



TVA Strategic Plan 2015-18





Inspiring people:

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Changing futures

introduction:

Tees Valley Arts is a small organisation which makes a big impact, and has done for over thirty years. We have been designing and delivering life-changing creative activities since 1982, working with a huge range of partners and supporting people from all backgrounds and of all abilities, ranging in age from 0 to 103!

Through our creative activities, designed and delivered by carefully managed, imaginative and resourceful freelance artists, we help our project participants learn new skills, engage better with services, think about and take positive steps towards a better future, express themselves and advocate for what they want, rebuild damaged lives and generally make progress – all while having a creative, interesting and enjoyable time.

We help our partners – who might be local authorities, or Teesside University, or other educational establishments, or health initiatives, or national charities, or voluntary sector agencies, or community groups – to achieve their aims and to work well with their identified beneficiaries, including some who may be quite resistant and hard to engage.

This three year plan aims to introduce the organisation and to explore why and how we do what we do – and to explain some of what it is that we actually do – and to outline our plans for the future, particularly in the light of the recently announced intended bid for City of Culture 2025.

TVA runs lots of different projects, of different types and scales, and working with lots of different types of participants, at any given time. Throughout this plan there are references to, and pictures from, different projects and events, that we hope will give a flavour of the range of our activities so far, and which indicate the range of what the next three years will bring.

TVA thanks all our funders, partners, colleagues, Board members, supporters, artists and participants; thank you for our history, and thank you for our future.



Rowena Sommerville
Director, TVA



P15VC

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you to
be a
doctor
like
me

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How come
you love it
if I love you

I love you
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executive summary:

This strategic plan aims to govern and underpin TVA's intended actions from 2015 to 2018; this plan also aims to explain and contextualise what TVA does (and how, why, where and with whom) for existing partners - and for new partners that we will meet along the way.

TVA's projects are varied and diverse, so this plan aims to explain how they come about, how they are managed, and how they are funded; TVA's projects also vary over time, so this plan aims to give a flavour of the variety, and of the varieties of scale, project length and project budgets.

This plan also aims to explore the magic ingredient in all the projects – and that is the use of the arts to achieve both arts and non-arts outcomes, such as engagement, understanding, skills gain or confidence; and TVA confidently asserts, that the higher the aims for the arts within any project, then the better will be the outcomes for the people taking part in it.

This plan outlines our communications planning – although we recognise that by 2018 the rates of invention and churn within digital and social media guarantees that names of platforms and sites which are current now will undoubtedly have changed.

And this plan gives a broad outline of how TVA's finances work now, explains the approaches which we think will continue to work in the future, plus new approaches which we think will make strategic sense for future sustainability, particularly the embedding of strong alliances and partnerships.

Finally, we offer our thanks to all the funders, all the partners, all the artists and all the participants who have made this work possible until now, and to those who will contribute so much to TVA in the future.

I myself joined TVA in 1999 as a part time Projects Officer; after a lengthy patchwork career as a freelance illustrator and writer; I became Director in 2009, having also been Literature Development Officer and Social Inclusion Manager along the way. It hasn't all been easy, it hasn't been smooth – but it has nearly all been very interesting! Some of it has been wonderful – including some bits that have moved me to tears.

I thank all my colleagues, Board members and partners, and here's to TVA's next three years!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rowena Sommerville". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rowena" and the last name "Sommerville" clearly distinguishable.

Rowena Sommerville
TVA Director



what we do and why:


Tees Valley Arts (TVA) is a participatory arts organisation based in Middlesbrough, working across the five boroughs of the Tees Valley and occasionally beyond, and was established, as Cleveland Arts, in 1982. The organisation was originally set up as the arts development wing of Cleveland County Council, but is now a wholly independent charitable trust and company limited by guarantee.

TVA is a participatory arts organisation - TVA believes that carefully designed, managed and delivered creative participation can help people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities move forward and take positive steps in life. Our participants have ranged from 0 (babies of teenage parents) to 103 (participant in the Writing: Home project), and a great deal of our work is with young people, especially those in challenging or vulnerable situations.

Taking part in creative activities, whether it's making music, or drawing, or film-making or any of the other myriad art-forms, can help people think, relax, engage, reflect, express and progress – and, if the activities are properly designed and delivered – the magic can happen without people even consciously knowing it, and without them ever having consciously thought that they would like to take part in the arts – we do a lot of what we do 'by stealth'! Creative participation can also help people become more independent, again as both individuals and/or as groups, so that they become more active and empowered citizens, planning and leading their own actions.

And of course, this participation is good for the arts in general too, because if people have enjoyed taking part in the arts, they are then so much more likely to visit a gallery or a museum, or to go to a concert or performance (this is particularly significant in an area like Tees Valley where cultural uptake is not strong).

We also believe and affirm that the greater the aspiration for the quality of the arts engaged with, then the better will be the overall outcomes for everyone, and we believe that our projects can demonstrate the truth of this.



A project example would be the stART (see what we did there?) programme: the project outline is that 10 young people, Not in Education, Employment or Training, aged 16-19 years, work with a host artist, support worker and visiting sessional artists (could be a photographer, sculptor, musician) for 3 days a week over 8 weeks. During that time the young people take part in creative activities that start off at an easy level, but build up to more complex things, so that the participants gradually – often without recognising it – gain skills, gain confidence, learn to turn up regularly, to work with others, to focus and to reflect. We try to build in the Arts Award as well, so that the young people come out with an accredited qualification, often their only one.

After taking part in stART, we have seen many previously rather lost young people, re-engage with their own lives and with making progress, perhaps to college or to other training – sometimes this is in the arts or creative sector, but we've also seen stART graduates go on to accounting, childcare, retail and animal husbandry! Whatever they go on to do, it is because the experiences, stimulation and enjoyment of stART have helped them take stock and then take charge of next steps in their lives.

Another project example would be creative work with a group of people who have mental health issues which mean that they feel isolated, lacking in confidence, not able to speak up for themselves and despairing of the future. Again, taking part in carefully thought through and supportively delivered creative activities can help them enjoy themselves, have a reason to get out of bed and to meet up with others, to feel welcome in a safe environment, and to express themselves, all the while gaining skills, having an ambition and interest for themselves, and possibly producing advocacy materials which allow them to communicate to others and to counteract the stigma which can attach to mental health troubles. All of which will, inevitably, contribute to an improved outlook.

