

20 March 2020

Let's Create – Arts Council England's new strategy

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction

Summary

Arts Council England's (ACE) new strategy has been launched, and will direct their approach to investing in arts and culture over the next ten years. This paper sets out the implications for local government and the LGA's improvement work.

A representative from ACE has been invited to present to the Board.

Recommendations

That the Board note the new direction for ACE and consider the implications for local government, including the CTS Board's future work programme.

Action

LGA officers to amend lobbying and delivery plans accordingly.

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Briefing: Let's Create 2020-2030, Arts Council England

1. Arts Council England (ACE) is the national champion for arts and culture. It develops, supports and invests in arts and cultural activities across England. Between 2018 and 2022, ACE plans to invest £1.45 billion of Government funding and c £860m from the National Lottery into arts and culture.
2. On 27 January 2020, ACE published its [new ten year strategy called Let's Create](#), it sets out ACE's vision, objectives and investment principles for 2020-2030. The LGA fed in during two consultation phases, with the first phase covering broad questions about areas of importance, and the second inviting comments on a draft strategy. During the period, the CTS Board also received a presentation from Paul Bristow, ACE's Director of Partnerships.

Key headlines from the strategy:

3. ACE's vision for the next ten years is ambitious and puts at its core three outcomes (creative people, cultural communities and a creative and cultural country) which will improve the cultural offer across the country for everyone.
4. This is a significant shift in approach from the Arts Council and an important one for places across the country.
5. The move aligns Arts Council closely with the work of councils who, in addition to their traditional role of commissioning cultural activity directly, are increasingly acting as place-shapers and conveners, bringing partners together to achieve shared local outcomes. The revised draft closely reflects the language of the LGA's consultation submission.
6. There is a strong inclusion of local government in the strategy, and an acknowledgement that councils are a key partner in achieving ACE's objectives. The LGA is explicitly mentioned as a key partner for delivering on the strategy. Embedding the importance of councils, place, community and everyday creativity in the new strategy means that the LGA will be able to work even more closely with ACE and have a greater impact.
7. The strategy is built around three Outcomes and four Investment Principles. They are designed to work together to achieve our vision of a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.
8. The three outcomes are:
 - 8.1. creative people - how people can develop personal creativity at every stage of their lives. It focuses on amateur and voluntary creative activity, including by children and young people.
 - 8.2. cultural communities - how culture is created by and with people in their communities, and how it shapes the places in which they live, work, learn and visit. It brings the first and third Outcomes together by considering how the professional and

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voluntary sectors can work with each other to help shape stronger cultural provision in villages, towns and cities.

- 8.3. a creative and cultural country - the development of the innovative, collaborative and internationally-facing professional cultural sector that we believe will be needed over the next decade. It looks at the professional cultural sector, including those seeking to develop a career in the creative industries after they leave full-time education.
9. The four investment principles will underpin ACE's funding offer to cultural organisations who will need to demonstrate they are ambitious and deliver high quality cultural activities, dynamic and responsive to challenges, environmentally responsible and are inclusive, represent diversity and are relevant.
10. The LGA had argued for a place based approach to tackling barriers to participation and this theme has been strengthened throughout the final strategy.
11. There is an increased recognition of libraries and museums in the strategy, and their role as critical pieces of cultural infrastructure – places that can host cultural activity, as well as being cultural venues in their own right. This appears to be a direct response to feedback from the LGA, and other library partners, that more work needed to be done in the draft to realise the unique role and development needs of libraries in their own right, as well as their potential as venues.
12. Ensuring children and young people are able to fulfil their creative potential, and access high-quality cultural experiences where they live, go to school and spend their free time continues to be a key part of the strategy. The LGA consultation response called for a greater emphasis on this work than was present in the draft, and this has been done strengthened in the final document.
13. ACE will publish a series of delivery between now and 2030 that will set out its specific priorities for each period.

Implications for Wales

14. The strategy relates to England only.

Next steps: What is missing from the strategy or needs further development:

15. This strategy does not yet have delivery plans associated with it. They will be critical to the success of the strategy.
16. We look forward to working with ACE to align delivery, in particular through the LGA's improvement programmes which are already delivered in partnership with ACE.
17. We are keen to support ACE in its advocacy role to secure policy and funding support for creativity in education from the Department for Education.

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18. Similarly we would like to work with ACE to advocate to the Department for Health and Social care and NHS England to help them to better understand the important contribution art and culture plays in improving and promoting good health and mental wellbeing and to also ensure social prescribing and adult social care is adequately resourced.
19. Whilst we support the strategy's aim of helping children and young people understand and access careers in the creative sector, we would like to see people of all ages (and backgrounds) given the opportunity to access a creative career. To achieve this, ACE should continue to support the British Library in the rollout of the Business and Intellectual Property Centres, which have demonstrated an ability to reach significantly more diverse audiences than other business initiatives, in part due to their location in libraries. We believe ACE to be committed to this, even though not explicitly reflected in the strategy.
20. We will work with ACE to help them develop delivery plans that will maximise the ability of councils to engage with ACE's priorities, and to support councils and their partners in delivering local cultural ambitions. Our improvement contract with ACE will be aligned to deliver this work.