

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



Project objectives and outcomes

The objective of this project was to establish an organised, though informal, network for charities and social enterprises that shares best practice, works collaboratively, supports one another, and engages partners to raise awareness of the wider benefits of artistic and cultural activity. The project used funding from the Arts Council of Wales' Sharing Together fund, and set out three actions to establish this network, including a re-engagement session to discuss expectations and needs of the group, establishing an online forum, and organising a virtual seminar.

The Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts (CTPNA) was successfully established as part of the Arts Council of Wales' Sharing Together Fund.

This project was managed by Community Leisure UK, a member association representing charities and social enterprises across public culture and leisure in Wales, England and Scotland.

Project progress and results

The re-engagement session took place on Monday 7 December 2020, leading to actions for effective collaboration by CTPNA members (see Appendix I for a summary). This session followed a seminar in January 2020 which identified the need for this project. The December 7th session was attended by 13 organisations.

The online forum was set up using the Slack platform after the re-engagement session, including different channels for thematic discussion, sharing of resources, introductions, queries, and options for polling. The Slack platform saw participation in December and shortly after Christmas. However, after initial introductions, a few queries and sharing of resources, engagement slowed down and it was concluded that the Slack platform was not the right way to connect as network participants preferred updates via email.

To replace this online forum, CTPNA has started the process of creating a shared contacts database. This database will include contact information of each network participant as well as areas that they can support others on (such as reviewing funding applications) and areas they would like support with (such as preparing an outdoor arts event).

With the permission of the Arts Council of Wales, instead of organising a virtual seminar, funding was used to facilitate four more networking sessions. Following the prolonged lockdown due to Covid-19, it was felt that these sessions would be a more effective way to achieve the intended outcome of sharing knowledge and experience and peer supporting with sustainable business models.

The topics of the meeting were modelled on the actions for effective collaboration as identified during the re-engagement session. An additional session on effective remote working was added following group feedback. These sessions took place on a weekly basis in late February and March 2021 with strong interest from CTPNA participants in each session – as detailed below.

Date	Topic
February 25	<p>Increasing Arts Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work under Covid19 – ways of keeping audiences and communities engaged: what worked and what did not work?• Experience of current funding programmes and what works / doesn't work <p><i>13 attendees.</i></p>

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



March 4	<p>Effective Remote Working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health of staff and volunteers • Best practice of remote stakeholder and staff engagement <p><i>7 attendees.</i></p>
March 11	<p>Strengthening business models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario planning – what to expect in the next 6-9 months, how to plan relevant events and activities, sharing of strategic aims and objectives • Inclusion of staff and volunteers in business planning <p><i>11 attendees, including representatives from Arts Council of Wales and Charity Finance Groups.</i></p>
March 18	<p>CTPNA in Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing the conversation on strengthening business models, including scenario planning and plans for future events/activities; • Sharing of best practice and/or previous challenges based on discussions in the first three sessions; • Scope and dates for future CTPNA meetings and work <p><i>6 attendees.</i></p>

Participation and network reach

The Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts was promoted in three different ways:

- 1) Community Leisure UK members and partners network;
- 2) Creu Cymru members' network;
- 3) Arts Council of Wales' news updates (website and newsletter)

This led to participation from two representative bodies (Creu Cymru, Welsh Local Government Association) and 19 Welsh charities and social enterprises working in the arts:

- Galeri Caernarfon
- Taliesin Arts Centre
- Conwy Arts Trust
- Venue Cymru
- Wellbeing@Merthyr
- SPAN Arts
- Newport Live
- Theatr Brycheiniog
- Aneurin Leisure
- Greenman Trust
- Music in Hospitals & Care
- Memo Arts Centre
- National Youth Arts Wales
- Congress Theatre
- Radiate Arts
- Y Ffestri
- Ensemble Cymru
- CARAD
- Awen Cultural Trust

The background of participants was diverse in terms of size of organisation, geographical location, and arts forms (ranging from theatre, cinema, visual art, festivals, music, dance, creative workshops to community arts).

Network sustainability

CTPNA is modelled on the Special Interest Groups that Community Leisure UK already runs for its membership. Therefore, the network can now self-manage, with back-office support from Community Leisure UK where needed.

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



Following the establishment of a contacts database, a rotating Chair schedule will be created as agreed by the group, where every meeting is led by a different member.

The group agreed to meet on a quarterly basis, with topics from the February and March meetings to be the standing agenda items. The next meeting is scheduled for May 27th. Each organisation will have the opportunity to suggest additional agenda items ahead of each meeting. All of this has been recorded in a Terms of Reference document for CTPNA, which has been drafted and is currently under review by the group (see Appendix II).