A third project example might be science through the arts, for example working with a class of young people looking at climate change, and researching what flooding might do to their communities. Working with a writer and an animator to end up with a snazzy and amusing short film called 'Nightmare on Flood Street' will ensure that the learning and the research stays with them, is something they have really engaged with, thought about and enjoyed doing, rather than just another science topic that might just float past them (sorry). And just to say – Nightmare on Flood Street, which was made by animator Mark Jobe and writer Niel Bushnell working with students of Macmillan Academy, Middlesbrough in 2014 as part of the One Planet Middlesbrough initiative, was nominated for an award at the Berwick Film Festival, and shown in Hollywood and at the BFI Southbank Kids For Kids Festival!

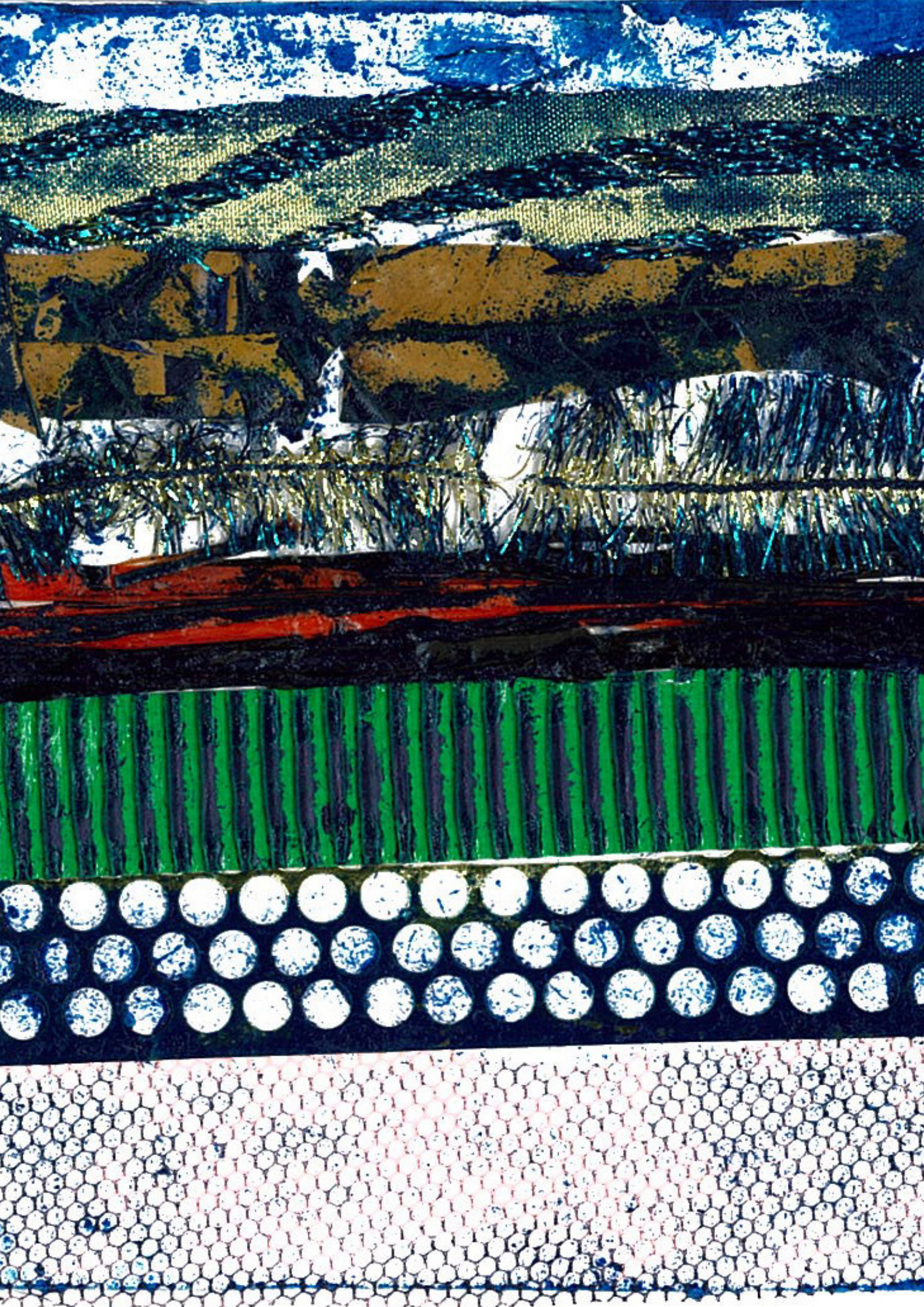
A young participant of another science project said 'art makes science un-boring', and we can't argue with that!

Thus we believe that participatory arts can help individuals, can strengthen communities, and can definitely save the planet.

TVA manages its projects under three thematic headings: 'Education', 'Inclusion' and 'Heritage and Environment'. As you might imagine, 'Education' projects are those wherein the key aim/s are about learning, gaining skills and so on; 'Inclusion' projects are those wherein the key aims are about working with individuals and communities who are, for any reason, at risk of marginalisation or exclusion, to help them re-engage and make positive progress in their lives; and 'Heritage and Environment' projects are those through which people are helped to learn about or engage with their natural, cultural, architectural, industrial or other heritage/s and/or to learn about science, in its broadest sense.

Naturally, most projects may contain many actions, aims and outcomes which overlap these boundaries – and that's a good thing. Often the distinctions between these thematic allocations may be largely to do with the funder or commissioning partner, rather than to do with differing approaches or activities.





context: tva in the tees valley

TVA is based in Middlesbrough and works across the five boroughs of the Tees Valley – Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton – and occasionally beyond.

The Tees Valley sub-region faces many economic and social challenges, and remains fixed in the minds of many as identified almost wholly by post-industrial blight, unemployment and poor health outcomes, and possibly the invention of the (in)famous snack, the Parmo! While these factors do exist, the sub-region also contains excellent universities and colleges, leading research hospitals, inventive and sustainable new industries and, as they always say, easy access to lovely countryside and coast.

However, we must acknowledge that there are many poor areas and estates, that educational attainment in the secondary phase drops off from nationally average to considerably below, that some wards have multiple indices of deprivation including rather astonishingly low figures for life expectancy, and that the sub-region has been identified as economically under-active and lacking entrepreneurialism.

Furthermore, the sub-region remains culturally fragile, with just a few key arts venues, and, for example, little night-time activity to attract the discerning cultural consumer. Having said all of which, there are always points of hope, with young artists' collectives, bands, poetry groups and other such initiatives going on if you know where to look, and now the exciting announced intention to bid for the 2025 UK City of Culture.

