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INFORMATION SHEET

Supporting Practitioners

For arts organisations, libraries and museums working with individual creative and cultural practitioners and freelancers.

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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

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This information is also available in audio, BSL, Easy Read and large print formats. If you require it in an alternative format, like Braille, please [get in touch](#).

Introduction

This information sheet sets out our expectations for all cultural organisations who work with creative and cultural practitioners. It suggests good practice approaches to consider, and other resources you could refer to.

We use 'creative and cultural practitioners' and 'freelancers' interchangeably throughout this document. These expectations and good practice approaches apply to all freelance or self-employed practitioners working in the cultural sector, including those who work in creative, specialist, educational, technical or administrative roles. Where these principles do not directly apply to your situation, you should consider how you can use them to ensure you are working with and supporting freelancers to the best of your ability.

The cultural ecology is at its best when creative and cultural practitioners and organisations work together to achieve incredible creative and cultural experiences.

Creative and cultural practitioners bring independent vision and ideas, offer highly developed specialist skills, and often work closely in and with communities. Organisations set out their own vision and mission, can draw on more substantial financial and human resources, and build long-term, ongoing relationships with their audiences, visitors, participants, and local communities. Both practitioners and organisations are needed for our culture sector to thrive and grow.

Cultural organisations are often the providers of work and opportunities for freelancers. We want to ensure that organisations are clear on our expectations when working with creative and cultural practitioners, and that freelancers are able to collaborate with organisations in ways that help them to build sustainable careers.

In our Delivery Plan for 2021-24, we have committed to funding creative and cultural organisations that will provide more equitable and transparent support for creative and cultural practitioners and offer clear progression routes into and through the industry. We expect all the organisations we fund to consider how they can better support the freelancers the sector relies on. We are doing the same to ensure that the Arts Council listens to, consults with, and better supports creative and cultural practitioners.

If you are a creative or cultural practitioner, you may find it useful to read our accompanying information sheet for practitioners.

Recruiting and working with creative and cultural practitioners

Recruiting creative and cultural practitioners

When looking to recruit a creative and cultural practitioner to work on a particular project or opportunity, it is important to recognise that responding to briefs or commissions can take up a lot of a freelancer's time with a risk of being unsuccessful. You should think about how you can limit the time and resource needed to respond to a commission, as well as how you can expand and diversify the pool of freelancers you work with. For example, you could consider some or all of the following approaches:

- fully developing and testing your brief or commission before asking for submissions from freelancers to make sure it's viable. You should think about the about the level of work expected for a freelancer to respond to your commission or brief and whether this is proportionate to the size of the project
 - a lower cost commission might not need a multi-stage process. It may be helpful to clarify the level of work you expect from the initial response or application
- thinking about how you can maintain existing relationships with creative and cultural practitioners while also seeking new talent to work with and support. You may also want to consider how you can support freelancers who are living or working in your locality, with whom you don't already have a relationship. This may inform how you approach recruitment for opportunities
- clarifying key information upfront, such as expected timescales, budget (rough or exact), delivery expectations, and the proposed payment schedule
- thinking about the experience of creative and cultural practitioners who you are inviting to join a 'pool' and to whom you expect to offer opportunities
 - how you will review the pool, and in what timeframe
 - the potential and likelihood of practitioners in your pool being offered paid activity

- if/how members will be removed from the pool; and
- what a fair and transparent approach to inclusion for all pool members might look like
- allowing sufficient time for freelancers to respond to your commission and allowing additional time or reasonable adjustments for those with access requirements
- considering an 'expression of interest' stage, to minimise the amount of work freelancers will need to complete in order to respond to the commission
- budgeting to support any access requirements and making it clear in the brief that you are doing so
- notifying unsuccessful applicants as quickly as possible
- considering whether you can offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants and making it clear if you will not be able to do so

Working with creative and cultural practitioners

We would encourage you to think about ways you can ensure that creative and cultural practitioners are able to deliver effectively during the contract. For example:

