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Thank you for your interest in the Creative Communities Programme.

You should ensure you have read the Guidance Notes provided before applying and bear these in mind when completing your application. You do not need to complete your application all at once - you can save your progress and return at any time.

Downloadable templates have been provided which you will need to complete and upload as part of your application.

NOTES

- Do not attach files other than those requested.
- Do not include web links in any text unless requested.
- Submissions which include redistribution of funding will not be considered.
- Receipt of submissions will be acknowledged by email.
- By submitting your application you are giving consent for us to share information with other key Hull 2017 partners, including The Big Lottery Fund.
- All applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by July 2016. Please do not enquire about the progress of your submission in the meantime as we will unfortunately not be able to respond. We will be in touch if we have any questions and/or if we require further information.
- Should you need further support completing your application please see Help section of this site.

We greatly appreciate you applying. Thank you.

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ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Please complete the following questionnaire to check your eligibility in applying to the Hull 2017 Creative Communities Programme.

Creativity

Does your project celebrate art or culture?

Yes

Themes

Does your project take inspiration from one of the four Hull 2017 themes (Made In Hull / Roots & Routes / Freedom / Tell The World)?

Yes

Additionality

Does your project create something new to make 2017 a success?

Yes

Accessibility

Will your project be open and accessible to all members of the public?

Yes

Engagement

Will your project engage with the people of Hull?

Yes

Location of Activity

Will all or part of the project take place in Hull?

Yes

Timing of Activity

Will all or part of the project take place in 2017?

Yes

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Name of Individual / Organisation

Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service & Verbal Arts Centre, Derry-Londonderry

Name of Project

Reading Rooms

Project Summary

Established by Verbal Arts Centre during UKCoC 2013, Reading Rooms is a low-threshold, high-quality programme of reading based activity celebrating literature, fostering rich, sustainable levels of engagement and participation across all groups.

We will share Reading Rooms as a legacy from Derry-Londonderry 2013 with Hull 2017 and then with UKCoC2021.

General Information

Lead Contact Name

James Kerr

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Project Description

With reference to the Essential Criteria set out in the Guidance Notes, please describe your project or event/activity. You must demonstrate how you are meeting the essential criteria and specify if you are meeting any of the Secondary Criteria.

Reading Rooms is a low threshold, high quality outreach programme of reading based activity celebrating literature to foster rich, sustainable levels of community engagement and participation across all group types. It was established as part of the Verbal Arts Centre's UK City of Culture 2013 programme in Derry-Londonderry.

Since 2013 the Reading Rooms programme has developed right across Northern Ireland and is one of the main legacy successes of 2013.

The aim of this proposal is for Verbal Arts to share the learning and delivery of Reading Rooms with Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service to establish Reading Rooms in Hull during Hull 2017. This will then be shared with the city named as UK City of Culture 2021.

Using a shared reading delivery model the project will work with the general population of Hull as well as targeting some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the city i.e.

- i) older people within and without the care system,
- ii) young people in care/or at risk,
- iii) adults with mental/and or physical disabilities and
- iv) Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds experiencing issues related to racial tension.

The purpose of Reading Rooms is to create an accessible and safe setting for participants to engage and flourish in an enjoyment of literature and other art forms.

The programme has a four phase approach;

1. Library Champions - Purposeful shared reading programme/Library staff training for 20 staff

The project will create a safe space within a range of community venues as well as in Libraries using high quality, locally relevant and thematically targeted literature to engage 35 participant groups comprising of a maximum of 12 participants each. (Total no. of participants 9840)

All groups will meet weekly throughout the year and participate in shared reading sessions where a trained facilitator recruited from Hull Culture & Leisure will read a carefully selected short story and poem. Literary materials for each group type will be selected to meet the needs of the group, encourage the forging of new connections between participants, and promote dialogue & reflection within the group about playing a positive and constructive role in the community within the context of their individual needs.

2. Community Champions - Accredited training & mentoring for community participants

The project will work with 20 individuals recruited from the community participants involved with each phase/season to undertake the accredited Shared Reading training and qualification. Each Community Champion will be partnered with a reading mentor supporting him/her through a structured process enabling them to lead shared reading sessions in their communities. Mentors covering a range of ages, gender and cultural backgrounds will be recruited from the bank of trained Hull Culture & Leisure Library staff, trained during phase 1.