Financial overview

After seeking approval from the Arts Council of Wales, more resources have been spent on network meetings and management due to the changed actions, as outlined below. Less resource went to the administration of the online forum as later in the project it became clear that email communication was more effective, and the group has started the process of setting up a separate online database.

BUDGET November 2020 - March 2021		
EXPENSE	AMOUNT	NOTES
Re-engagement session: administration	£200.00	Facilitator compensation for Community Leisure UK to bring together participants, organise and lead the meeting.
Online Forum: set up and administration	£500.00	Facilitator compensation for Community Leisure UK to scope, set up, and moderate the best online platform.
Network meetings	£1,000.00	Facilitator compensation for Community Leisure UK to prepare and manage four 1.5-hour networking sessions.
Network management	£133.00	Facilitator compensation for Community Leisure UK to support network participants in formalising the network through briefings, creation of a contacts database, and terms of reference for the group.
Translation Fees	£17.00	Using Fiverr for translation service. \$23 fee for translating slides from English to Welsh for the re-engagement session. The free Helo Blod service from the Welsh Government has also been used to translate our invitation to the wider sector to join the network, as published on the ACW news page.
Total	£1,850.00	

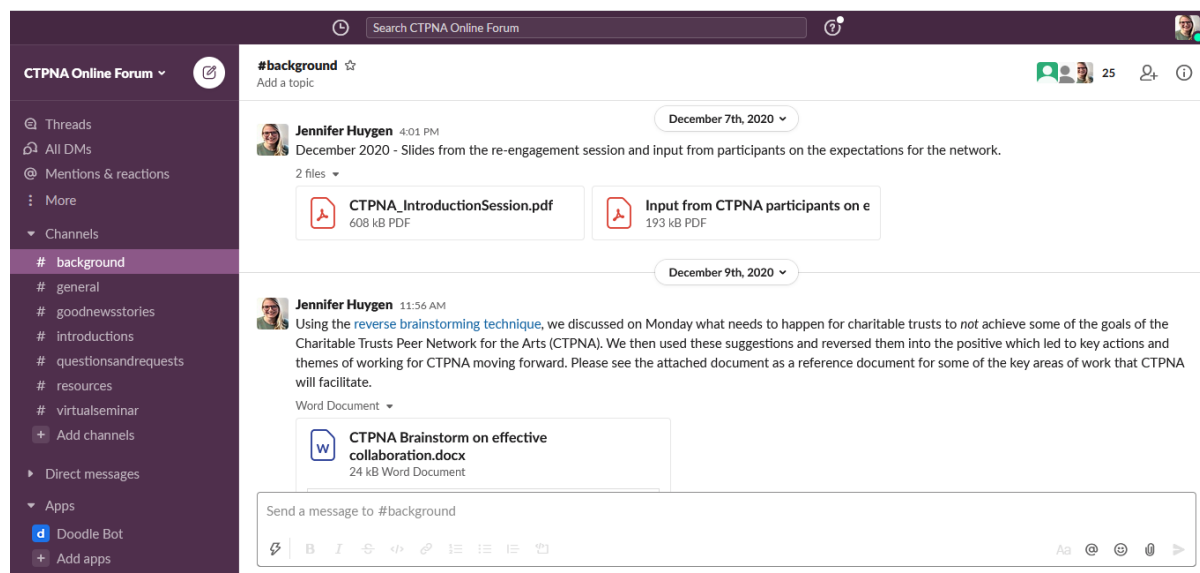
Challenges, learning and conclusion

While the use of a digital means to communicate was essential (not only due to Covid-19 restrictions but also due to the diversity of the group, especially their spread across Wales), the online forum was not as successful as originally planned for. Participants were willing to try this out, and consequently a full platform has been set up as pictured below, but the digital skills of participants were too different for the platform to work. In addition to the different digital skills,

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts

participants also had different experiences with different systems (some being more used to Microsoft packages, others to G-Suite, or to Dropbox or Basecamp). Finding a middle ground therefore was challenging.

Picture 1: Screenshot of the CTPNA online forum on Slack, including overview of different discussion channels



However, there was still a need for participants to connect outside of meetings, which is why the group shifted to starting an online database. The need for such a database became apparent during the additional networking meetings in February and March 2021 where various participants asked Community Leisure UK to be introduced to other participants via email to follow up on a discussion and to share promised resources to support others in their work.

