

‘a space’ arts Transition Project Application Pack



Introduction

For 22 years 'a space' arts has been incrementally and strategically growing. We've conceived, created and established new projects, nurtured artists, supported audiences and created cultural infrastructure in Southampton. We are now at seminal stage, a turning point, and focused on developing a future in which we maximise the potential of the organisation and the income from our cultural assets. To achieve this we are now seeking to work with experienced cultural professionals to develop a new business plan to guide us through the next 5-year chapter of our work.

The Transition Project Brief

The brief calls for a holistic review across the breadth of the organisations project's (see Family Tree below) and the production of a new business plan. This should be informed by internal discussions with our team, external conversations with partners, key stakeholders and past/present funders and input from the appointed external experienced experts. We would also expect competitor analysis to be undertaken to benchmark any identified income generating/business opportunities. The final plan should articulate our future vision and provide a blueprint for transitioning into a more resilient future.

A core objective of the work is to maximise revenue from the organisation's existing cultural assets, balancing our cultural ambitions and programming with commercial opportunities, new sources of funding and increased, diversified income. The review should consider a wide range of relevant elements including, but not limited to, organisational models, modes of operation, commercial activities that support cultural programming (and vice versa), governance and staff resources. The work should also explore the potential to partner with other local organisations who may be interested in working with us on new business opportunities or to use our facilities.

Central to the business plan is a focus on God's House Tower (GHT), the organisation's flagship venue, and how to increase its income generation to build surpluses. GHT is the most commercially sensitive of our projects yet the one with most potential to generate revenue and develop a robust post-pandemic economic model.

The final outcome of this brief will be the production of a new 5-year business plan, enacted from April 2023, to guide the organisation across the next period of its growth and lead us into a more resilient future.

We want to explore and are willing to implement new ways of operating our cultural assets by revising and evolving our existing business model for a post pandemic world. We envisage revisiting and updating key aspects of our operations and income streams along with considering new opportunities that generate income. The plan should aim to balance maximising revenue, new commercial opportunities and sources of funding with our cultural programme, artist development offer and public engagement activities.

Approach and Considerations

We want to work with consultants that understand the ethos of a progressive, inclusive and ambitious organisation and consultants who can support our journey to sustainability.

We want to work with the successful consultants to form the final detailed work-plan and scope which will be agreed by the board at the start of the appointment.

We envisage the consultants considering the following points and working in the following ways however we remain open to the consultants input towards content and methodology:

- Internal conversations with the team including board members, core staff and front of house crew to understand current structures, operations, income, expenditure and cultural provision.
- External discussions with existing partners, potential partners and stakeholders to understand the wider context and place of our organisation and work in the local economy and cultural offer, and to evaluate future joint opportunities.
- Talking to artists and audience members (as required) to seek user views on our work and areas into which we could develop.
- Reporting to the Director and a business review subgroup of key trustees and members of staff, ahead of presenting the plan in draft and final stages to the wider board and team.
- Conducting appraisal reviews on a range of areas, including but not limited to governance (membership and succession), management and organisational structure, existing income streams, expenditure and overheads, commercial opportunities and fundraising.
- Guidance on balancing a high-quality artistic programme with hires and commercial uses of GHT, along with exploring, considering and presenting ways of maximising income across all current projects.
- Reviewing fundraising plans and supporting the progression of our fundraising ambitions, including Trusts and Foundations but also new opportunities.
- Exploring the benefits of establishing a trading arm to assist in maximise commercial income, and/or other models to commercially support charitable activities.
- Assisting to develop plans that drive footfall to all our venues, in particular to GHT located in Southampton's old town area. Plans should explore new cultural, leisure or businesses activities in partnership with Southampton City Council venues and local businesses.
- Developing budget forecasts across the 5-year period with a detailed budget for 23/24
- Identifying risks and offering mitigations across for the life of the business plan.

The final outcome will be a new 5-year business plan, approved by the board of trustees, for the period April 2023 to March 2028.

Organisational context - aspacearts.org.uk

Since 2000 the organisation has grown from a single gallery to become a registered charity, ACE NPO (since 2018) and respected visual arts organisation. We deliver a range of projects to 'support artists and inspire audiences' including affordable studios, public gallery spaces and venues, along with a multi-strand Artist Resources programme. Our work grows artist communities, reaches and engages a wide public demographic, and culturally reanimates vacant properties to create new cultural infrastructure; we play an important role in Southampton's cultural ecology.

Venues

Since 2018 two new major projects, GHT and RIPE, have expanded our portfolio to create further cultural opportunities for artists, audiences and communities, as well as significantly adding to our assets and liabilities. These sit alongside our cornerstone projects of the Arches studios, home to 21 visual artists since 2004, and a multi-dimensional programme of Artist Resources activities.

Our current projects are built on foundation projects that included the Bargate Monument Gallery (2006 - 2012), ArtVaults (2004, 2005, 2007, 2008 & 2019), the Sorting Office studios (2013 - 2018), Talent Development (artist bursary project when funding available) and our inaugural gallery in Old Northam Road (2002 - 2004) from where we grew. These projects all enabled us to grow and develop, however they were all of a semi-permeant nature e.g. the Bargate Monument Gallery ran for 6-years. The move to GHT was driven in part to establish a permanent flagship venue and base for the organisation; we now need to maximise its potential.