3. Community engagement & delivery (intergenerational, diversity, inclusivity)

Using the skills learned during phase 2 the Community Champion, with his/her mentor, will begin to deliver weekly Reading Rooms sessions to their community. To maximise community integration the sessions will be open to all and take place in a range of different community settings and with a range of different demographic groups including; older people, young people in care, people with learning/physical disability, ethnic minority groups etc. Creating the context and opportunity for each Champion to engage meaningfully with his/her community.

4. Leadership, feedback & communication

The Community Champions will also participate in a weekly peer Reading Room “support and review” feedback session which will be led by an experienced member of staff using the same model.

These sessions will reflect on champions experience to date and input into the ongoing design of the project. It will also facilitate the articulation of their voices in respect of wider issues and concerns connected to their specific communities.

Reading Rooms delivery model? The model involves small groups (up to 12 maximum) of people meeting weekly in a community location where short stories, extracts of novels and poetry are read aloud by a trained practitioner. At regular discussion breaks in the reading, the group is encouraged to reflect on what is being read and to explore how it might relate to their own lives. The programme for each group will also be sprinkled with guests for example Lemn Sissay and James Nesbitt did guest spots at Reading Rooms in Derry-Londonderry. Artists of a similar ilk will be invited as guests to Hull groups. The guest spot may be a writer but equally it may be someone from another art form e.g. film, dance, drama, visual art

Groups will be established, based on experience from Derry adjusted as required to meet the needs of Hull people, by working within communities and over the life of the project recruiting, training and mentoring participants and community workers to extend participation.

Critically the model actively seeks to promote;

1. the participation, training and continuous support/mentoring of volunteers as peer reading leaders
2. the targeted use of literature that relates directly to the experiences of the specific group
3. the locating of the sessions “where people are” rather than emphasising that participants have to come to the project.

The Reading Rooms – legacy handover project is proposed as a 4 season long set of activities covering 12 months so as to ensure sufficient recruitment & training of group leaders, recruitment of targeted participant groups and satisfactory embedding so that the project is self-sustainable post 2017.

Reading Rooms is a bold concept that challenges the most vulnerable of people to step out of their comfort zone, explore ideas and feelings through the writing of others. In doing so they are able to experience the new, unusual and exciting with expert support to help them manage their response and build their confidence to explore more literature, and other art forms, as a consumer but potentially as creators too.

Reading Rooms will be established in community locations, where marginalised and vulnerable groups are already visiting for other purposes e.g. health centres, council support centres, The Warren, libraries, youth centres, homeless hostels and on the street.

Reading Rooms will work with people where they are comfortable, encouraging and challenging them to explore their own fears, perceptions and experiences through literature. Sharing learning so that the community benefits that accrued during UK City of Culture 2013 continue and grow in Hull City of Culture 2017.

The enduring link would be the maintenance of the Reading Rooms network and branding which is deliberate so as to promote sharing of information, development of conferences, promotion of network scale funding bids etc.

We would welcome the support of Hull 2017 to establish a dialogue with Paul Hamlyn Foundation about the strategic development of the project for future UK Cities’ of Culture.

Hull Culture & Leisure has identified the potential of £25,000 legacy funding which could be used to lever in additional funding from Trusts & Foundations.

This project will include the development of an online community network that will enable the sharing of skills and resources between Derry and Hull. The site will be multi layered to provide resources and support for facilitators, mentors and participants.

How this resource is used and developed will be a matter of exploration, it will allow connectedness between participating cities but the level of connectedness will grow as those involved experiment with the potential. We envisage there will be a knowledge and support element to the site with experimentation in the use of other media encouraged.

The Reading Rooms project since established in 2013 in Derry – Londonderry has resulted in;

- i) positive community development among areas of high socio-economic deprivation,
- ii) enhanced levels of inclusion among communities divided along sectarian lines,
- iii) increased self-confidence and personal development of individuals especially young people categorised as at risk
- iv) Cross community and intergenerational engagement.

The project's core objective is to support those individuals and groups marginalised through deprivation, discrimination, circumstances etc. to re-engage with their community. Reading Rooms groups in Northern Ireland successfully includes older people, children and young people at risk, homeless and ethnic minority groups, people in rural communities suffering social isolation.

It is anticipated that the same level of positive community development with those sections of the population hardest to reach will take place in Hull and will be sustainable post 2017.

Looking beyond 2017

As a result of the network of trained Reading Rooms facilitators and mentors the project will continue to be delivered in multiple locations across Hull with relatively little investment. A specific element of season 4 will be the structured "handing-on" of the project to the next UK City of Culture. If for timing reasons, due to the fact that the UK is scheduled to host a European Capital of Culture in 2023 and the next UK City of Culture isn't announced then Season 4 would see Hull handing on the project to another city or cities selected on the basis of need.

