



Working with our National portfolio

Our National portfolio organisations represent some of the best arts practice in the world today. They are our most significant strategic partners – and we want every National portfolio organisation to collaborate with us to deliver our mission.

Ambition, artistic exploration and pioneering spirit are a prerequisite. We expect and support inspirational leadership and recognise that this can take many forms – in producing ground breaking art; in inspiring and mentoring a new generation; in providing civic leadership and helping to create a sense of place with communities; in challenging orthodoxy.

The portfolio is made up of a rich variety of organisations across the country, reflecting the quality and excellence of the arts in England. These organisations differ in size, artform practice, business model and governance but they all play a role in achieving our long-term goals for the arts.

Of course we understand that the National portfolio – no matter how extraordinary – cannot be expected to deliver all our goals for the arts and these 696 organisations represent only part of the vibrant ecology and economy of the arts in England. The Arts Council has a role to play beyond the organisations we directly fund, and we aspire to work with organisations from across the commercial, public and voluntary sector to develop and champion the collective impact of the whole arts ecology. Alongside our National portfolio investment we will use [Grants for the arts](#), [strategic funding](#) and our development function to fill the gaps that the portfolio, on its own, cannot hope to address.

How the National portfolio will contribute to our goals

Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated

Through the portfolio, we invest in and support organisations that exemplify the production and presentation of great art from large scale venues such as Sadler's Wells, Aldeburgh Music, the Royal Opera House, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Royal Shakespeare Company to the mid scale powerhouses of Nottingham Contemporary, Northern Stage, Modern Art Oxford and The Tobacco Factory; from innovators such as High Tide, Punchdrunk, Kneehigh and Artichoke to influential small scale companies such as dreamthinkspeak and Aurora Orchestra and digital pioneers such as Resonance FM, Blast Theory and Artangel.

The reach of the portfolio internationally is critical to attracting talent to the country so we maintain and enhance England's role as a centre for artistic excellence. For example, artists such as Hofesh Schechter have established their market abroad with great skill, while our symphony orchestras have a hard-won, international standing. Companies such as the Royal Court and the Royal Ballet win critical acclaim abroad and drive tourism here and we support writing in translation through our investment in the British Centre for Translation and English Pen to ensure audiences have the chance to experience the best writing from around the world.

The National portfolio also plays a major role in developing talent. We have a wonderful platform for artists to shine provided by organisations such as the Sage in Gateshead, the Southbank Centre, the National Theatre and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. The Young Vic, Battersea Arts Centre, the UK Centre for Carnival Arts and Dance Xchange have been instrumental in supporting emerging companies, while The Writing Squad and Tomorrow's Warriors specialise in their talent development programmes. Many of our artistic leaders also give their time and expertise to mentor and nurture the next generation. We know there is work to do in proving a more coherent and nationwide approach for this talent development and we will be working with the portfolio over the next three years to achieve this, using successful schemes like [Escalator](#) as a blueprint.

We are clear that a diverse portfolio is one that is artistically richer and one that has more contemporary resonance. Disability-led and focused organisations that are strong in terms of artistic quality and reach are well represented. These include Tin Arts, Graeae, Deafinitely Theatre, Heart n Soul, Spare Tyre, First Movement, Candoco, Bobby Baker (Daily Life), Intoart and Julie McNamara. And there are a number of organisations that fulfil a national role in supporting and developing Deaf and disabled artists and audiences. These include: Attitude is Everything, Stagertext, Vocaleyeyes, Shape and Extent.

The portfolio also supports the excellent work of a number of culturally diverse artists and arts leaders through investment in ZendeH, Akram Khan, New Art Exchange, Chinese Arts Centre, Autograph, Bigga Fish, B3 Media, Arts Asia, the Otolith Group, Mahogany and many others. Musiko Musika, Darbar Arts Culture

Heritage Trust and Yarum Productions bring fresh thinking and excellence to the portfolio.

A number of venues and promoters have a strong and recognised track record in promoting the work of disabled and Deaf artists and in programming an artistically diverse offer such as Albany, Fabrica working with the New Wolsey and Project Art Works, Live Art Development Agency, Arnolfini, Oval House, Watford Palace, Kazzum, Theatre Royal Stratford and Action Space.

We believe that responding to major opportunities, such as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to showcase talent and build audiences for excellent art is important. National portfolio organisations will continue to play a large role in these celebrations, creating outstanding moments of shared artistic magic. Some, such as Pacitti Company, are currently working on our 2012 flagship project [Artists taking the lead](#) and, with many others, are at the forefront of ambitious plans for the [Cultural Olympiad](#).

More people experience and are inspired by the arts

Organisations in the National portfolio are encouraged, if not sometimes required, to reach areas that currently have low levels of arts participation.