As previously stated, TVA believes that everyone should have access to the arts, and should feel welcome and confident to visit galleries, museums and other venues, but frequently this is not the case. TVA often works with people with little self-confidence and few obvious artistic skills, so we, and all our artists, work hard to make people feel relaxed and safe, and then we slowly engage, support and challenge them, so that they discover skills, aspiration and enjoyment. We don't go on to an estate or into a youth group saying 'who wants to do some lovely art?', because the answers would probably be horrible, but we set up activities which are initially easy to take part in, with quick wins, so that people surprise themselves and then come back for more.

organisation: shape and who we are

TVA is a charitable trust and a company limited by guarantee. We have a Board of Trustees, eight at time of writing, who represent a broad mix of local authority Councillors, creative industries and individuals, academia, environmental management and finance; new members as of December 2014 are a Councillor (Redcar and Cleveland) and the Director of External Relations at Teesside University. Our Chair at time of writing is Richard Anderson, Head of Risk and Compliance at Gentoo Housing Group, and before Richard it was Tony Campbell, Managing Director of Creative Glass, and also very involved in Stockton's regeneration partnership – Tony gets the long service medal, having been on the Board for fourteen years! The Board is entirely voluntary, and their contribution is very important to TVA's continued and continuing health, and is much appreciated.

During the period governed by this strategic plan we will undertake a review of the composition of the Board, together with an up to date skills analysis, to support any targeted recruitment which might be considered necessary.

TVA's activity, operations and programme are governed and underpinned by a full set of policies, each of which is presented to the Board for review every two years. These policies are available through the website and on request.

TVA Patrons:

TVA has two patrons, both of whom are proud supporters of Teesside, and – we hope! – of Tees Valley Arts. They are **Mark Benton**, well known actor and a former contestant of Strictly Come Dancing, and **Steph McGovern**, BBC economics and business presenter on BBC Breakfast, among other programmes.

Operationally, TVA has a hub and spokes model, with a small core team and then artists and other project workers are contracted to detailed, time-limited briefs, subject to activity funding.

The core team is just three roles: Director; Office Co-ordinator and Projects Officer; all currently part time - the remit and responsibilities of the roles are exactly what you would imagine from the titles.

The Director leads/ supports/ oversees all the organisational activity and reports to the Board of Trustees (see more below). The current Director – author of this plan – is Rowena Sommerville. Rowena has a background of professional freelance arts practice in illustration and poetry, having had several children's books published, and having contributed numerous poems to anthologies and magazines over the years. She also sings, notably with acappella band 'Henwen', but also with various configurations of the many musicians who live in and around Robin Hood's Bay – at varying levels of professionalism!

Rowena began working for TVA in 1999, when it was still called Cleveland Arts, on an arts and disability programme, and began the organisation's continued commitment to engagement with refugees and other newly arrived communities.

The Office Co-ordinator is Peter Neal, who oversees TVA's finances, communications and general organisational operations. Peter has a background in property development, and a lifelong interest in the arts and social/ cultural development.

The Projects Officer is Ree Collins, who also has an established freelance practice as a drama worker and performer, including a variety of projects working with young people across the North East. Ree has previously spent a year as performer and stage manager with performance artist Bobby Baker, on the 'Mad Gyms and Kitchens' tour; Ree has a keen interest in both project management and artistic delivery.

Also 'in the office' at time of writing are the Refugee Arts Worker and the Adult Projects Officer, both freelance and time-limited contracted, rather than part of the essential core team.



Adult Projects Officer (Project Funded):

TVA's Adult Projects Officer has been contracted to develop TVA's programme of work with adults(!), which has waxed and waned over the years, subject to the organisation's capacity for collaboration and development and the availability of funding. The APO is Miki Rogers, a visual/ textile artist and cultural activist, whose interests include organising 'Totally Locally' markets and other such initiatives.

This post is funded by the (former) Lloyds TSB Foundation for 18 months (part time) and affords TVA some much needed capacity, especially to attend preparation and planning meetings for collaborative bids.



Refugee Arts Worker (Project Funded):

TVA began working with refugees, asylum seekers and others newly arrived in 2002, shortly after Teesside had become a government dispersal area for asylum seekers. We believe that the arts can help newly arrived people settle and rebuild their lives in essentially three ways: support and sign-posting for those (few) individuals who have either been professional artists in their countries of origin and/or who have creative talents at that level; support for community groups who wish to celebrate/ challenge/ stretch their own cultural interests and practice; and events and celebrations that can bring all the foregoing and other community groups, including 'locals', together in the spirit of peace, love and understanding!

Our Refugee Arts Worker is Maurice Dezou, originally from Ivory Coast, who is a musician and film-maker; and a prominent member of various arts and cultural diversity initiatives across the North East.

This role (part time) and associated project costs is funded by a 3 year grant from the Northern Rock Foundation, who have been a strong ally and supporter of TVA over many years.

Image: The Tees Valley Creative Afro-Women group at the BBC1 Great North Passion

Photograph: Adrian Moule / Supported through the Wider World Programme funded by Northern Rock Foundation



partners:

Almost all of TVA's work is developed and delivered in partnership with other organisations, which might be statutory, voluntary or community-based – with one or two rare exceptions such as the refugee arts work, where the RAW actively seeks out and recruits people to take part in, and benefit from, our activities. TVA projects vary hugely in scale and budget (1 day to 3 years, a few hundred pounds to a few hundred thousand), and similarly partners can range from large statutory bodies to small special interest community groups such as a group of mothers on a particular estate or adults living with ADHD.

When we work in partnership with another agency then our activities will be designed to align with, enhance and to help achieve their overall aims – often when potential beneficiaries are hard to engage or retain, and where adding stimulating and enjoyable creative sessions into an overall offer can achieve surprisingly positive outcomes.

TVA works in partnership with Teesside University both through involvement in strategic initiatives and 'on the ground'; TVA delivers a number of events and initiatives for TU, including e.g. taster days for young people with statements of educational need, and events which contribute to the internationalisation of the campus. This partnership is currently strengthening, and is likely to be very important for TVA over the next few years.

TVA works in partnership with other arts organisations, such as Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima) on various initiatives, including the Tees Valley cultural email-out and CPD for artists, and mima is managed through Teesside University. TVA also links with other arts organisations in the region or wider, contributing to national networks of e.g. participatory arts organisations, or of organisations working with refugee and diverse artists.

TVA works can work with different departments of all five Tees Valley Councils, and at any given point might be working with them, using the arts to e.g.: engage with young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training; or to help overcome social isolation of older people; or to help address the stigma of mental illness; or to offer new opportunities to adults with learning difficulties; or to help communities learn about and celebrate their area's heritage.





TVA works/ can work with health groups, using the arts to e.g.: help groups understand, deal with and make peer to peer advocacy materials about difficult messages such as smoking cessation or weight management. TVA can be a partner in collaborative bids where several voluntary sector agencies come together, often with one as lead, to submit larger (e.g. could be several million pounds) bids to strategic funds such as Big Lottery Ageing Better.