The long term aim would be to see the capacity to deliver Reading Rooms at a community level distributed through the existing GB wide national library network showcasing Hull as a creative leader.

Consideration should be given to the investment of post 2017 legacy funding to a Reading Rooms project that showcases Hull across the rest of Great Britain with Hull Culture & Leisure leading on a capacity building programme that maximises the existing skills, resources and expertise of librarians and community workers across the country. This would explicitly demonstrate the cultural innovation, ambition and openness of Hull which would generate profile for the city as well as attract strategic central government interest if positioned appropriately.

Reading Rooms could not have been established without the initiative of the 2013 UK City of Culture – this partnership development between Derry and Hull cannot happen without the 2017 UK City of Culture. Embedded into this dynamic is an obligation to disseminate the model and practice as widely as possible in as sustainable a manner as possible. This will be a central legacy of UK City of Culture 2013, 2017 and on.

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KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

What are the main art forms in your project?

Responses Selected:

Literature

When does your activity take place? Please provide the start date, or advise if this is still to be confirmed.

Format: DD/MM/YYYY

09/01/2017

Start date still to be confirmed

No Responses Selected

Please provide the end date for your activity, or advise if this is still to be confirmed.

Format: DD/MM/YYYY

(No response)

End date still to be confirmed

Responses Selected:

Yes

When will you begin work on developing your project / rehearsing your activity?

Format: DD/MM/YYYY

01/11/2016

Where will your project take place?

Responses Selected:

North Hull

East Hull

West Hull

City Centre

How many performances / days of your event/activity will your project include?

820

How many people are expecting to attend/experience your activity?

0

How many people are you expecting to participate in your activity?

9840

Please describe the relationship with any partners you may be working with.

The Verbal Arts Centre established Reading Rooms in Derry-Londonderry during UK City of Culture 2013. This project will see them share the learning and experience from Derry-Londonderry 2013 with Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service to establish Reading Rooms in Hull during Hull UK City of Culture 2017 as a legacy from one UK City of Culture to the next.

Our intention is to then share this legacy with the next UK City of Culture in 2021.

Hull Library Service has strong community partnerships already in place in Hull, these will be utilised and more developed, particularly at a strategic level to ensure Reading Rooms builds strong foundations in communities to continue beyond 2017.

OTHER INFORMATION

Who will benefit from the project and in what ways?

(Please indicate any particular target groups)

We will work with the general population of Hull as well as targeting some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the city i.e.

1. older people within and without the care system,
2. young people in care/or at risk,
3. adults with mental/and or physical disabilities and
4. Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds experiencing issues related to racial tension.

The purpose of Reading Rooms is to create an accessible and safe setting for participants to engage and flourish in an enjoyment of literature and other art forms.

How will your project be accessible?

Reading Rooms will be established in community locations, where marginalised and vulnerable groups are already visiting for other purposes e.g. health centres, council support centres, The Warren, libraries, youth centres, homeless hostels and on the street.

Reading Rooms will work with people where they are comfortable, encouraging and challenging them to explore their own fears, perceptions and experiences through literature.

Please explain any permissions (for use of space, venue or property) which you have been required to obtain.

Permissions are in place for the use of libraries, parks, leisure centres, community centres i.e. The Freedom Centre, Gipsyville Multi-purpose Centre, St. Margaret's Welcome Centre. As the project and partnerships develop a greater number of locations will be used.

How will you promote the event/activity and to which target audiences?

The Verbal Arts Centre was established in 1992 and is situated on a sectarian interface area on the city walls in Derry/Londonderry. The primary purpose of the Verbal Arts Centre is to give everyone regardless of age, background or ability the chance to "tell their story".

At the heart of our work are the values of respect, tolerance and inclusion that everyone's story is important and needs to be heard, while at the same time encouraging participants to be open and listen to the stories of others.

We have considerable experience in the promotion and collection of purposeful stories with all ages on a cross-community basis including;

- ☒ young people in early years,
- ☒ primary level and post-primary level education (both formal and informal)
- ☒ community groups,
- ☒ issue based groups,
- ☒ communities of interest marginalised in society and
- ☒ intergenerational projects

The Verbal Arts Centre has a track record of over 24 years in delivering community/good relations programmes on a cross-community and cross-border basis throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

These programmes enable those taking part to look at issues that exist in their own communities, to explore the origins of these issues in a safe environment and to promote the building of a united and shared community.

Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service also has considerable experience of community engagement and a good track record of attracting audiences, over 42,000 people of all ages and backgrounds participated in library events and activities last year. We will use the skills and experience of library staff utilising their local connections to reach residents from all target groups. Library Champions will build partnerships with groups that already meet for other reasons. Experience of community engagement in other projects has shown that face to face contact and relationship building (and nice biscuits!) are key to getting people interested but more importantly to sustaining that interest .

Hull Libraries also has a strong social media presence, we will utilise this to promote Reading Rooms. We will also use local media connections to ensure the project receives coverage on radio and TV and in Newspapers.

Have you created a project like this before? Please tell us what experience you / your organisation or partner organisation has had in delivering projects of this scale/nature in the last five years.

The Verbal Arts Centre were awarded over £200,000 to establish Reading Rooms in Derry-Londonderry during UK City of Culture 2013. Since then Reading Rooms has continued to flourish in Derry - Londonderry. The Verbal Arts Centre also has a track record of over 24 years in delivering community/good relations programmes on a cross-community and cross-border basis throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service also has considerable experience of managing and delivering large scale projects independently and in partnership. Recent examples are:

- Hull Children's Book Award in its 9th year, with 50 schools participating each year between January and June. 2 voting days are held with 800 students and the shortlisted writers.
- Untold Hull - is a 3 year oral history project gathering the stories of Hull people.
- Projects with Freedom Festival e.g. Freedom to Tell Tales and Beyond Words
- led a partnership of 35 library services to deliver Try Reading a project that linked the arts with Rugby League World Cup 2013
- Networked Narratives, a partnership project with Fact Liverpool, Wigan and Burnley libraries
- Each year we deliver over 150 reading and art based out of school activities and over 500 under 5s events

Please supply a brief outline biography of the main members of your team including the lead artist(s). Web links can be used for this section.

About Verbal Arts

The Verbal Arts believes that narrative/storytelling is a transformational art form open to all, through which we translate values into action: engaging heart, head, and hands.

Narrative/storytelling is accessible & participation based created from the experience of challenge, choice and outcome which we all have encountered.

The Verbal Arts aims to give everyone regardless of ability, background or circumstances the opportunity and the means to; tell their story & listen to the stories of others. Stories are made up of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterise who and what we are and are reconstituted and articulated through language both spoken and written.

The ability for all sections of the community (especially the most vulnerable and marginalised) to reconstitute and articulate shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices through language is the unchanging need that the Verbal Arts strives to meet.

About Hull Culture & Leisure

Hull Culture and Leisure Ltd is a not for profit company with charitable objectives established in April 2015 to deliver cultural, library, leisure,

parks and catering services on behalf of Hull City Council.

Its vision is to improve life chances for people by providing high quality, affordable and accessible opportunities for cultural and physical activity.

Hull Culture and Leisure Library Service aims to “connect residents and communities to knowledge, culture and one another to create ambition, aspiration and a sense of positive well-being” by providing a highly skilled staff team who will enable and support residents to be independent and self-resilient.

How will you measure and evaluate your success, and how will you share that with us at the end?

Project evaluation is carried out using technology enabled focus groups. The Verbal Arts uses a research tool called Perception Analyzer Instant Response dials (see fig. 1).

The Perception Analyzer is an interactive group testing system that Verbal uses on all its projects as it bridges the gap between quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is an advanced data collection and analysis tool that combines exploratory freedom, depth of analysis and the immediacy of interactive group research with the precision of survey research methodology.

Instant Response is more quantitative and representative than a focus group because more people can be tested. It is also more conducive to extensive project variable testing than traditional survey techniques as groups enjoy the experience the results are instant and can be used to stimulate additional real time discussion

(Figure 1 – An Instant Response dial)

The advantages offered by the technology include the capacity to;

1. Identify, isolate and test a large amount of specific project variables from all sides of the multiple viewpoints held by the respondents and the potential contribution to project outcomes such as health & wellbeing, community connectedness, enjoyment etc.

Using this technology also enables the project to quickly and accurately

- Establish baselines
- Track project effectiveness during the project
- Capture post project information

How will you document your event/activity?

A Reading Rooms Facebook page and Twitter account will be set up. Each group leader will take a photo of his/her group before the session. Hull Culture & Leisure, Verbal Arts, Hull Culture Company and Hull City Council will be tagged in each post and each organisation will be asked to share, retweet etc.

Subject to available resources a short advocacy film will be made at the end of Season 1 as a recruitment tool as well as promoting the innovative approach of Hull Culture & Leisure and the success of City of Culture in terms of the scale and scope of community engagement.

This film will form the foundation of the project's legacy development.