

HIGHLIGHTS & ARTS OUT WEST BUSINESS PLAN

2018 - 2022

Contents

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction2. Background3. Key Objectives of the Partner Organisations4. Statement of Purpose of the Business Plan5. Description of the Businesses – some facts & figures6. Management | <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Financial Management and Resilience8. Responding to Internal & External Factors (includes SWOT analysis)9. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Business Plan10. The detailed one year Forward Plan (2018-19) and outline future plan (2019-22)11. Touring Schedule |
|---|--|

1. Introduction: from the Chairs of Highlights and Kirkgate Arts (Arts Out West)

Highlights and Arts Out West are committed to the overarching purpose of rural touring – to bring outstanding performers to isolated communities across the north of England, from St Bees in the west to the North East coast. We provide more than 250 performances and workshops for some 16,000 people annually in around 95 villages and small towns.

This plan sets out how Highlights and Arts Out West will develop their work from 2018-2022. The main challenges arise from the continuing pressure on our public, private and voluntary sector funding; but the schemes will continue to face these challenges as a partnership.

Highlights and Arts Out West were awarded Arts Council England [ACE] National Portfolio Organisation [NPO] funding in 2012 and have worked as a partnership since then. The Partners have worked closely on joint programming – particularly international work; marketing and data collection. We have shared good practice and expertise, developed joint projects and found ways to grow by working together. This is our second joint business plan; and will seek to develop and grow the partnership.

2. Background

Highlights (H) was established in 1997 to provide access to a varied and high quality programme of arts events to isolated rural community groups in the North Pennines.

In its first 10 years of operation Highlights enjoyed steady and successful growth and development, expanding its artistic remit to incorporate not only performing arts, but also Contemporary Craft exhibitions. This made it one of only three rural touring schemes in the UK offering this additional art form at the time. It also expanded its geographical area of operation to include rural Carlisle and South Lakeland.

At the start of its second decade, Highlights was awarded a 3 year contract to deliver a rural touring programme throughout Northumberland. This work has now been incorporated into Highlights' core activity.

Highlights employs one full-time director (job share); one part-time administrator; and contracts one part-time craft tour coordinator and a Northumberland outreach worker, as well as other specialists when the occasion arises (eg a part-time temporary Catalyst Campaigns worker for the current Catalyst: Evolve Project) .

Arts Out West (AOW) - Kirkgate Arts is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The Kirkgate Arts Board has responsibility for the management of AOW and the Kirkgate Centre. To deliver AOW activities, Kirkgate Arts employs a full-time Artistic Manager (3 days/week allocated to AOW) and a finance/administrative officer (2 days AOW).

Arts Out West was established in 1999 and operated with one part-time post and a small number of halls. A Grants For the Arts bid enabled the appointment of a full time project coordinator in 2005, hosted by Copeland Borough Council. The scheme expanded and in 2008, became an Arts Council RFO. At this time an independent organisational review resulted in the decision to move Arts Out West into a partnership with Kirkgate Arts. In 2011 Arts Out West and Highlights submitted a successful joint bid for NPO status. The subsequent partnership working has resulted in partnership working across funding applications; artist liaison, mentorship and booking and training of both staff and volunteers.

Joint vision statement: Highlights and Arts Out West's vision is to develop the provision and promotion of high quality arts to their local communities by pooling the resources, expertise and experience of the partner organisations

Highlights and Arts Out West are delighted to have been awarded a third National Portfolio agreement for 2018-22, in recognition of their partnership work with their remarkable network of volunteer promoters.

3. Key Objectives of the Partner Organisations

- To support a network of local promoters involved in the development of a performing arts programme in their area
- To make the arts socially, geographically, economically and physically accessible to communities across, Cumbria, County Durham and Northumberland
- To provide training opportunities for promoters to develop transferable skills
- To improve access to the arts for people living in isolated areas.
- To provide quality and choice at a local level
- To build new audiences at grass roots level
- To promote creative and culturally diverse work to rural venues
- To commission new work suitable for rural venues
- To support a sustainable local economy, encouraging audiences and companies to use local amenities
- To support village halls as viable community centres, contributing to the upkeep of the hall and social life of the village

4. Statement of purpose of the Business Plan

Highlights [H] and Arts Out West [AOW] wish to develop robust strategies for sustaining their operations in the current challenging climate, so that they are in a position to:

- ensure that rural & isolated communities in the areas of operation can actively engage with top quality art, which is appropriate and challenging
- support, develop and enable artists to develop employment and touring opportunities which are artistically relevant and technically suited to small scale non-traditional spaces, managed by volunteers
- illustrate that they are in a position to manage any changes brought about by external influences such as a decrease in funding from Local Authority or Arts Council of England etc
- seek additional funding for joint projects of strategic importance as they arise
- ensure continued stability for H and AOW, by demonstrating to funding bodies that they have a strong and viable future, by sharing services where achievable, whilst maintaining the identity of the two branded organisations
- develop existing artistic and funding partnerships and establish new ones.
- maximise potential for growth that might come about through co-working initiatives
- address issues raised in the ACE Annual Review
- embrace managed risk and challenge in both programming and business practice

5. Description of the Partnership – some facts and figures

In 2016-17, H & AOW worked with 90 [67 (H); 23 (AOW)] venues, promoting 217 [(164(H); 53 (AOW))] performances and attracted 10,492 [8,317 (H); 2,175(AOW)] people to local venues. Highlights ran 67 exhibition days at 6 venues attracting an estimated 19,889 visitors. Please note: these are probably extraordinary figures, as the 2016 exhibition tour venues included 3 libraries, so visitor numbers included all daily library footfall

Using funds raised from sources additional to those within the core NPO agreement, along with other partnerships, the two organisations organised 55 participative workshops [(42(H); 13 (AOW))] linked to the performances in 2016-17. These attracted 1,095 participants of all ages

Many of Highlights' & AOW's venues are in some of the most isolated communities in the country. Northumberland is the most sparsely populated county in England, with Teesdale, Weardale and Eden having a similar demographic. The majority of the villages in West Cumbria are at least three hours' drive away from the nearest major urban centres such as Glasgow, Manchester, Newcastle & Leeds. West Cumbria, South East Northumberland and parts of County Durham are recognised as areas of low engagement in the arts mainly due to deprivation caused by the decline of traditional industries.