TVA is a member of Synergy, the umbrella organisation for voluntary sector agencies working in Stockton, so we may be involved in collaborative bidding and delivery through that.

TVA works/ can work with other voluntary sector agencies and/or charities, using the arts to e.g.: encourage young people at risk of sexual exploitation to keep attending and using services offered by Barnard's SECOS (Sexually Exploited Children On the Streets) service by offering them exciting and enjoyable positive activities; to help environmental managers inform and enthuse people with the special nature and interest of a particular managed site; to help a group of people attempting to live in abstinence from previous substance abuse to enjoy and express themselves and to develop inner resilience.

Over some years TVA has worked in partnership with Arts Council/ Trinity College London to deliver and disseminate Artsmark and Arts Award, however, changes to these programmes, at national level, have meant that our continuing involvement is unclear at time of writing, certainly at the level of offering training to advisers, or of being a local Artsmark validator.

However, TVA has had particular success in embedding Arts Award in projects with young people, especially those in challenging circumstances, and this will continue. The nature of Arts Award is that it is built up through evidence in a diary or portfolio – eg this is me taking part in a papier mache workshop, this is me singing on stage and this is what I thought about it – and with young people who are very disengaged we often don't tell them at the start of a project that they will be undertaking a qualification, as this can scare them off! The diaries also promote reflectivity, in what can be chaotic lives, and help to support the growth of confidence and the gain of transferable skills.

Additionally, TVA may work with strategic business development agencies to benefit from their expertise in business development and strategy, to inform and improve our future sustainability.

An abstract artwork consisting of several overlapping, wavy lines in various colors including blue, yellow, orange, red, green, and purple. The lines are drawn with a soft, textured stroke, possibly using colored pencils or pastels, and they flow across the top half of the page.

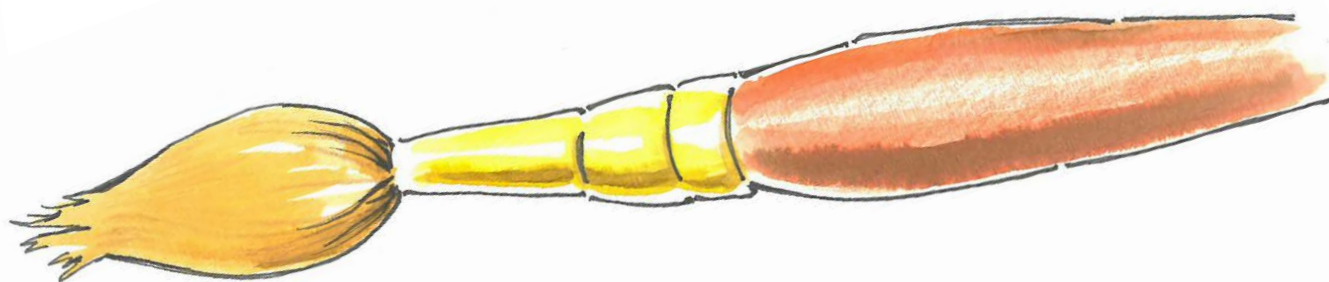
artists:

TVA's activities are delivered by freelance artists, offering almost all the art-forms that anyone can think of, and who can offer skills in delivery to, working with, and supporting the progress of groups and individuals who may be challenging and/or unskilled.

Inevitably TVA has built up a small 'stable' of artists with whom we often work – artists whose creative work, ability to devise imaginative routes to learning and engagement, and ability to respond empathetically to participants we know we can rely on. However, it is important to keep our offer refreshed and current as well, so we also recruit new artists along the way, and, if needed, will offer them additional support and preparation so that they can be confident of working well in participatory settings, and/or with groups where there may be particular sensitivities.

When a particular project contains messages which need to be correct – e.g. this wildlife site is home to these particular habitats and species, or is working with a particular group – e.g. these young people have acute eating disorders and thus these issues and this subject matter may be uncomfortable for them, then development time for artists and partners to inform each other and to share ideas about approaches and activities to be used, will be factored into the project budget, with artists to be paid (usually at a lower rate than for delivery sessions). The same will apply for any necessary review and planning meetings throughout larger scale projects, and also for 'non-contact' time artists will need to spend, e.g. editing, or framing, or putting exhibitions together.

Whenever scales of ambition, time and budget allow we advertise artists' opportunities through our website, our cultural email-out service, twitter, Facebook, Google+, arts jobs etc. We make our artists' briefs for any opportunity as detailed and specific as possible, including overall aims and desired outcomes, nature of the participants and any particular issues to be prepared for, and all logistics, including where possible specific dates, as freelance artists have complex diaries and these things need to be sorted.



Given the nature of most of our projects, e.g. working with a group which meets every Thursday afternoon for 16 weeks, then artists need to be able to get there regularly and on time, so geography can be a limiting factor. However, we regularly attract artists from Newcastle, Durham and beyond, as well as those based in the Tees Valley.

Occasionally we are able to work with artists from further afield, which can be positive and exciting. One example would be the Journeys project in 2012/13; we secured funding from Grants for the Arts to work with Middlesbrough based playwright Ishy Din, to develop a new drama working with young people, and as part of the project, Ishy was able to receive mentoring from award-winning dramatist Fin Kennedy, who also offered some workshops to other local aspiring writers. The whole project was a great success, both in terms of the outcomes for the young participants, the quality of the eventual dramatic piece, the new learning for Ishy, and the opportunity for TVA, Ishy and other Teesside writers to work with someone beyond our usual remit.

We always welcome approaches from artists who want to introduce themselves to us, and also artists can suggest activities to us – e.g. a print maker would like to develop a series of prints about the history of Redcar and would like to include in that some creative sessions with older people, incorporating their memories and responses to local changes. Artists are, of course, even more welcome if they have some funding (unlikely) or at least an idea where funding might be sourced (possible). As will be outlined in sections below, TVA will always have to make choices about what potential projects/ funding to take forward, as many ideas may be lovely in principle, but unlikely to attract funding, so, with the best will in the world, we may not be able to help.

Through a variety of initiatives and wider partnerships, TVA occasionally delivers Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions for artists, including introducing them to the world of participatory arts, and how best to manage this (in outline) as a freelance.

TVA administers the Tees Valley cultural email-out which reaches approximately 2500 recipients, informing them of artist opportunities, exhibitions, concerts, performances, and other significant relevant cultural news.



projects:

how they work, how they happen, how they are funded and how they are evaluated

TVA's theory of change:

In their 2012 publication 'Theory of Change – the beginning of making a difference' Angela Kail and Tris Lumley of the new Philanthropic Capital Organisation, say:

'A theory of change shows a charity's path from needs to outcomes to impact. It describes the change (you) want to make and the steps involved in making that change happen. Theories of change also depict the assumptions that lie behind (your) reasoning, and where possible, these assumptions are backed up by evidence.