Team

Our staff team currently includes 8 members, in a post-pandemic restructured organisation, including a combined Director/General Manager, a management team of 4 across Programming, Communications, Finance and GHT, supported by Officer and Assistant level posts.

Across the core team 6 are women, including 3 of the management team, there is no gender pay gap, we are real living wage accredited, we are driving salaries up through annual 5% pay rises, actively monitor and promote individual well-being and work in a collectively supportive spirit.

Our board of trustees is led by a strong and experienced female chair, 7 out of 9 trustees are women, and collectively the board are extremely supportive, pro-active, generous with their time, open to sharing skills, imparting their knowledge, and are invested in the organisation's future.

GHT context - godshousetower.org.uk

Our vision transformed GHT, taking it from a vacant scheduled ancient monument to a dynamic new arts and heritage venue in the heart of the old town. This flagship venue now hosts an enticing exhibitions and activities programme by regional visual arts talent and cultural practitioners that attract audiences from a wide demographic spectrum. The venue also includes a permanent exhibition 'stories behind the stones', located in the tower about the monument's history that leads you to enjoy the rooftop views across Southampton water. Income is currently generated through a cafe, bar and shop, ticket sales to the tower exhibition, regular private hires and the recent return of live events as we rebuild a post pandemic evening economy.

Following a 7-year development project GHT launched in October 2019; five months later it was forced to close due to the pandemic. Through careful financial management, an organisational restructure and emergency funding, we survived. GHT reopened in June 2021 on a reduced hours maximum impact model, with activities focused on 3 days a week (Friday to Sunday) mitigating overheads as audiences rebuild. Since launching we've traded for circa 15 out of 30 months and therefore haven't gained clarity on trading patterns, seasonality and how to maximise the venue's commercial potential.

The original GHT business planning premise, written in 2017 before the pandemic, built key commercial activities and sources of income around the tourist economy (specifically cruise ship

passengers as GHT is located opposite the International Cruise Terminal), however this market has vanished and therefore the context in which GHT operates has significantly changed. There is now an opportunity to reconsider key audiences and income generation aligned with post-pandemic changes in local needs, visitor requirements and motivations.

Across 22/23 GHT will deliver a high-quality programme which seeks to broaden public engagement and create new or expanded opportunities for income generation, for example through reintroducing evening events and building on our existing hires model. Therefore, the work of the new business plan can assist to re-gear the venues economy from April 23. This follows an initial post-pandemic development year and our first full 12 months of trading (June 21 - June 22). However, we cannot sustain the level of activity envisaged for the year 23/24 without changes and/or significantly increasing income.

RIPE context - ripesouthampton.org.uk

RIPE, designed to retain artistic talent educated at both of our local partner universities (Solent University and the University of Southampton), is achieving this and demonstrating far more potential than originally envisaged. The seasonal programme of events and exhibitions across three character properties supports an annual cohort of new graduates, after which there is an option for them to join the ZEST Collective, a growing artist community based in the road.

The project is culturally reanimating Old Northam Road (ONR) a neglected part of the city centre and there is significant appetite from the organisation and partners to sustainably grow the project further. A 10-year vision to create a new independent artist quarter in ONR is emerging, a vision included in Southampton's UK City of Culture bid and one of the legacy projects that could now be taken forward by the Cultural Trust. How to maximise revenue from this project as it grows is also a key consideration for the business planning brief.

How to apply

To apply for this opportunity please send a proposal covering the following elements:

- An explanation of how you would respond to this brief and why you are suitable for the role
- An outline of your methodology and approach to the work and producing the final plan
- Details of the team that will work on the project and their specialisms, evidenced through CV's of all relevant team members
- A fee proposal for the work stating number of days and day rates for all professionals included
- A timeline for delivering the work including milestones and meetings with board, staff and partners

Please aim to cover the above points on no more than 4 sides A4, team member CV's can be in addition to this.

Please send your proposal to dan@spacearts.org.uk by 9:00am on Monday 25th July

Budget

A maximum fee of up to £24k is available to complete the work of this brief, this must include all costs and expenses and VAT (if applicable).

Interviews

Interviews will be held on **Monday 1st August**, ideally in person at GHT (SO14 2NY), however

zoom interviews can be accommodated. No travel expenses are available for interviews.

Delivery Timeline

Following the appointment the following timeline will guide the project stages:

- Start up meeting - Team to assemble w/s 05/09/22
- Stage 1 - Research, meetings - draft report by Monday 03/10/22
- Review 1 - Feedback from organisation by Friday 07/10/22
- Stage 2 - Development work - updated report by Monday 31/10/22
- Review 2 - Feedback from organisation by Friday 04/11/22
- Stage 3 - Final Business Plan presented to and agreed with board w/s 28/11/22

The final business plan is required by December 2022 to allow time for transitions to be implemented by the organisation before the new financial year 2023/24.

Resources

Documents and resources available to the selected consultant include; our recent NPO application, the current one-year business plan, impact reports from RIPE and Arches open studios, staff structure diagram, job descriptions, audience finder reports, Artist Development evaluation 2021, and financial information including up to date management accounts.

Family Tree

The visual family tree shows the organisation's current projects through their respective logos.



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