

Information Sheet: Bringing the arts to your own community

The first thing to think about if you would like to bring a new activity to your village or community is establishing a need or an interest. You need to take steps to find out whether a sufficient number of people would be interested in attending. There are various ways of achieving this, some of them far more time-consuming than others:

- Survey/questionnaire – you could distribute these door to door throughout your village or parish but collecting the completed forms can be both time-consuming and frustrating and you may need some additional help from friends. You could also use Survey Monkey – it's easy to use and tends to get a good rate of response. Utilise local FaceBook groups and make Twitter work for you.
- A notice in your village or parish newsletter or on your village notice board setting out what you plan to do and asking people to contact you if they may be interested – be aware that only the very interested are likely to contact you as this involves action (and effort) on their part
- A "sign up sheet" in the village pub or shop where people can sign up to indicate that they may be interested
- Collecting anecdotal evidence by talking to people and contacting other groups who may have a similar audience or membership
- Contacting individuals and groups in other villages and parishes who have tried something similar and asking them how successful their activity was, how well attended and so on. If you are not sure how to go about this, or who to contact, ask the Creative Economy Officer for help

It is a good idea to collect this information because it will both prevent you putting a lot of time and effort into something which is unlikely to succeed, but also because it will satisfy most funders requirements for evidence of need. Once you have gathered the information you may discover that there are a suitable number of people who would be interested, which means you can progress your idea with minimal risk, or you may discover that your idea is unlikely to be sustainable. If the latter you may choose to go ahead anyway in the hope that you will attract people from outside the immediate area, or that more people will become involved once the idea has got off the ground. You will need to think carefully about cash-flow if you choose to accept this risk and you may find it harder to attract funding.

You'll probably find it helpful to involve other people at an early stage in planning. A group of a few people will have broader skills and more time available. You can also spread the load for the long list of tasks which you will end up generating.

Contact other people who have delivered something similar and ask if they would be able to help either with advice or practically. They may be willing to share contacts and they may well help by telling you all the pitfalls so you can avoid making the same mistakes.

Some basics to consider:

- A suitable venue which is available at the right time for your event and is affordable
- Adequate facilities at your venue such as refreshments, toilets, parking
- Good access which ensures all members of the community can join your activity if they would like to
- A realistic budget and a plan for how you will raise the money
- Access to the equipment and resources your activity might need

Remember that there is help available:

The Creative Economy Officer can help with advice on funding, publicity & marketing, professional contacts and venues. Make contact at an early stage.

Rural Arts North Yorkshire manage the On Tour scheme (commissioned by Ryedale District Council) which works with local promoters to make professional live performances available in village hall venues. You can find out more about this on the Rural Arts website at www.ruralarts.org They offer lots of support to voluntary promoters in the scheme.