A good theory of change can reveal:

- Whether your activities make sense, given your goals
- Whether there are things you do that do not help you reach your goals
- Which activities and outcomes you can achieve alone and which you cannot achieve alone
- How to measure your impact'

TOC and strategy – Kail and Lumley say that using the theory of change can inform strategic reviews, as it will allow staff and trustees to focus on the goals of the organisation, it will ensure that causal links, supporting evidence and different stakeholders' viewpoints will be considered, and that it draws people's minds to the activities which are needed to achieve the agreed goals, rather than becoming fixated on what is currently happening.

TOC and evaluation – Kail and Lumley say that the theory of change provides a crucial basis for measurement, as it provides a theoretical framework which can be used to assess whether an intervention is working as planned and how it could be improved.

TOC and progress towards long term goals – Kail and Lumley acknowledge that some final goals cannot easily be measured, and that change may be very gradual, or beneficiaries may be difficult to track long term. In these cases it will be important to identify intermediate steps and goals, and to ensure that progress is compared with agreed milestones towards those longer terms aims, which may be beyond the scope of the immediate intervention.



TOC and the wider sector – Kail and Lumley also say that using a theory of change will allow charities to think about collaboration, and to work out what a particular intervention can and cannot achieve i.e. where two or more charities are working together with the same beneficiaries, then the respective theories of change will help the charitable partners agree what particular aspects of desired change can be brought about by any particular interventions, and thus what aspects may not be. This will support effective collaboration, and will help clarify the respective responsibilities of the different agencies involved.

TVA's activities and the theory of change:

TVA's core belief is that through imaginatively designed, carefully managed and well delivered creative interventions, people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds can engage, enjoy, learn, make positive choices and improve their lives.

Thus aims of any given intervention will vary across many factors including funder aims, strategic partner aims, host partner aims, nature of beneficiaries, scale of intervention and agreed long term and short term aims of and milestones for any given intervention.

The range of our activities can be understood from the Strategic Plan or from our website. Project goals could be/ include learning about science, improved engagement with a health provider, developing self-confidence, developing improved literacy and numeracy, turning away from risk-taking behaviours, improved parenting, rebuilding a shattered life, making a positive next step and so on.

Thus it would be wearisome to list here the numerous possibilities of detailed variants within different creative interventions and projects, which would all demonstrate the applicability of the theory of change which we employ to govern our actions and our evaluations. However, the strategic approaches we use would always aim to come back to the crucial over-arching statement/s given above and would be summarised as:

- Identify the change you want to make and the steps involved in making that change happen.
- Identify and agree milestones for assessment of progress, and how that progress is to be measured.
- Collect appropriate supporting evidence of progress made.
- Review the efficacy of the intervention and make changes if necessary.



How ‘the magic’ works in particular projects:

Project outlines cited throughout this plan give a flavour of the varied nature of our programme, and some of its possible specific details. ‘The magic’ happens when participants are introduced/ supported/ encouraged to take part in something new, something that stimulates their imaginations, something that they can enjoy, something that they can do well at, and something that may give them new ways to consider and think about issues – whether the issue is the construction of a spider’s web, what constitutes threat in a personal relationship, the difference between sheep and wolves in sheep’s clothing, the nature of beauty, what it is to be lonely, or an understanding of the geological forms of aggregates under the surface of the road (yes, really!).

If we imagine a teenage parent, with next to no self-confidence, in a relationship where she doesn’t always feel comfortable or safe with her boyfriend – how can she look at that, and maybe consider trying to improve it? She might have a relative or good friend to confide in, but that is so tough, and possibly embarrassing, and their responses may not be helpful.

If she is in a group of other, similarly situated, young women working with a couple of writers/ drama workers, then they might, for instance, choose two individuals to put on masks, of a woman and a man, and then get them to act out particular dialogues and exchanges. The group can all contribute to the scenario, and then what one person suggests for a character to say doesn’t have to be directly ‘he said to me’ but can be ‘he might say’ so they can explore what’s good and what’s not in safety, without embarrassing personal disclosure, and sharing contributions and responses with the wider group. Thus individuals can establish other people’s reactions, and can make more informed judgements about acceptable interactions themselves – which may then be reflected back in their personal lives and situations.

Maybe that group will devise a proper sketch from the improvised beginnings – a whole little scenario which they could then perform to others – prompting those others in turn to think about the issues, and giving the performers all sorts of confidence for themselves, having a voice, having spoken up, in front of an audience.

How TVA projects happen:

TVA projects, which vary greatly in scale, time-scale, aims and nature of participants, come about in a number of ways. The main ways these projects come into being are:

- Partnership development led by TVA and/or partner; application to funder/s with TVA as main applicant
- Partnership development led by partner and/or TVA, with partner as lead applicant
- Large scale collaborative bid, co-ordinated by a lead body, with TVA as either a named delivery partner in the funding submission, or subsequently taken on as a delivery partner, once funding has been secured
- Direct commissioning of TVA
- Tendering opportunities
- Small community group and/or artist approach



TVA is almost wholly project funded, meaning that every project and piece of work we carry out must bear its appropriate burden of costs for project management and administration, financial management, communication costs, supervision and management costs, and overheads – by which we mean the costs of our having an office to sit in, chairs to sit on, computers, desks, phones, printers and stationery, office consumables, necessary professional insurances and so on. These costs must be proportionately factored into every budget, using a full cost recovery method.

Project development prior to the receipt of funding must be supported by our reserves, and will not be retrospectively included in any funding award, so the pressure for us is always to make the best judgement we possibly can as to which projects are worth spending time on when the outcome is in no way guaranteed, and when securing funding is so very competitive. This always involves the balancing of risks, with consideration of the known, the unknown and the unknowable, and the certain knowledge that we cannot succeed every time.

Having said which, TVA's longevity, in a very challenging climate all round, testifies that we do get it right more times than we get it wrong.

The size and scale of any given project or programme of work which TVA undertakes will be arrived at through a mix of factors, including the size and scale of any partners – clearly, having a significant agency as partner can indicate the potential scale of activities and intended outcomes, hence can make a case to a potential funder for the allocation of significant funds, whereas if TVA is partnered with a small community group, the funding likely to be secured will/ must reflect that smaller scale of activity, number of participants and so on.

As a company operating in this way for over thirty years, we can confidently state that TVA has very considerable experience of and expertise in project development and management, and – crucially – in securing monies to support them.