6. Management

Highlights is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Highlights' Management Committee has written descriptions for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer, ensuring clear management of succession. The Management Committee comprises arts officers, local promoters, and people with specific expertise eg marketing, education, PR, finance or legal matters. Arts Council and local authorities are invited to send observers to meetings.

The Management Committee meets quarterly. The AGM takes place in July. In addition to regular Board meetings; task groups or special meetings are arranged in response to particular issues, eg personnel, finance matters, policy updates and new legislative requirements.

Highlights employs a full-time Director, (50/50 job share); an administrator (3 days/week), contracts a Contemporary Craft worker (2 days) and a Northumberland outreach worker (2 days). Detailed job descriptions exist for all posts. Notice periods are 12 weeks (employed personnel); and 6 weeks (contracted personnel).

Kirkgate Arts is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The Kirkgate Arts Board has responsibility for the

management of Arts Out West and the Kirkgate Centre. The Board, which meets bi-monthly, includes 2 trustees who have specific responsibility for AOW. To deliver Arts Out West activities, Kirkgate Arts employs a full-time Artistic Manager (3 days/week allocated to AOW) and a finance/administrative officer (2 days AOW).

A **Collaborative Review Group**, consisting of board and management committee members and staff from both organisations was established in January 2011. It meets regularly to discuss matters relating to the business plan, joint funding obligations, joint working practices and sharing of expertise and best practice. The memorandum of agreement will be updated.

Both Schemes are members of the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF). The Artistic Director of Kirkgate Arts and one of the Co-Directors of Highlights sit on the NRTF board. Both schemes are active members of the Northern Alliance of rural touring schemes.

7. Financial Management and Resilience

Earned income

- Box office income is spread across 88 venues, ensuring financial stability.
- Both schemes review box office options, along with differing subsidy models to maximise income while still addressing local community needs & artistic quality.
- H has now introduced membership fees for all venues.
- AOW operates a Friends scheme which will be developed.
- We'll work with venues that are more financially sustainable eg Kirkgate Centre, Cocker mouth and The Witham, Barnard Castle - offering support with marketing, programming and training, but less financial subsidy
- The Contemporary Craft Tour is more reliant on funds from other sources. H will raise funds from Master Class fees; & earned income from non-H venues "buying in" the exhibition.

Managing Risk

- Funding is made up of a large portfolio of smaller funders (public and non-public bodies).
- When Local Authority grants are reduced, we'll scale back work in the districts affected, but this will not jeopardise work in other areas.
- The Contemporary Craft Tour prepares 2 budgets to mitigate risk, safeguarding a smaller tour if larger funding applications are unsuccessful. H has set up a separate subcommittee within its Board structure to monitor the Contemporary Craft Tour fundraising strategy & budgets.

Resilience

- As members of the northern rural touring schemes, we collaborate on larger projects, reducing risk for individual schemes & working with a wider cross section of artists; and enabling us to broker substantial tours with international artists .
- KA can apply for G4A funding or other ACE programmes on behalf of H/AOW.
- H is a recipient of an ACE Catalyst:Evolve award in partnership with Arts Alive, the Rural Touring Scheme for Herefordshire/Shropshire (to Aug 2019). The planned campaigns will encourage private giving, online donations, artist commissioned donation boxes, gift aid, legacies, sponsorship, & more applications to Trusts/Foundation.
- Kirkgate Arts is a partner in the Cumbria Arts Network, an informal consortium of bodies in West Cumbria, working together to develop and promote high quality work for young people and families. Collaborative projects help reduce costs for all concerned, minimise risk and allow cross-promotion of activities, as well as generating strategic interventions to develop audiences and participants among hard-to-reach sections of the population.

NB: A separate joint Risk Assessment document - covering both operational and financial risk - is attached with this document

Costs/efficiencies

- We're both lean organisations. Volunteer contributions mean that staffing levels & admin costs are kept low. In 2016 -17 volunteers contributed in the region of 5,400 hrs, equivalent to £70,902 [£13.13 per hour] (comparable to 3 full-time managers)
- We've managed a period of no growth for 4 years. To keep the service vibrant we've accessed funds through separate projects & have pared down operation costs. Inflation at 1% has been factored into budgets. Projected earned income has been increased to offset this.
- As a partnership we can offer artistic companies runs of several consecutive dates, making operations more cost effective
- A stand still budget equates in reality to a decrease in real terms. If fees and other on-costs continue to rise, it may be that the 2 organisations will reduce the number of performances per annum and /or the number of venues we work with, in order to balance income and expenditure

8. Responding to external & internal factors

8.1 External Influences:

Local Authorities: The partnership fully expects to continue to work with the 2 unitary systems (County Durham and Northumberland), whilst recognising that local authorities are facing severe cuts in their funding. Cumbria County Council withdrew all funding from both schemes in 2016. H & AOW will pursue other available and relevant county-wide funding streams.

Arts Council England: Highlights and Arts Out West will continue to contribute to **Goals 1 & 2 of the ACE goals and priorities** (from 'Achieving Great Art for Everyone'):-

Goal 1: Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated

Goal 2: More people experience and are inspired by the Arts

The Consortium may access G4A funding (through Kirkgate Arts); and will be alert to other opportunities offered by ACE Strategic Funds as they arise. This will possibly be in partnership with other Rural Touring schemes.

H & AOW will take advantage of other funding streams offered by external bodies such as trusts & foundations, and other government or non-government bodies to support the development of specific activities and projects not contained within the current NPO agreement eg Young people; volunteering; Training; Older people; Community Development; Tourism, Digital and Social networking

Northern Heartlands, one of the 16 national 'Great Places' schemes (funded by ACE, HLF and Historic England), covers Teesdale and Weardale in County Durham. It runs until May 2020. Highlights is already in discussion about potential partnership working.