Finally, for the network participants to get to know each other, to build trust for future collaboration, and to encourage the sharing of resources, more time together during meetings was needed than originally planned. It is one of the reasons the project shifted from organising a virtual seminar to organising more discussion sessions (the other reason being mainly that due to a prolonged lockdown business planning had changed and needed time and space to be discussed to help organisations prepare and manage the situation). It was therefore much appreciated that the Arts Council of Wales was flexible in this funding and allowed for slight changes in actions that were better suited to achieve the project objective.

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



Appendix I: Actions for effective collaboration

Using the [reverse brainstorming technique](#), there was discussion of what needs to happen for charitable trusts to NOT achieve some of the goals of the Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts (CTPNA). These suggested were then used and reversed into the positive which led to key actions and themes of working for CTPNA moving forward.

Identified actions CTPNA can take so that charitable trusts can increase arts participation:

- Share insights and best practice on different ways of engaging different types of audiences as well as communities, including sharing approaches that differentiate between the two types of targeted stakeholders.
- Discuss and plan to put on relevant events and activities, as a collective or individually, particularly so that arts activities will fit well into people's daily habits and feel comfortable in attending, and support people's and the nation's Covid-19 recovery.
- Discuss and share insights on ways of communicating and promoting (local) arts activities.
- Discuss and share examples of how current funding programmes are limited arts programming and share insights with the Arts Council of Wales and other national agencies to make funding accessible and relevant.

Identified the actions CTPNA can take so that charitable trusts can work collaboratively:

- Trust other participants and openly share ideas and innovations, best practice / lessons learned, concerns, and suggestions for collaborations.
- Share and discuss new ideas of working and ways to put on events and activities, including the potential for collaboration on these projects, and sharing work of new up-and-coming artists so they can be included in new and ongoing projects.
- Discuss and share examples of how current funding programmes are limited arts collaboration and share insights with the Arts Council of Wales and other national agencies to make funding relevant.

Identified actions CTPNA can take so that charitable trusts can work to strengthen their business models:

- Share and discuss strategic aims and objectives that consider current landscape developments so that participants have a sustainable plan moving forward.
- Share and discuss ideas, best practice and concerns on including staff and volunteers in business planning.
- Share and discuss new funding models and programmes.

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



Appendix II: Draft Terms of Reference for CTPNA

Purpose and role of the group

- To be an organised, though informal, network that shares best practice, works collaboratively, supports one another, and engages partners to raise awareness of the wider benefits of artistic and cultural activity;
- Have a peer support network amongst Welsh culture trusts, with a safe and supportive space for charitable trusts to work collaboratively and share their learning on managing their portfolio of services and facilities;
- Have a safe space to discuss demographic reach and audience data and insights, and to share learning on reaching currently excluded groups;
- Explore relevant thematic matters and arrangements that will support trusts to effectively manage public arts services, and for their work to be inclusive of, and accessible to their local communities so as to increase arts participation;
- Closer collaborative working between organisations that engage in the network, with the potential to discuss mergers through centralised CRM systems and shared Box Office functions to enable more sustainable delivery models for public arts services;
- Support personal and professional development of individual participants;
- Have this network as a horizon scanner in relation to opportunities, risks and trends of the public arts landscape in Wales, and to learn from developments in England and Scotland through learnings shared from the wider network of Community Leisure UK.

Group management and reporting:

- The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis;
- Meetings will take place on a quarterly basis and take place virtually using GoToMeeting or a similar software solution. The next meeting date will be confirmed at the end of each meeting;
- The Chair of the Group will be selected from within the membership of CTPNA;
- The Chair will be appointed on a rotating basis, with each CTPNA member taking up the role of Chair when they are available;
- The first Chair will be appointed based availability and expressed interest. The Chair for each consecutive meeting will be appointed at the end of the previous meeting;
- The Chair will liaise with Community Leisure UK as required to create agendas, work plans and updates;
- CTPNA meetings will work with a standing agenda to cover discussion on increasing arts participation, effective remote working, strengthening business models, and sharing of best practice / experience of work. Additional agenda items can be

Sharing Together End of Project Report: Charitable Trusts Peer Network for the Arts



submitted to the appointed Chair of the respective meeting ahead of the meeting taking place;

- CTPNA members are encouraged to contact each other outside of meetings to seek or offer support, and to pursue new collaborations, using the contacts database;
- CTPNA members will keep the information in the contacts database private and confidential;
- The Group will remain subject to review from Community Leisure UK to ensure value and viability is delivered and that CTPNA members commit to engage