Sadly, the world is not full of money available for arts activities, and only some of what scarce arts money there is available will be open to supporting participatory arts, as opposed to directly commissioning a new symphony or sculpture etc. Most of the funding that TVA secures is for educational or social outcomes, and we make the case that we achieve these outcomes, usually in partnership with other agencies who have the 'bodies' or client groups, through the arts. We also argue that the 'arts quality' of the activities and products are crucial to the effective achievement of agreed outcomes – if the arts activities and experiences offered are poor or mundane, then the 'magic' will not be achieved.

Allied to our effective advocacy for our activities is a very careful consideration of and alignment with funder guidelines – from overall stated funder aims and principles, to the (crucial) fine print of sums available, time-scales

of the application process, questions to be addressed. Some funders will have deadlines for application, maybe twice or four times a year; some funding opportunities may only arise once; some funders will not 'repeat' fund but some will; and many will have two-stage procedures with only selected applicants invited to submit a second stage, more detailed, bid.

There are very many factors to consider when seeking project funding and the greater the prize, then inevitably the longer and more complex the application process, sometimes taking well over a year from start to finish – and considerable amounts of work will need to be done before the submission of a credible first stage application, so the whole process can be very lengthy, with success not guaranteed at any stage.

Partnership development led by TVA and/or partner; application to funder/s with TVA as main applicant:

This is the most usual route to activity and funding undertaken by TVA. An example would be the Risky Biz project, referred to elsewhere in this report, designed and delivered in partnership with Barnardo's SECOS project (Sexually Exploited Children On the Streets).

Barnardo's SECOS project were delivering a programme of outreach to young people at risk of exploitation; Barnardo's were finding that it was hard to keep the young people engaged, meaning that they were drifting away, sporadic in attendance, hence returning more frequently to risky situations.

Through previously established contacts with Barnardo's, we proposed to them that programmes of exciting, enjoyable creative activities would keep the young people engaged, and, moreover, could help clients take an imaginative look at what was happening to them, and potentially also they could create some peer to peer advocacy and advisory materials.

TVA looked at Comic Relief as a potential funder as they had an anti-exploitation strand of funding, and we established their guidelines for application, including the usual size of funding (in that case it was c£40K per annum) and usual length of grant (in that case 3 years). We then sat down with SECOS managers, using our knowledge and understanding of creative project costs and their understanding of work with the targeted group, factoring in SECOS additional costs, factoring in costs of e.g. Arts Award as an accredited achievement for the young people, factoring in any in-kind provision e.g. provision of venues and other such costs, to draw up an outline budget and an outline schedule, for the three years. This was then put into an application to Comic Relief, plus answers to all their questions – why this approach, why this group, why this partnership etc.

Eventually, after two stages of application writing and an interview, we were informed that this application had been successful and the work could begin. So, the work began, with the initial actions being the need to work with the partner to put detail into the previously outline schedules, to agree the schedules for milestone review and evaluation, and also to agree a wealth of administration and budgetary management procedures, with TVA as grant holder.

Throughout all of this it is vital that we never lose sight of the fact that at the project's heart lies a concern

for the intended beneficiaries, in this case very vulnerable young people, and a partnership with another agency, which must be open, reciprocal, honest and based on trust.

In all these matters, and in the good and positive outcomes for the young people, the Risky Biz partnership has worked well, and the funder has congratulated us on the good use that their money has been put to. Now we hope to go to them again, for another three years of good work, with more young people, at risk.

Partnership development led by partner and/or TVA, with partner as lead applicant:

This would be essentially similar to the process described above, but with the partner as the lead applicant, and with TVA as a named delivery partner for some element of the action/s to be carried out.

An example might be an environmental partner seeking funding for the management and maintenance of a wooded site, for which they also want a raft of engagement activities with communities nearby, to increase understanding of and engagement with the site, to promote longer term respect for the site. In such a case the lead partner would meet with us, ideally at an early stage of development of any funding application to a funder which they had identified as likely to provide the overall scale of funding required, to work out some outline programmes of activities and appropriate costings.

Then, if their application were successful, they would meet with us to work out the details of delivery, plus all the administrative, monitoring and financial arrangements, as they would be grant holder; and we would report to and receive our share of the funding from them.

Large scale collaborative bid, co-ordinated by a lead body, with TVA as either a named delivery partner in the funding submission, or subsequently taken on as a delivery partner, once funding has been secured:

Sometimes a large fund – eg up to a few million pounds – becomes available to certain specific areas, for specific work, with a collaborative bid invited, to be led by either a voluntary sector organisation of sufficient scale, or by a voluntary sector development agency or similar.

An example would be that eg the Big Lottery, in partnership with European funding, invites bids from 10 potential local authority areas across England, of which 5 will be awarded funding, to work with people furthest from the work place, to address practical, educational, personal, emotional and other factors which deter them from working. In that case there would be a process of application and negotiation to establish the designated lead agency, and then there would be a general call out for other agencies working in that area to register an interest in being a delivery partner. If all the early (necessarily quite complex) stages are got through successfully, then it could be that funding is awarded to an area where TVA works, and had registered an interest.

Then there would need to be processes in place for the selection of delivery partners, plus the designing of outline schedules, plus all the usual monitoring, reporting, administration and financial arrangements being set up. If TVA were selected at that point to be a delivery partner, then the intended scale of our delivery, plus



budgetary allocations to permit that, would be agreed/ arrived at, and, subsequently, work would begin.

These major scale opportunities (major in terms of overall funding rather than that allocated specifically to TVA) arise very occasionally, and usually only once.

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Direct commissioning of TVA:

Occasionally an organisation approaches TVA directly, saying 'we want you to do such and such, with our client group, and we've got a budget of whatever it is' to do that.

An example would be our work with the Evergreen Adolescent In-patient Unit for Acute Eating Disorders. The Evergreen Unit wanted their current in-patients to create a book of writing and pictures for subsequent new arrivals to look at and hopefully find comfort in, and they wanted to improve an inner courtyard, so that it could become a calm and relaxing space which also attracted butterflies and so on. They had a certain amount of money available to spend on these aims, so we sat and worked out a budget with them, itemising what could be achieved with their budget, including the optimal number of participatory sessions, the amount of non-contact time such as editing, designing the book, preparing surfaces in the courtyard etc, and the materials and other allied costs, plus our management costs could be factored in, and a mutual contract was agreed and the work then delivered.

This project won the Evergreen Unit (and by implication TVA) the North Tees Health Trust 'Working in Partnership' award in 2013.

Sometimes TVA is approached by organisations which want to commission us but they either have no funding at all, or an unrealistic idea of what such a project might cost. Conversations and information exchanges then ensue, and sometimes groups do surprise us by coming back in due course with the money!

