
WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE ARTS – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FROM THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Arts Council of England's (ACE) plans for the future support of the arts in England. ACE and the Regional Arts Boards (RABs) are inviting responses to the document on how the proposals are viewed and how they might work in practice.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following an earlier consultation "Prospectus for Change" in which the ACE put forward proposals for a restructuring of the arts support system in England, the current document "Working Together for the Arts" has been produced. It is now being subjected to its own consultation.

3 CURRENT SYSTEM

- 3.1 The arts support system in England is currently made up of eleven constituent parts. The ACE currently works with ten RABs who are independently constituted. ACE is responsible for distributing central government funding and National Lottery funds for the arts. Responsibility is delegated to the RABs for a wide range of services including the funding and appraisal of regularly funded organisations. The RABs also manage national arts initiatives such as the Regional Arts Lottery Programme and the Year of the Artist.
- 3.2 ACE provides the central focus for liaison and negotiation with government and other national and international agencies. It also acts as an advocate for the arts. RABs however have a more localised focus having links with local and regional government and local arts communities.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 ACE hopes to embark on a period of reform as the existing make-up of the system results in considerable duplication of skills and functions. It is difficult to share expertise across the system and there is no mechanism for sharing best practice between regions. A reform of the system will result in
- Simplification of the arts system

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- Reduction of bureaucracy and duplication
 - Administrative savings that will be channelled to support the arts
 - Increasing devolution of funding and decision making to the regions
 - Providing greater financial flexibility and capacity
 - Significant cost benefit over future years

4.2 To focus the consultation process, ACE have posed a number of questions relating to the key issues on which they are seeking views. These are detailed below with the corresponding answers.

1. Will the proposals meet the objectives identified for a new organisation?

The system will definitely be simplified for the arts community if the regional offices are delegated more authority to make decisions and award grants. Centralisation of all ten RABs under one organisation will ensure a consistent approach by the arts support system across the country. If greater financial capacity and flexibility is passed to the RABs, this should go some way in ensuring that funding of the arts becomes more strategic.

2. Are the proposals likely to deliver well across the full range of requirements for an arts funding and development organisation?

The needs of arts organisations and individual artists will be met if more authority on decision making and awarding of grants is passed to the RABs. In many respects the proposals mirror the organisation of Sport England and the function carried out by its headquarters and the relationship with the regions.

3. Will the proposals address issues raised in the initial consultation concerning regional influence and decision-making?

One of the main concerns of the previous consultation was that the regions would be marginalised by these proposals. Clearly this will not be the case with more authority being delegated to the regions. The formation of one organisation with responsibility for support of the arts in England should provide stability for the RABs and some certainty for the future.

However, it remains to be seen how the additional funds, realised from administrative savings as a result of streamlining, will be allocated. The new organisation must ensure that these funds remain in addition to existing funding and do not replace central funding.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That this report forms this authority's response to the document "Working Together for the Arts". (CD(F&ES))

R Crofts

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Background Papers:

The Arts Council of England – Prospectus for Change
The Arts Council of England – Working Together for the Arts

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