Co-working and Partnerships: Six rural touring schemes in the North: Spot On (Lancashire); Cheshire Rural Touring; Arts Out West (West Cumbria); Highlights (East Cumbria, Northumberland, County Durham); ArtERY (East Riding of Yorkshire) and Live Lincs (North Lincolnshire), along with Arts Alive (Shropshire & Herefordshire), form an unconstituted, informal strategic alliance. The schemes have collaborated since 1999, with Arts Alive joining later, demonstrating creative programming, strength and resilience, delivering projects to the value of over £1,000,000 in jointly commissioned tours by professional touring artists and companies from the UK and internationally. The artistic quality of work in the region is increased by working cooperatively on joint ventures and increases opportunities for artists. This method of working is often cited by ACE as a model of good practice in consortia working. The methods employed use the skills and expertise of the scheme managers. Funding bids, tour programming, management, financial leadership and risk are shared amongst the participating schemes.

The five schemes also collaborate with other rural schemes in the north (North Yorkshire and East Cleveland). H has recently formed new relationships with the emerging Rural Touring schemes in the South Of Scotland (Ayrshire; Borders; Dumfries & Galloway).

Talent Development Given the Performing Arts Network Development Agency (PANDA)'s changed circumstances, the consortium will also work with other agencies to ensure that it keeps talent development high on its agenda. Eg Jazz North; Federation of Scottish Theatres; New Designers; Venues North. Producing houses such as The Lowry, Manchester; Northern Stage, Newcastle; Unity Theatre, Liverpool; Theatre By the Lake, Keswick have talent development embedded in their programme of work. The 2 schemes can benefit from their work, and will investigate collaborations when the work is suitable and relevant for small scale rural touring.

H & AOW will work with venues which allow emerging companies to develop work in their facilities eg The Witham, Barnard Castle; ARC Stockton, Rosehill Theatre, Whitehaven.

The **National Rural Touring Forum** provides support and networking opportunities. It also researches funding which it then passes on to members for identifiable projects and/or cross boundary work.

Technology: The increased availability of broadband in rural areas means that both organisations are able to conduct more business online with promoters and audiences (online ticketing, e-newsletters etc.), which is more efficient in terms of cost & time and is more environmentally sustainable. Marketing via social media is growing exponentially. There is an enormous increase in companies which have digital content on line, which the schemes use when presenting what's on offer to the network of volunteer promoters in the village venues. Companies

8.2 Internal drivers:

Highlights' Management Committee continues to change year on year, with 3 new members in 2017-18. Members take on specific roles and challenges, including sponsorship and future development of the Contemporary Craft Tour and Exhibition.

The Highlights/Arts Alive (Shropshire, Herefordshire) Catalyst: Evolve award (September 2016 – August 2019) has allowed an additional day a week for the Highlights administrator, freeing up the directors to pursue other work related to fundraising, sponsorship and individual giving. It has also allowed Highlights to recruit a Campaigns Worker on a 6 months' renewable contract. Drives to increase individual giving are gathering momentum. Sponsorship and successful applications to Trusts and Foundation are more challenging.

Arts Out West has introduced cinema screenings into village halls which is providing the organisation with the opportunity to recruit new venues that are wary of staging live performances. Through film it is anticipated that we will be able to increase the number of venues onto the 'live' programme.

Kirkgate Arts is working towards a major capital redevelopment of the Kirkgate Centre, where Arts Out west is based. If successful, this would strengthen the resilience of Kirkgate Arts as a whole, and provide greater opportunities for AOW to support and develop new work for rural touring. While rebuilding was taking place, there would also be opportunities to promote performances in new venues in and around Cockermouth.

Both schemes: With constant new developments in **digital technology and data gathering**, staff training is constantly carried out and updated. We also carry out training with our promoters, so that more operations can be paperless eg electronic contracts, booking forms and show report forms. Promoter training is regularly carried out on use of Social media. Online ticketing is growing annually.

8.3 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is compiled from discussions at the joint Board Away day held in October 2016 and the Collaborative Review Group meeting of October 2017.

Please note that unless specified, the points in the SWOT analysis relate to both members of the Consortium

Positive Factors	Internal	Negative Factors	Internal
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations are well established with a good track record • Committed, knowledgeable staff and board, passionate about rural touring • Strong network of volunteer promoters, with high promoter retention. Good relationship between staff and promoters • Good curation of programme, due to combined knowledge of partnership, promoters and staff. • Organisations have a good reputation with audiences, promoters and companies • Good financial control. Financially stable with adequate reserves and cash flow • Good degree of co-working between the partnership, which has led to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing of information and best practice ○ Collaboration on Artistic Programming ○ Shared workload ○ Ability to reach targets by sharing them • Balance of artform which includes new writing and spoken word • Commitments to offering diverse work. • High quality Craft Tour • Large scheme able to offer companies more work and negotiate prices on behalf of Promoters • Strengthened use of social media • Consortium can apply for G4A funding via Kirkgate Arts. • Arts Out West being part of a larger organisation, enables them to access additional expertise and resources. • H's Catalyst: Evolve award (donations/individual giving) 		<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff workload means lack of capacity to successfully plan, write and submit joint funding bids – therefore minimises development of new projects & expanding the organisation. • Kirkgate Arts Board currently has a strong focus on development of the Kirkgate Centre • Unable to give adequate support to volunteers in Cumbria and Co Durham due to staff time constraints • Reduction in number of performances due to standstill and/or reduction in funding • Contemporary Craft Tour requires annual additional funds in order to take place • Low number of workshops offered due to funding reductions. • Sponsorship needs time, money and resources • Difficulty for H in retaining and developing promoters in semi urban areas • Some promoters are reluctant to programme more adventurous work • The organisations do not have a high media profile • Limited availability of suitable culturally diverse work • Volunteer fatigue and Promoter succession can affect success of venues. 	