Directly commissioned projects are not very frequent – agencies very rarely have some money which they can 'dispose of' at will - and they are not usually of great scale.



Tender opportunities:

Local authorities, commissioning bodies and other agencies sometimes publish tendering opportunities which are likely to have detailed aims, client groups, budget amounts, time-scales and so on. When TVA receives notice of a relevant opportunity then we will submit a tender outlining how we would meet the tender specifications, achieve the desired outcomes and how our budgetary breakdown would meet the outlines given.

Like every funding opportunity these will be highly competitive, but again, we are often successful, and we have a good and lengthy track record of successful delivery of projects to cite and to call upon.

Small community group and/or artist approach:

As previously stated, TVA is sometimes approached by a small community group which wants to do something – e.g. a community centre wants its youth group to design and create a mural – or by an artist with a particular creative idea which involves some element of participatory work and/or social engagement.

TVA is not able to offer limitless time and guidance to bodies who approach us in this way, as we are simply not funded to do that, but we always try to respond with some helpful pointers, some signposting and with some encouragement. Very occasionally these initial approaches do turn into some concrete activity, which is a good thing in itself, and even better in an area like Tees Valley, where people in general do not readily seek out cultural engagement.

evaluation:

Evaluation is something that we take very seriously, and we build it in to all projects, with the scale of evaluation geared to project size. Of course there are many different and differing approaches to evaluation of participatory arts but we try to reflect on four key issues:

- Arts quality
- Authenticity
- Distance travelled
- Legacy

Without going into wearisome detail or argument we believe that arts quality can be thought of in terms of the viewer/ audience/ reader response – are you moved/ excited/ engaged/ entertained/ provoked etc or are you having to exercise too much empathy and 'oh bless, didn't they do well' to get through?

Authenticity is a measure of how much the works produced are genuinely those of the participants and how far they reflect their emotions, expressions, responses etc; of course the participants are supported, catalysed and guided by the artist/s, but we wouldn't want to see products which are essentially made by the professional artists with the participants having just leant a hand somewhere along the way.

Distance travelled can be measured in various ways which will depend on project aims, but if the project was e.g. designed to increase local engagement with a wildlife site, then it would be easy to measure increased visitors, increased volunteering and to question/ record people saying what they had learned – e.g. 'I never knew the lapwing nested there'.

Legacy is often closely linked with distance travelled, but may include e.g. those pledging to continue volunteering, or participants making positive next steps, or someone becoming involved with regularly playing music, or the setting up of an independent group and so on.

Throughout projects and partnerships we endeavour to maintain open dialogues with partners, artists and participants, as appropriate and we seek to recruit feedback by both formalised and informal means, also as appropriate. Partnerships can only flourish if all partners feel free to both praise and/or complain, and where all sides feel they can be heard and that their responses and comments will inform subsequent actions.

monitoring and measuring:

TVA records project and participants on a central information system which we strive to keep updated. Our projects are so variable that the bald figures do not really help us tell our story; for instance, an artist could work with a class for one session and we could record that as being 30 beneficiaries, but someone could be supported by our Refugee Arts Worker regularly over three years, and would count as just one beneficiary, so we tend to think in units of 'person/ sessions' as this gives a truer picture.

All funders require evaluative, reflective and statistical reports of what has been achieved, with requirements varying with funders and time-scales of projects.

During the period governed by this strategic plan we will review and refine our methods of monitoring and recording projects, participants and demonstrable outcomes, and will develop a statement of our theory of change, as a policy statement.



safeguarding:

Also, when developing projects, it is crucial to consider the nature of the intended participatory groups, and, of course, the intended project aims – all of this will govern the kind of work to be attempted, the approaches to be used, the likely speed of progress, and all the safeguarding, safety and comfort issues such as the possible need for support workers or similar. Some groups will be volatile, some will contain very vulnerable members, some will inevitably involve the potential disclosure of distressing and significant personal experiences and so on. In every case this all needs to be thought through by TVA and partners, to have proper support mechanisms in place for clients and artists, and we must recognise that artists will need guidance, support and relevant information in order to do their job well.

The rules governing the requirement for artists to provide original copies of Criminal Record Bureau checks have now altered with the inception of the Disclosure and Barring Service; to be frank there is currently some confusion about DBS requirements for freelance artists, but it is safe to say that some host organisations may require it and some won't. TVA will always seek to comply with partner requirements on this.

We use consent forms for participants, or for parents/ guardians/ teachers/care workers etc, for project activity and for photographs, and always endeavour to abide any requests that e.g. photos of a particular individual should not be used in public display of any kind.

We use risk assessments for any activity, and where a host organisation has particular issues and guidelines around health and safety procedures then artists are informed of those and required to comply with them.





communications:

TVA endeavours to reach as many people as possible, in a creative and lively way, as benefits a creative organisation, and of course we continually produce lots of lovely imagery and other products from projects.

In general, we advocate for the arts whenever possible – we have to, it's what we do! – and often we find ourselves in strategic meetings of various kinds, being the lone voice for the arts and culture.

We communicate TVA news through our website, a quarterly newsletter, the Tees Valley Cultural Emailout, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and we variously put works on Vimeo and YouTube, and we circulate press releases to all local and regional media, as appropriate, and in 2016 we will produce promotional materials for TVA using the strapline 'TVA, the art of changing lives'.

Our website is attractive and features various strands of current news, opportunities, project archives, and links to items such as TVA policies.

Our quarterly newsletter reaches 2500 recipients by email, and carries a digest of organisational and project news. We try to keep the style light and conversational – these are not project reports for funders, but are aimed at colleagues and friends of the organisation, to keep them engaged and informed.

The Tees Valley Cultural Email-out (we really must find a catchier name) is a service that TVA has provided to the Tees Valley for many years, circulating news of opportunities and items of interest to 2500 recipients, on behalf of anyone who has a relevant and appropriate item to circulate. Other arts organisations and venues of course have their own mailing lists, but this is the only service which works for 'everyone' and expressly across the whole sub-region. In numerous sub-regional cultural consultation events over the years this service has always been rated as 'something that is working well', and feedback is always positive.