- showing freelancers around the building or workspace, and making sure they can access any equipment they'll need
- introducing them to staff and other workers across your organisation, not just the team they'll be working with
- ensuring that appropriate safeguarding checks have taken place, where necessary, and that the freelancer has read and understood the safeguarding policy for your organisation
- similarly, making sure that freelancers know how they can raise a concern or flag an issue during or following their work with you, and that those procedures are followed properly and fairly
- updating your policies and procedures to directly refer to freelancers, and ensuring that they are relevant to, and use consistent language in relation to, freelancers
 - for example in your complaints policy, conflict of interest policy, safeguarding policy

- putting processes in place to monitor how much time freelancers are spending on your project, and making sure you have agreed an approach for if they're nearing agreed maximum hours
- when re-contracting freelancers, making sure they are aware of any relevant changes in your organisation, including changes which may impact on the number or regularity of opportunities they may be offered
- including freelancers in company-wide events, training, opportunities, benefits, discount schemes, and meetings, as appropriate, particularly when they are working with you for a long period of time

In the event of any changes to the organisation or project that mean that freelancers' services are no longer required, or that mean you have decided to take a different approach to working with freelancers in the future, we expect organisations to treat creative and cultural practitioners fairly and transparently.

Organisations and freelancers should consider including a 'cancellation clause' in the contract to protect both parties' interests should the contract need to be ended early. You should consider how you can support freelancers through the process, recognising that ending contracts or changing your approach can be a difficult experience for all involved.

Working with entry-level and early career practitioners

We are committed to funding arts organisations, libraries and museums that offer clear progression routes into and through the industry. We recognise that there are a range of routes into the sector and encourage organisations to consider how they can support entry-level and early career practitioners.

We also recognise that practitioners from under-represented backgrounds, including those from lower socio-economic groups, can find it particularly difficult to enter the sector or to access certain opportunities. We want the cultural sector, and the creative and cultural practitioners that make up almost half of its workforce, to be representative of contemporary England.

Work experience and industry placements

Organisations in the creative and cultural sector offer a range of ways that children and young people can have their first taste of the industry. This can include: through work experience and industry placements, or through more formal education or training opportunities such as internships and apprenticeships.

You should consider how you:

- can ensure that any opportunities are available to those who are currently under-represented in the sector
- will ensure that the individual's experience is genuinely beneficial to their career interests and aims, and that it offers them an insight into the workings of the cultural sector

Work experience, industry placements and some entry-level opportunities, could be the individual's first experience of the workplace. They may need some support to learn what to expect, and what is expected of them, while in the workplace. For example, they may not have experienced activities that are seen as a routine part of work, such as writing emails, making phone calls or talking to staff or others from different backgrounds to their own.

Entry-level and early career practitioners

You may wish to set out briefs or opportunities explicitly aimed at entry-level or early career practitioners. You should consider how you can reach practitioners who are under-represented in the sector and encourage them to apply or respond to the opportunity.

When setting out your brief or criteria for an entry-level or early career practitioner, you should consider whether traditional requirements, such as educational requirements or qualifications, are truly needed for the work. You may find it useful to consider the attitudes, behaviours, and level of skill required for an opportunity that is aimed at entry-level or early career practitioners and to frame your criteria around those attributes.

With support from Arts Council England, Creative and Cultural Skills have created [A Best Practice Guide to Apprenticeships, Internships and Volunteering](#). We encourage cultural organisations to adhere to the guidelines set out in this document when employing apprentices or interns, or when offering work experience opportunities.

Fair pay

We are committed to making sure those who work in the cultural sector are properly and fairly paid. We expect that organisations and projects funded by us ensure that fees for artists, creatives and specialists are in line with, or better than, recognised codes of practice and guidelines set by the relevant lead bodies.

When you employ someone on a contract or freelance basis, you should agree the expected number of hours needed to complete the activity, which should include research, development and planning (including attending meetings with you, where relevant) as well as delivery. As part of this process, you should consider how you will ensure that the freelancer is recompensed if they work beyond the agreed number of hours.

You should also consider that self-employed practitioners are responsible for their own tax and National Insurance contributions, overheads, travel, and equipment, and often do not receive holiday or sick pay, when negotiating an appropriate fee. You should refer to the appropriate industry guidance for further detail on what's included in the advised rates of pay.

You should ensure that individual creative and cultural practitioners are paid promptly and in line with the agreed schedule. You may wish to consider signing up to the [Prompt Payment Code](#), or applying its requirements to your own practices. You could consider an upfront or early payment of a proportion of the total fee.