Positive Factors External	Negative Factors External
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop knowledge and use of social media • Further develop online ticket sales • More work can be done on developing the partnership to achieve cost savings and time efficiencies. • Other forms of funding to be explored. • Potential audience development including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The tourism market ○ Interest groups – U3A, WI, reading groups • Subscription schemes • Friends scheme (AOW) • Workshop programmes to engage audiences at an earlier age • Partnership working can help us achieve our aims with diminishing funds: • Partnership with the Northern Consortium to enable us to programme new and international work over a larger area • Partnership with the Northern Consortium and other producing houses to develop work with new and emerging artists, particularly diverse work • Partnership with NRTF; particularly current dance initiative • Further development of AOW’s cinema offer • Kirkgate Arts joining Big Imaginations (from April 2018) will help develop and support the offer for young audiences and families • H’s’ partnership with The Old Fire Station, Carlisle, to enable us to sell our services and programme work to a larger venue • AOW’s partnership with Cumbria Family Arts Network (family work) • H’s partnership with Take Off to help expand our offer of children’s work • H’s partnership with Northern Heartlands (Teesdale & Weardale) • Development of the Kirkgate Centre will result in a better resourced infrastructure for Arts Out West. • H/AOW partnership arrangements regarding delivery of rural touring programme may be changed. Details unknown at time of writing (See also Threats) • AOW can submit separate applications for ACE strategic funds on behalf of both organisations. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of Local authority funding. • Arts Council standstill settlement actually equates to a reduction in real terms • Increase in competition for additional funding from Trusts and Foundations • Competition from TV, and the internet, which can deter audiences from leaving their homes • Efforts to attract new audiences may create more work for too little gain eg Friends or Subscription scheme • Increased cost of touring theatre fees • H’s change in staffing. Plans & funding yet to be defined to deal with recruitment, hand over & subsequent knowledge gaps & continuity issues • Uncertainty about status of and future for Kirkgate Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H/AOW partnership arrangements regarding delivery of rural touring programme may be changed. Details unknown at time of writing. (see also Opportunities) • High level of reporting and paperwork required for Arts Council NPOs can interfere with our ability to deliver work • Kirkgate Arts Artistic Manager role split between Arts Out West and Kirkgate Centre. This can cause challenges in time management across the two areas of work. • Uncertain future for PANDA

8.4 Where do we want to be in four years?

Highlights and Arts Out West want to build on our current good reputation in the varying sectors in which we work, aiming to become front runners in our areas of operation. In an ever changing world, we want to be a sustainable consortium. To ensure that the organisations are fit for purpose, we will include a plan for succession/retirement.

Our aspirations are that over the next four years the partnership will develop specific programming strands, including:

- work specifically for older people, with linked participatory activities
- to broaden the diversity of the programme in the spirit of Arts Council England's 'Creative Case'
- riskier and more challenging work which will be more heavily subsidised
- work with emerging artists & local organisations to develop more professional work produced in the region
- dance

Other possibilities are:

- age specific work for children and young people
- to have a higher public profile with visitors to the area; and the potential to increase audiences from this sector
- to have an increased workshop offer, associated with productions on the programme
- to build on current partnership work, broadening the range of collaborators in artistic, community and rural areas – at local, regional, national and international levels.

NB: Work which is not included in the core agreement with ACE is dependent upon additional funds being raised from other sources and partnership

9. Monitoring & evaluation of the Business Plan

The Business Plan will be monitored at every Collaborative Review Group meeting

10 . Forward Plan

Plans/actions are for both schemes, unless specified separately

Goal 1 Programme Plan: April 2018 – March 2019

Artistic excellence

- work with a network of 400+ volunteers to promote around 190 high quality professional performances in remote, rural and semi-urban communities in the area of operation. Of these, at least 45% to be theatre or dance
- plan & deliver a Contemporary Craft exhibition (H)

To achieve this the 2 schemes will:-

- nurture relationships with reputable regional and national arts bodies so we can access companies & artists whose talent & skill has already been assessed (Jazz North; Theatre Hullabaloo; Theatre by the Lake; Federation of Scottish Theatre; Imagine; NRTF's biennial New Directions showcase and its Rural Dance Initiative; Contact East [with the Northern Alliance of rural touring schemes])
- apply for and offer bursaries (where available) to volunteer promoters, to attend festivals and showcases to enable them to see emerging work of the highest standard, to help inform their choices, so they programme more diverse work and feel more confident in taking programming risks [links to Goal 2 and Audience Development]

Creative digital content

- Increase the amount of inventive and effective digital content integrated into performances.
- The Contemporary Craft tour (H) will include a commissioned art film as part of the annual exhibition.
- Develop the use of digital images in our expanding use of social media to increase awareness, understanding and engagement.

Talent Development

- AOW will extend its development of emerging artists and new work using the facilities available at the Kirkgate Centre
- With the Northern Alliance of Rural Touring schemes, work with the Performing Arts Network and Development Agency (PANDA) on an ACE G4A application to develop the Pitching and Mentoring programme to support emerging artists/companies and those new to rural touring, whereby PANDA will provide strategic sector support. The project will aim to establish a coherent, nationwide approach to the development of talent, particularly for emerging & mid-career artists, so that more high quality, culturally diverse and adventurous work will be created for rural touring. Selected companies will be mentored through the process of producing a piece suitable for rural touring. Volunteer promoters are involved in the process, gaining invaluable confidence in developing audiences for new work. (links to Audience Development and Creative Case)

- the consortium will work with other agencies to ensure that it keeps talent development high on its agenda. Eg Jazz North; Federation of Scottish Theatres; New Designers; Venues North. Producing houses such as The Lowry, Manchester; Northern Stage, Newcastle; Theatre By the Lake, Keswick have talent development embedded in their programme of work. The 2 schemes can benefit from their work, and will investigate collaborations when the work is suitable and relevant for small scale rural touring
- Continue to develop the relationship with NRTF's Rural Touring Dance Initiative to increase the amount of contemporary dance (an under-represented artform) programmed in rural venues.
- Forge or develop other partnerships with producing houses/venues which allow emerging companies to develop work in their facilities eg (e.g. Theatre by the Lake, Keswick; ARC, Stockton; Rosehill Theatre, Whitehaven; The Witham, Barnard Castle)

