of the Regional Artists' Advisory Groups. This allowed artists to feel they were being judged by their peers.

Funding

Including sponsorship, approximately £4.2 million was spent directly on individual artists' projects during Year of the Artist (Press pack, 2001).

- The Arts Council of England committed £3.5 million of lottery funds to YOTA, which was delegated to the RABs, and funded the national office of Arts2000 on an annual revenue basis of £75,000 to £100,000 for four years
- Arts2000 also received £715,000 from the New Millennium Experience Company
- Nine RABs used grant-in-aid and other funding to provide a budget for YOTA over and above the lottery money they each received from the Arts Council. Each of the 10 RABs also provided a one-off payment of £15,000 to support the national office of Arts2000
- The Arts Council was responsible for agreeing mechanisms of funding including the terms of the distribution of the YOTA funds and the priorities adopted for each region

Year of the Artist was successful at unlocking additional monies and thereby expanding the arts economy:

- 50% of funding for projects came from Year of the Artist awards
- 17% was from other sources of public funding
- 34% was from non-public sources

Although a rate for artists of £150 a day was recommended, in some cases it was found that artists whose projects ran into financial difficulties 'subsidised' their residencies by taking a cut in fees.

Summary of outcomes

A key aim of Year of the Artist – achieving 1,000 artists in 1,000 places – was surpassed. The final report forms, received from 62% of all projects funded, record 2,397 artists working on Year of the Artist. These artists were working on 980 projects (Breaking the Barriers, 2001) which took place in 1,500 places (Press pack, 20016).

The 608 final report forms completed by artists showed that activities taking place during the year included:

- over 34,000 artist days
- over 15,500 public presentations or exhibition days
- over 7,500 participatory sessions
- over 1,400 educational activities

Of the experience for the artists themselves:

- 81% of artists had the opportunity to work in a new setting
- 71% entered into a new collaboration with other artists
- 69% had the opportunity to use new or different facilities
- 26,579 pieces of new work were produced

The national audience figure recorded by the final report forms received from artists was just over 14 million. Some projects which took place in broadcast, internet or public art contexts did not provide audience figures. It is likely these projects would have generated additional audiences or viewer figures of several million.

Residencies were based in a range of locations, from an abandoned hospital to a Youth Hostel. Over half (52%) of artists specifically stated they would work in a residency again, as did 41% of the hosts.

Key benefits generated by YOTA for artists were identified as:

Economic:

- significant funding for some artists
- the daily rate highlighted the need for fair pay for artists

Artistic:

- a chance to develop their practice in new ways
- a rare chance for performing artists to apply to work individually

Professional:

- YOTA gave participating artists confidence in their own planning and management skills
- it enabled artists to gain experience of dealing with host organisations and to develop marketing skills

There was also a new partnership brokered in the overall management of the scheme – the first time all 10 RABs had worked together on a national scheme.

Future developments

Year of the Artist is being taken forward by the funding system with a range of initiatives:

For individual artists:

- improved and increased funding
- improved terms and conditions of work and rates of pay
- mentoring schemes and bursaries
- a task group working across the arts funding system has been established to develop and take forward policies to support individual artists
- an international artists' fellowship scheme has been established

Building on successful residency models:

- the establishment of standard contracts between artist and host
- training and information sessions are being planned to disseminate good practice

Building on partnerships:

- several Regional Offices have stated their intention to continue their work in brokering partnerships
- Arts & Business has awarded funds to allow some residencies to continue
- academic work with universities on evaluation and development will continue

Involving artists in decision-making processes:

- discussions are taking place in several Regional Offices about how artists' advisory groups can be taken forward
- the artist-led evaluation of the application process commissioned by Northern Arts will be used when planning future schemes

Economic status of artists:

- the Arts Council has commissioned research into artists' labour markets which will be used to inform the debate about the economic status of artists

- the guidelines on pay established by YOTA are being used in future negotiations
- several Regional Offices are negotiating for the minimum wage for artists to be adopted on their funded projects

Research and development:

- the success of Yorkshire Art's research and development grants has led to the funding being adopted into its mainstream development programmes

Lessons to be learned

Lessons to be learned can be grouped under three main headings:

For individual artists:

- the need for financial training for support from project managers, to prevent artists subsidising their practice
- including artists in planning initiatives was successful and could be built upon
- the arts funding system should decrease the demands that the application processes place on individuals
- the arts funding system should consider enabling administrators to spend more time working on behalf of individual artists

Residencies:

- training, information and support should be offered to artists and hosts to improve the outcomes of residencies
- with time-limited projects, expectations of continuity need to be managed and exit strategies should be planned from the start

The programme:

- terminology and concepts should accurately reflect the aims of a project
- sufficient planning time should be allowed for major projects
- evaluation and legacy should be planned from the start
- when working collaboratively, management structures, roles and responsibilities and the location of decision-making need to be clarified in the earliest stages

raising general public awareness is very difficult. Targeting specific sections of the audience might be a more effective strategy