For further detail on our fair pay expectations, and links to industry-specific websites and organisations which offer advice on rates of pay for artists and those working in the arts, cultural and creative industries, please see our [Equality and Fair Pay Information sheet](#) for National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Investment Principles Support Organisations (IPSOs) or our [Project Grants and Fair Pay](#) information sheet. We strongly encourage the organisations and projects we fund to ensure that their fees are in line with the advised rates of pay.

Supporting creative and cultural practitioners

Cultural organisations can play an important role in helping creative and cultural practitioners form relationships with their local community and network with the wider creative and cultural community. Organisations can also help freelancers to develop awareness of, and access, sector assets such as equipment and resources, and training and development opportunities.

Alongside offering paid opportunities and commissioning practitioners to deliver projects, organisations should consider how they could support creative and cultural practitioners through providing resources or offering time. For example, this could include:

- allowing practitioners to use spaces while they are unused, such as desk space, or rehearsal or meeting rooms
- giving practitioners access to equipment they might not ordinarily have access to, or to equipment that they only need to use occasionally
- training practitioners to use technical equipment safely, such as construction equipment
- offering the use of organisational resources such as printers, computers, and Wi-Fi
- enabling freelancers to access training and development opportunities that are available to staff in your organisation
- supporting practitioners to network through brokering connections or offering a space for a networking event

- offering staff time to help or advise practitioners on certain aspects of their practice or business, such as marketing or digital, or offering mentoring and shadowing opportunities

We encourage all organisations to consider what they can practically and helpfully offer to support creative and cultural practitioners to establish, develop or sustain their careers. This should not be a replacement for paid work, but it could form part of an organisation's wider offer for freelancers.

Equity when working with freelancers

While there are many advantages to self-employment, it can also be precarious. Organisations should bear this in mind when working with creative and cultural practitioners.

We expect organisations to embed our [Investment Principles](#) throughout their practice, including when working with creative and cultural practitioners. In particular, you should consider how the Inclusivity & Relevance principle can be applied in all aspects of your work with freelancers and help to address barriers that limit opportunities for freelancers with protected characteristics and from under-represented backgrounds.

We encourage you to consider how you can embed the needs and ambitions of creative and cultural practitioners more broadly in your thinking and as you carry out your work. For example, this could include:

- including creative and cultural practitioners on your board, and ensuring that at least one board member space is reserved for a freelancer
- developing a written statement about how you work with freelancers and publishing it on your website
- consulting with local creative and cultural practitioners in your planning and programming
- reserving a regular, paid space in your programme for freelancers to showcase their work
- encouraging freelancers to ask for your advice or support when they need it
- reserving tickets for creative and cultural practitioners to visit your venue or see your work

- helping creative and cultural practitioners to connect with other organisations and brokering connections with potential new clients
- considering whether local freelancers can benefit from a discount if you are bulk-purchasing resources or equipment

Other useful resources

The Covid-19 pandemic saw major progress in developing networks and bringing freelancers together to produce a range of resources to enable organisations to best support individual creative and cultural practitioners. Several organisations have also shared their best practice resources for working with freelancers.

We have drawn on a range of documents and resources to put together this information sheet. We encourage you to read the below resources for further detail about many of the issues outlined above:

[Policy for the Employment of Freelancers](#)

ARC Stockton

[Project Grants and Fair Pay](#)

Arts Council England

[Working with the Self-Employed](#)

Creative and Cultural Skills

[Creative Freelancers](#)

Creative Industries Federation

[Mind the Understanding Gap: The Value of Creative Freelancers](#)

Creative United

[The Big Freelancer Report](#)

Freelancers Make Theatre Work

[Big Freelancer Report 2023](#)

Freelancers Make Theatre Work

[Working with Freelancers](#)

Group for Education in Museums

[Working Guidance for Arts Freelancers and Organisations](#)

March for the Arts

[Working with Freelancers resources](#)

South West Museum Development

[10 Principles for Safe and Inclusive Workspaces](#)

UK Theatre/SOLT

[Freelance: Futures](#)

Resources from online events delivered by a freelancer-led consortium

[Organisational Change Toolkit](#)

Freelance: Futures

[Creating Equitable Working Conditions](#)

Freelance: Futures

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