International

- With the Northern Alliance, we will maintain the strong partnership with the Atlantic Presenters Association (APA) and the invaluable connection with Contact East, their showcase of Canadian and other international artists. Coordinate (H) the planned tour of up to 12 dates for Theatre Newfoundland Labrador's 'Our Frances'. Participate in a tour of up to 12 dates for Bon Debarras (Quebec)
- Nurture relationships with reputable showcases and festivals to source suitable companies from other countries. Eg Edinburgh Fringe; Celtic Connections; Skipton International Puppet Festival

Goal 1 Smart Objectives April 2018 – March 2019				
Actions	Who (H)	Who (AOW)	When	Notes
Performances: promote around 190 high quality professional performances [140 (H): 50 (AOW)]	All staff		2018-19	Links
Contract at least 63 companies [54 (H): 9 (AOW)]	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	
Contemporary Craft Tour (H): Contract up to 6 visual artists	KB	-	2018-19	
Talent Development: work with relevant organisations and as a result, programme at least one company which is new to rural touring.	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	Links to Creative Case & Audience Development
Talent Development: through our specific work with PANDA or similar organisations with Talent Development featuring high on their agenda, we aim to engage at least 6 emerging artists or those new to rural touring	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	Links to Creative Case & Audience Development
International: build partnerships with relevant organisation. As a result promote at least one international company	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	Links to Creative Case
Increase digital content by including artist film in Contemporary Craft Tour	KB	-	2018-19	

Outline Plan April 2019- March 2022

A similar programme will be followed as for 2018- 19. In addition:-

- Whilst we will maintain the same high quality and will continue to expand the diversity of work available, outputs may be somewhat reduced, due to reductions in funding (Local Authorities; real-terms drop in ACE grant) & the expectation of an inflationary increase.
- Partnerships will be maintained and nurtured, to ensure that we are accessing work of the highest quality which is suitable for rural touring.
- Depending upon the future of PANDA, in partnership with the Northern Alliance and other northern rural touring organisations, we will continue to work with PANDA on the Pitching and Mentoring programme
- Build further partnerships with organisations which support emerging artists and those new to rural touring, such as Theatre by the Lake, Keswick; ARC, Stockton; Rosehill Theatre, Whitehaven; The Witham, Barnard Castle

Creative Case for Diversity

Programme Plan: April 2018 – March 2019

Separate Race Equality Action Plans [REAP] 2018-22 for H & AOW are attached with this Forward Plan.

Diversity of Programme

- Our programming is designed to reflect the country we live in.
- The Contemporary Craft Tour (H) will include the work of international artists and refugees. The 2018 exhibition and tour will take 'Conflict' as its theme and will be entitled "Craft+Conflict". The touring exhibition will include 'The Architect', a film about a child architect re-imagining his war-torn city of Aleppo, by Syrian-born artist Mojahed Abou Joud; as well as work by other international and British artists (Highlights' Craft Officer is 50% Armenian/Iranian)

To achieve this aim, the 2 schemes will:-

- Forge or develop partnerships with agencies & organisations with Diversity high on their agenda eg NRTF's national dance project, festivals, showcases, NRTF, producing houses (see Goal 1 above)
- Continue partnership work with PANDA (funding permitting) to allow H & AOW to develop work with a variety of protected characteristic groups, via the pitching and mentoring project

Diversity of Audience

- by programming work directly into community venues we attract a diverse audience from different socio-economic backgrounds

Self-evaluation and sector leadership

- Learning will be shared via joint programming meetings
- Gatherings of the informal Northern Alliance group will assess the Creative Case as a specific item for debate
- Both boards' agendas will regularly include Creative Case as an item for discussion and monitoring.
- Joint Collaborative Review Group agenda will regularly include Creative Case as an item for discussion and monitoring.
- Learning is shared with promoters via 6 Promoters' events per year.

Recruitment/Selection

- We will endeavour to make sure that the make up of the 2 boards accurately reflects the diversity of Contemporary England and the communities we work with and are working to reach.
- Chairs of both Boards remain in office for 3 years and then stand down.
- We will use the guidance contained within our REAP when recruiting more board members
- We will use the guidance contained within our REAP when recruiting volunteers and other workforce with in our areas of operation.
- Both Boards will use the guidance contained within our REAP when recruiting new Co-Directors (H) and any other workforce.

Creative Case for Diversity Smart Objectives April 2018 – March 2019				
Actions	Who (H)	Who (AOW)	When	Notes
To programme at least 6 companies or artists from a background of the protected characteristic groups [4 (H): 2 (AOW)]	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	
For the Contemporary Craft Exhibition (H), contract at least 1 artist from a background of the protected characteristic groups	KB	-	2018-19	
Carry out a Skills audit to identify any gaps within the Board. Use this accordingly if/when recruiting future board members	Board members	Board members	2018-19	
Expand the channels where adverts are placed for Recruitment of staff and Board members	Board Members	n/a	2018-19	
Hold at least 6 volunteer promoter learning events per year to promote/share best practice on programming diverse work and working with diverse artists	Staff/promoters	Staff/promoters	2018-19	

Outline Plan April 2019- March 2022

A similar programme will be followed as for 2018- 19. In addition:-

- In 2019-22 H/AOW will extend its work with older people via a joint project (funding permitting – a G4A application to be submitted by Kirkgate Arts) which will enable us to work with people in day centres & residential settings (links to Goal2 and to Audience development)
- When the second phase of staff retirement & succession happens (H 2020-21) ensure guidelines contained within the REAP are followed

Goal 2: Chosen Strand: More people have the opportunity to experience and participate in great arts