Companies such as Clean Break, Cardboard Citizens, Metal, Eastside Arts, Emergency Exit Arts and new entrants Streetwise Opera, People United and Entelechy Arts work in areas of under provision with those who may not generally participate in the arts. These organisations represent best practice and we will seek to ensure that what they've learnt from these experiences is shared across the portfolio.

There is important investment in England's touring portfolio across all artforms including English Touring Theatre, Artichoke, English National Ballet, Gecko, Wayne McGregor | Random Dance, Crying Out Loud, Mahogany, Protein Dance, Film & Video Umbrella, English Touring Opera, Red Earth and the Royal Philharmonic. In the Midlands and the South West there will be total area coverage for rural touring circuit and in the North, there is also a strong commitment, with enhanced funding for National Forum for Rural Touring Circuit to enable them to take a leadership role. In the East and South East, our investment supports HOUSE, a consortium of performing arts promoters.

Producers such as Fuel, Crying Out Loud, Bureau of Silly Ideas and Dash are also key contributors to this country's successful touring ecology. The Arts Council will work with successful companies and promoters to improve coverage and build relationships between venues and promoters and producers of work.

There is a focus in this portfolio on outdoor provision, festivals and carnival - organisations like East Midlands Caribbean Carnival Arts Network, Manchester International Festival, Brighton Dome and Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival, Artichoke and Imagineer that reach large numbers of people through excellent arts programming.

Digital is a powerful means to deepen engagement and potentially extend reach and we have invested in organisations using digital technology to deepen engagement such as Lighthouse, Watershed, Apples and Snakes, The Reading Agency, Coney, the National Theatre, the Bush, Furtherfield and the ICA. Nationally, we're strengthening the distribution of excellent art through digital platforms, though we know there is much more to do, including working with organisations outside the portfolio that have expertise in this fast growing area.

The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative

The development of resilience in the arts is a major, long-term project. Our [Catalyst Arts](#) programme will play a major role in supporting systemic change in both the culture of asking and the culture of giving, helping arts organisations attract more funding by increasing their fundraising potential and helping them to develop and explore innovative new approaches to securing private giving.

The Arts Council is also building partnerships of its own to support greater resilience and sustainability and we will work with our National portfolio organisations to encourage collaboration and connections with other public services.

Overall we will work with arts organisations to explore a range of new approaches including social enterprises, recoupment models and new alliances with the commercial sector as well as understanding the social value of our investment in arts organisations.

The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled

Our artists are, in many cases, world leaders in both artform and workforce development and in running major cultural institutions. We recognise that, if we are to achieve our ambitions in relation to this goal, we can only do so in partnership with them, wider industry and with the higher education and further education sectors.

Through our conversations and negotiations with the National portfolio we will recognise and formalise the contributions of our arts leaders, many of whom already offer mentoring support, associate programmes and a visible leadership role. We are already creating meaningful and valued opportunities for arts leadership cohorts to meet and work together to further our shared goals and objectives in this area and will continue to do so. In the North for example we are already discussing the idea of creating an internal market among the National portfolio organisation leadership where mentoring, sabbaticals and job exchanges would be encouraged, and enhanced through investment in the next generation of leaders through a programme of associate directors, curators and producers.

Joining the portfolio, the National Skills Academy, supported by industry membership, will play a national strategic role in supporting Arts Council in the delivery of its priority of creating equal opportunities to enter the arts workforce. We will ensure that other National portfolio organisations such as the Crafts Council, Engage and Shape are networked into the National Skills Academy so that their work can deliver maximum impact.

We will also use our relationships with the National portfolio to strengthen boards, develop skills and encourage great diversity to maintain creativity and innovation in the arts.

Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts

Many in the portfolio see their role in working with children and young people as critical and integral to their artistic mission and we are investing in them to support this. Performance work and programming by companies such as Oily Cart, balletLORENT, Ockhams Razor, Eastern Angles, Fevered Sleep, Protein, Oxford Playhouse and Spark Children's Art Festival provides the benchmark. We place

equal value on those that provide a sustained, regular engagement such as Cheshire Dance, 20 Stories High, Discover and LSO St Luke's.

For the first time in a portfolio, we have identified [Bridge](#) organisations, strategic children and young people's organisations, with £10 million of Lottery funding a year allocated to organisations that will provide a direct connection between the work produced by arts organisations and schools and communities in their area. We hope that these organisations will build on the work of Creative Partnerships and other programmes by working in schools, with arts organisations, and other children and family services to encourage artists into schools and to provide innovative and accessible ways for children and young people to experience the arts, both in and out of school. We believe that, over time, these Bridge organisations will become a major resource for the rest of the portfolio, helping to build partnerships, eliminate duplication and create new networks and communication channels.