Programme Plan: April 2018 – March 2019

- Highlights (H) & Arts Out West (AOW) will tour professional live performances & exhibitions into isolated areas (rural & semi-urban) of Cumbria, Co Durham & Northumberland that would otherwise have limited access to the arts.
- Carry out promoter training, with assisted visits to showcases and Festivals , encouraging them to be confident in making bold programming choices.
- In line with our Equality Action Plan we'll strive to ensure that all identity groups have full access to our events & activities
- Whilst we're not funded to delivery Goal 5 targets, we will deliver education & outreach & workshops, to encourage more people to attend the high quality professional performances. **Note: this is dependent upon successful additional fundraising**
- Work in partnership with Northern Heartlands to deliver Contemporary Craft Tour in new venues in the area of operation (specifically the upper dale areas of Teesdale and Weardale)

Ensure more people who are least engaged experience our work/ Increase number & range of people

- Continue to build relationships with venues in in places like Maryport, Millom (W Cumbria); Pegswood (SE Northumberland); Crook & Bishop Auckland (Co Durham).This work is more challenging, requiring a higher level of support & resources due to the weak arts infrastructure. All AOW areas fall in the lowest 3rd of authorities in terms of arts engagement (Active People Survey), while Wear Valley is among the 20 lowest in the country
- Work will be supported by additional audience development activity where funding allows. (links to Audience Development Plan)
- We will offer programming & training support for local promoters
- Programme a Contemporary Craft Tour with the theme of 'Conflict' accompanied by a participative programme engaging these harder to reach local communities.
- Work in partnership with Helix Arts to apply for additional funds to extend the reach of the Contemporary Craft Tour
- Partners will gather data to monitor whether the type of show new is new to audience members

Goal 2	Smart Objectives	April 2018 – March 2019		
Actions	Who (H)	Who (AOW)	When	Notes
Increase percentage of those survey respondents saying they had not been to an AOW/H performance before, from 25% to 30% (=328 survey respondents – using most recent reliable, meaningful joint survey results [Spring 2015]) demonstrating an increase in our audience base.	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	
Contemporary Craft Tour: maintain percentage of those survey respondents saying this type of event was new to them at 56% (121survey respondents), demonstrating a new visitor base	KB	-	2018-19	
Obtain bursaries to assist 4 Promoters to attend showcases or festivals	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	
Increase online ticket sales from average 8.1% [2016-17: H 10.9% (= 909 sales); + AOW 5.3% (= 115 sales)] to average 8.9%	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	
Partners will seek additional funds to offer project work to schools & families	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	Links to Audience Development with reference to targeting Facebook Families segmentation
Maintain visitor numbers for Contemporary Craft Tour at an average of 38 per day. This is dependent upon a number of variables	KB	-	2018-19	
Performances: promote around 190 high quality professional performances [140 [H]: 50 [AOW]	All staff		2018-19	
Maintain average audience numbers of 47 per performance	BS/RX	CB	2018-19	

Outline Plan April 2019- March 2022

A similar programme will be followed as for 2018- 19. In addition:-

- In 2019-22, we'll further develop our digital marketing, and monitor the impact of different approaches
- Develop online sales, by encouraging promoters to offer the facility; increased use of online marketing and developing use of social media
- If funding applications with Helix Arts are successful, continue to work in partnership to extend the reach of the Contemporary Craft Tour

Audience Development Plan

Programme Plan: April 2018 – March 2019

Where we are now

The partnership aims to:

- Provide access for rural villages and small communities to enjoy high quality arts experiences that inform, entertain and enrich the lives of local communities
- Give people a great time out, at an affordable price, on their doorstep

We do this by:

- Touring live performances across a range of art forms by professional artists; an annual contemporary Craft Exhibition (HL); supporting the showing of feature films in community venues (AOW); and by providing opportunities to take part in workshops and special projects
- Striving to make these experiences accessible to everyone, by keeping ticket prices low; providing events within easy reach of people in isolated rural locations; engaging populations with low arts engagement in peri-urban areas by offering high quality entertainment in familiar community venues; and making every effort to overcome physical barriers to attendance
- Managing a financially sustainable organisation whilst being willing to take risks with productions
- Supporting our volunteer promoters by offering training, guidance, marketing support and opportunities to further their knowledge of event promotion
- Working with arts and community partners to achieve best value and best practice

Our Current Audiences

Although we do offer online ticket sales (from which we can collect audience data) this represents only a small (though steadily growing) percentage of sales. We are heavily reliant on audience questionnaires and feedback from our volunteer promoters. With their help, we collect audience data, both quantitative and qualitative. As most of our venues are in small communities, our promoters have a deep understanding of their audiences as many of them are known personally to them.

We encourage audiences to complete a feedback form at every event, and achieve a high rate of return.

Information from feedback forms indicates that 65% of our audiences are repeat attenders.

Between them our promoters present a broad spectrum of genres, although individual venues can often exhibit a preference for particular kinds of programming – some tending to choose music, others keen to present theatre. We encourage our promoters to take risks with new types of programming; but we are aware that any event which proves unpopular can damage their standing within the local community, and they may well then tend to become more conservative in their choices in reaction.

The size of venue often determines the style and genre of production.

Highlights and Arts Out West recommend parameters within which ticket prices are set, the promoter makes the final decision based on their local knowledge.

Geographic – Where do they live?

We collect postcodes on feedback forms. These are mapped and from this evidence we can see that the majority of audiences travel from between 0-20 miles.

Highlights operates an email alert generated by the website informing people of shows within a 20 mile radius of their home.

Demographic – Who are they?

We know that our audiences are largely aged 55 and above

We know that a larger percentage (61%) of our audience is female. This is higher than the count for female residents both in our areas of operation and across England.

We know that our area of the country is one which attracts tourists and visitors. However, they do not currently engage with our activities to a significant degree, and we see this as a potential growth area in audience terms.

The APR indicates that in our area there is a larger percentage of Facebook Families than in England as a whole and the evidence is that we do not attract this segment of the population in large numbers.

Audience development - Summary and direction of travel

We want to maintain our current audiences of loyal and local attenders. We will encourage them to travel wider and be more adventurous.

We will develop new audiences targeting:-

- non-attenders – especially from areas of traditionally low engagement with the arts
- visitors to the area

Types of Current Attender

1) Loyal Supporters of their local hall and promoter

People who will attend almost anything that is staged at their local hall and may not even know what they are coming to see. They will usually have received a flyer through their door but will almost certainly have spoken to their local promoter or someone within their community about the event.

2) Local Arts Supporters

People who find out about the events through the brochure and local advertising eg parish magazines, posters & local papers.

3a) Highlights & Arts Out West Supporters

People who follow the organisation not just their local venue. They receive the Highlights/Arts Out West brochures, website alerts, e-newsletters and follow social media. They will travel to attend Highlights and Arts Out West events in various locations.

3b) Artist followers

People who follow the company or artist through their communications eg websites, newsletters etc.

Four Year Plan

This is the partnership's second audience development plan. The partnership held an away day for both management committees in October 2016 and outcomes from that day inform this document.

AIMS

Within what we can only assume will be a financially challenging environment, our minimum aim is to maintain current levels of audience engagement.

However (particularly within a challenging environment), stasis is highly likely to turn to decay. We will seek to

- Encourage more frequent attendance by our existing customers
- Draw in yet more attendees from our established demographics
- Broaden our audience base by attracting new customers from among
 - A. Visitors and tourists
 - B. People with traditionally low engagement with the arts – specifically from the Facebook Families segment

STRATEGIES

To achieve these aims we will:

- Maintain a balanced programme of appealing, high quality performances, while carefully working to extend the horizons of our existing audiences
- Investigate and trial a range of techniques and approaches to encourage increased attendance by existing audiences- e.g., 'package' offers; more cross-marketing between venues
- Continue to strengthen and build our social media presence and online marketing
- Continue to build our presence on tourism-related websites
- Seek to build partnerships with tourism-related organisations
- Establish current levels of attendance from among Facebook Families as a benchmark.
- Develop programming designed to specifically appeal to Facebook Families, while maintaining our established levels of quality
- Promote to Facebook Families through community organisations, schools etc

Audience Development Smart Objectives April 2018 – March 2019		
OBJECTIVE	TARGET	INDICATORS
MORE PEOPLE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATE IN GREAT ART	Increase size of web based email list. Increase by 2% year on year. 2016-17 baseline: 3,085 (H: 2,450; AOW: 635)	Mailing lists
	Raise profile through targeted social media advertising. Y1 Establish social media following (using 2017-18 data) Y2 Increase social media following by 5% of 2017-18 figure Y3 Increase social media following by a further 5% of 2017-18 figure Y4 Increase social media following by a further 5% of 2017-18 figure	Feedback forms Social media comments and insights Online analytical tools
THE NUMBER AND RANGE OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING GREAT ART, MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES IS INCREASED	Maintain and increase audience numbers for each event. Y1 Maintain average audience, using 2016-17 figure (47 per performance) Y2 Increase average audience by 2% of 2016-17 figure Y3 Increase average audience by a further 2% of 2016-17 figure Y4 Increase average audience by a further 2% of 2016-17 figure	Feedback forms Electronic survey data Google Analytics Tourism websites Profiling report from The Audience Agency Email sign up data
	Develop audiences from currently under-represented segments - specifically Facebook Families (FF). Present a minimum of 3 productions per season which are suitable for Children & Young People and families	Programming data
	Increase number of tourists and visitors to our events. Y1 Establish a baseline for visitor numbers among audiences for 2017-18 [NB question was not asked in 2016-17 i-pad survey] Y2 Increase total number of visitors by 2% of 2017-18 figure Y3 Increase total number of visitors by a further 2% of 2017-18 figure Y4 Increase total number of visitors by a further 2% of 2017-18 figure	Feedback forms Electronic survey data Email sign up data

ENGAGEMENT LEVELS HAVE INCREASED AMONGST THOSE LEAST ENGAGED IN THE ARTS	Develop venues in peri-urban areas with hard to reach audiences such as Workington, Cleator Moor, Crook, South East Northumberland. Y1 maintain current peri-urban venues in Whitehaven, Maryport, Millom, South East Northumberland & Bishop Auckland Y2 Add one other such venue in each partner’s area. Y3 maintain these venues, and work to broaden engagement from the surrounding populations Y4 Add one other such venue in each partner’s area.	Number of new venues. Audience data from feedback forms Electronic survey data
---	---	--

11. Touring Schedule

2018-19

Confirmed (April to June 2018)

H ighlights	Name of company	Title of performance	date	Venue	Post code
	Alan Barnes & David Newton Duo	Alan Barnes & David Newton Duo	5/4/18	Boldron Village hall	DL12 9RF
	Alan Barnes & David Newton Duo	Alan Barnes & David Newton Duo	6/4/18	Newbiggin Village Hall, Co Durham	DL12 0TX
	A Heart at Sea	Half a String	6/4/18	The Witham, Barnard Castle	DL12 8LY
	Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	12/4/18	Mickleton Village Hall	DL12 0JR
	Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	13/4/18	Lazonby Village Hall	CA10 1 AQ
	Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	14/4/18	Warwick on Eden Memorial Hall	CA4 8PA
	Fruit Tree Arts	Ubunye	19/4/18	Whorlton Village Hall	DL12 8XD
	Fruit Tree Arts	Ubunye	20/4/18	Frosterley Village Hall	DL13 2QW
	Fruit Tree Arts	Ubunye	21/4/18	BURC (St Paul’s) Spittal	TD15 1RD
	Fruit Tree Arts	Ubunye	22/4/18	Melmerby Village Hall	CA10 1HD
	Ethyl Smyth – Grasping the Nettle	Lucy Stevens	26/4/18	St Thomas Church Hall, Stanhope	DL13 2UE
	Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	26/4/18	St Cuthbert's Church, Norham	TD15 2LF
	Ethyl Smyth – Grasping the Nettle	Lucy Stevens	27/4/18	Wreay Village Hall	CA4 0RL

Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	27/4/18	Whittingham Memorial Institute	NE66 4UP
Ethyl Smyth – Grasping the Nettle	Lucy Stevens	28/4/18	Lesbury Village Hall	NE66 3PP
Hymn to Love - Homage to Piaf	Theatre by the Lake	28/4/18	Shap Memorial Hall	CA10 3NL
Ethyl Smyth – Grasping the Nettle	Lucy Stevens	29/4/18	The Cheviot Centre, Wooler	NE71 6BL
Endless Featuring N:Dless	Trifle Gathering Productions	3/5/18	Duften Village Hall	CA16 6DB
Endless Featuring N:Dless	Trifle Gathering Productions	4/5/18	Watson Institute, Castle Carrock	CA8 9LT
Gone Cuckoo	Talesongs	4/5/18	Shilbottle Community Hall	NE66 2XH
Endless Featuring N:Dless	Trifle Gathering Productions	5/5/18	Felton Village Hall	NE65 0NH
Gone Cuckoo	Talesongs	5/5/18	Allendale Village Hall	NE47 9PR
Chalk About	NRTF	11/5/18	The Witham, Barnard Castle	DL12 8LY
Gone Cuckoo	Talesongs	11/5/18	Bardon Mill & Henshaw Village Hall	NE37 7HZ
Gone Cuckoo	Talesongs	12/5/18	Orton Market Hall	CA10 3RL
Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	17/5/18	Upper Weardale Town Hall, St John's Chapel	DL13 1QF
Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	18/5/18	Thropton War Memorial Hall	NE65 7LT
Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	19/5/18	Pegswood Community Hub	NE61 6XG
Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	20/5/18	Crosby Ravensworth Village Hall	CA10 3HY
Frankie Vah	Luke Wright	23/5/18	Old Fire Station, Carlisle	CA3 8QP
Frankie Vah	Luke Wright	24/5/18	The Witham, Barnard Castle	DL12 8LY
The Giant Jam Sandwich	New Perspectives Theatre Co	29/5/18	Old Fire Station, Carlisle	CA3 8QP
The Giant Jam Sandwich	New Perspectives Theatre Co	30/5/18	Bardon Mill & Henshaw Village Hall	NE37 7HZ
Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	31/5/18	The Cheviot Centre, Wooler	NE71 6BL
The Giant Jam Sandwich	New Perspectives Theatre Co	31/5/18	The Witham, Barnard Castle	DL12 8LY

	Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	1/6/18	Frosterley Village Hall	DL13 2QW
	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	1/6/18	Appleby Hub	CA16 6QR
	The Giant Jam Sandwich	New Perspectives Theatre Co	1/6/18	Pegswood Community Hub	NE61 6XG
	Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	2/6/18	Bolton Memorial Hall	CA16 6AL
	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra 2018	Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra	2/6/18	Whittingham Memorial Institute	NE66 4UP
	Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	8/6/18	Wark Town Hall & Mechanics Institute	NE48 3LG
	Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	9/6/18	Amble Parish Hall	NE65 0DX
	Dan Walsh & Alistair Anderson	Sharper Than	10/6/18	Hepscott Parish Hall	NE61 6LN
Arts Out West	Lucy Stevens	Ethel Smyth: Grasping the Nettle	20/4/18	Globe Hall, Ireby	CA7 1DX
			21/4/18	Gosforth Public Hall	CA20 1EL
	George Egg	DIY Chef	27/4/18	Kirkgate Centre	CA13 9PJ
			28/4/18	The Gather, Ennerdale	CA23 3AR
	Rob Gee	Forget-Me-Not	5/5/18	Bassenthwaite Parish Room	CA12 4RG
			6/5/18	Kirkgate Centre	CA13 9PJ
	Rabbit Theatre	Great Expectations	18/5/18	Ireleth Temperance Hall	LA16 7EG
				Torpenhow Village Hall	CA7 1HT
				Thursby Parish Hall	CA5 6PQ
	Daria Kulesh	Long Lost Home	25/5/28	Lamplugh Village Hall	CA14 4SF
			Muncaster Parish Hall	CA18 1SQ	

Planned but unconfirmed (September 2018 to March 2019)

- **HIGHLIGHTS** [performance]: “Pals” - Northsouth Theatre’ ; “The Picture of Dorian Gray” - Box Tale Soup; Kathryn Roberts & Sean Lakeman – Midnight Mango ; Katie Doherty and The Footprints Project – Katie Doherty; “Finding Joy” - Vamos Theatre Company; “Our Frances” - Theatre Newfoundland; Bon Debarras; “1,000 Doorways” – Living Myth; “The Story of the Little Gentleman” – Catherine Wheels Theatre Company; “Confessions of a Red Headed Coffee Girl” – Rebecca Perry (Canada); “Excalibow” - Bowjangles ; “Christmas Medley” - Shoo Shoo Baby; “Venuti & Lang” - James Brikett & Emma Fiske.
- **HIGHLIGHTS** [Contemporary Craft Tour]: Mojahed Abou Joud (film) ; Mark Gibb (Sculpture - recycled material); Paul Scott (ceramics); Sumi Perera (mixed media with print and artist’s books)
- **ARTS OUT WEST** [performance]: “Our Frances” - Theatre Newfoundland; Bon Debarras; “The Haunted Man” - Kindred Theatre; Dommy B; Louise Jordan; The Devil’s Violin; “The Hit” - Strangeface Theatre Company.

2019 onwards

Companies with whom we have had preliminary conversations or who are likely to be offered

- **HIGHLIGHTS** [performance]: Midnight Mango – Martin Harley; Remi Harris Trio – Yardbird Arts;
- **HIGHLIGHTS** [Contemporary Craft Tour]: Blanka Sperkova (Czech finger knitter working in the tradition of wire work); Leah Jenson (‘anti-digital’ ceramics); Forest + Flow (woven textiles and woodturning)
- **ARTS OUT WEST** [performance]: Stephanie Morin-Robert; Farnham Maltings; Ragged Edge; Box of Tricks; Nick Hennessey; Philip Dyson