Having said which, establishing sustained/ sustainable funding for it has not proved easy in the recent past. When TVA was regularly funded by the Arts Council, then it was part of TVA's supported programme of activities, but since our status changed in 2012, supporting the service has been more challenging. There was support from some of the TV local authorities but squeezes on their funding has stopped this; there has been financial and other support from mima, which continues; and there was significant and ongoing support from East Street Arts of Leeds over some years, but sadly they have ceased that support now due to financial pressures of their own. Their support and partnership has been very welcome. As will be seen at 'future plans' below, we are considering various ways in which this platform might be user-funded, although this is difficult and would increase the costs of administration of the service, but also, and probably more achievably, we are working with Teesside University to look at the optimal future of this useful service – again, especially in the light of the acknowledged cultural fragility of the sub-region, but also following the City of Culture announcement.



finances:

As has been outlined, TVA currently secures the bulk of its income through grant funding, whereby TVA may be the lead partner and grant holder, or may be a delivery partner for a programme where another body is lead partner/ grant holder, with an admixture of commissioned work, tenders secured and some activity delivered directly by the core team.

This particular mix of income streams has allowed TVA to exist and deliver good projects achieving good outcomes for people for over thirty years, but we recognise that the model inevitably has weaknesses, and must be challenged and scrutinised to ensure longevity, continued effective delivery and sound business sense. Thus, on occasion, TVA will work with business consultants to explore new ways of securing income, including applying versions of social impact measurement/ monetisation, refreshed approaches to mainstream commissioning, and strengthening/ re-shaping key partnerships, including with Teesside University.

TVA has a hub and spokes organisational model, which allows us to keep core costs and over heads as low as possible, whilst permitting the flexibility necessary for variable project development and delivery.

The core roles are: Director, Office Co-ordinator and Projects Officer, all currently worked as part time. Thus core costs consist of those three staff and appropriate on-costs, premises, rates, equipment, software, office consumables, insurances, memberships and all other items necessary for effective professional delivery of TVA services.

Currently there are two other staff roles – Adult Projects Officer and Refugee Arts Worker – those two roles are funded by secured time-limited grant funding which covers fees, and all overheads and associated costs for those two workers, including elements of supervision, support, financial administration and communications and so on, for a given length of time, after which the roles will cease, unless further funding has been secured.

Project delivery can only happen when the funding for that delivery has been secured, and project delivery costs, including artists' fees, materials and so on, are entirely met out of grants, fees or commissions (see above 'TVA projects').

All funded activity will be governed by a budget, and all funded activity budgets will – necessarily – contain the costs of delivery plus an element of costs to TVA (I will avoid using the word 'overheads' as different funders and partners have differing understandings of what items they strictly class as overheads).

We base the calculation of the TVA costs element on a Full Cost Recovery method; thus, as an approximate guide, if a project makes up about a quarter of our overall annual turnover, then we would expect it to contribute about a quarter of our annual core costs.

Thus TVA core costs are contributed to through a mix of many sources, each project making a contribution in proportion to its size, and thus in turn spreading the risk as widely as possible, rather than heaping undue risk on to just a few possible sources of income.

TVA currently has two sources of direct grant funding to core costs (ie not as part of a project of arts delivery) which are some support from Teesside University, to support us in contributing to various initiatives including at the planning stage, and a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The EFF grant was originally awarded as £45K in three six-monthly payments of £15K, to support us through a period of organisational change, and has now (November 2015) been followed by an award of three years x £30K per year. This funding is what allows us to spend the development time needed to scope and plan potential new projects and partnerships, before any funding can be applied for and may be secured. Without it the threat to our reserves, which would then be the only funding 'at our backs' would be high, thus such an award is like gold dust, and we are very grateful for it.

TVA also earns some money direct to core: for example, the TVA Projects Officer is an Arts Award Trainer; she has been trained and contracted to deliver adviser training to people wanting to support young people to achieve Arts Award at Discover and Explore levels, so she delivers a mutually agreed (with Trinity College London) number of training sessions throughout the year – the actual number of sessions will be subject to overall demand in our region.

The TVA Director was formerly contracted to be the Tees Valley-based Artsmark Validator (for Trinity College London), but that role has now ended (through national programme change) and it is not currently clear whether the opportunity will return

Additionally, TVA may occasionally earn money from loaning/ hiring out our specialist equipment such as cameras, PA system etc, to artists (i.e. for projects of their own and not for TVA projects, wherein the cost of the use of such equipment is factored into the materials and consumables budget). In the future we intend to build upon this currently small amount of such activity, to optimise the payback from expensive equipment/s (see 'Future Plans' below).

To explain our approach to meeting our annual commitments (and given that we need to raise funds continually rather than being given e.g. Arts Council National Portfolio or other major donor funding for a large proportion of our activity, to then disperse to a pre- agreed programme) and to put it as simply as possible:

- We enter each financial year with a set budget for core costs (with all project delivery on top of that)
- We know what existing projects are ongoing into that year (each making an identified contribution to core costs), and what other funds may contribute to core costs (e.g. the core costs grant from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation)
- We subtract the second from the first, and that gives us a clear picture of what core costs then need to be recruited during the year (i.e. to be earned in the various ways outlined) to avoid a draw on our reserves at the end of the financial year
- This sum/ balance will be regularly monitored by the Director and the Office Co-ordinator; and reported on quarterly to the Board

This strategic plan will give indicative rather than detailed figures; TVA can provide accounts and/or projected figures on request.

TVA's annual turnover:

TVA's annual turnover varies, and at the time of writing, the turnover is less than it has been in recent years, and less than it will be again in the future. In 2013 TVA underwent a major restructure in the light of its own, and its context and landscape of, financial challenge. This has inevitably lessened the organisation's activity, but we believe that the restructure was necessary, and that it has strengthened and refreshed the organisation, allowing us to move forward with confidence. We absolutely believe, and all the evidence indicates, that TVA will rebuild, recreate and will expand over the next three years.

Over the last ten years, TVA's annual turnover has been as high as c£700K, whereas in 2013/14 it was c£300K.

TVA finance management systems:

TVA has robust systems in place for the everyday management of financial transactions, using appropriate software packages.

Invoices and payment notices are prepared by the Office Co-ordinator, and payments are signed off twice monthly by the Director and a Board member.

At time of writing TVA is in the process of opening a second bank account, this will allow for a clear separation of core and reserves monies from project monies, and helps to minimise the risk of losses should banks fail – which, history tells us, can happen.

Cash flows are prepared as needed and quarterly management accounts are presented to the Board for scrutiny and comment.

The annual accounts are externally examined, and are filed with the Charities Commission and with Companies House.

Members of the Board, the Director and the Office Co-ordinator will also meet at occasional working parties, additionally to the regular quarterly Board meetings, to review and scope TVA's finances and financial plans; the current Chair of the Board is Head of Risk and Compliance at Gentoo Housing Group and other Trustees run sizeable businesses and/or other agencies, so financial scrutiny and guidance is a strength for the organisation.

TVA core costs:

TVA sets a core costs budget for each financial year comprised of:

- Staffing
- Office expenses
- Operations
- Professional costs
- Miscellaneous

Through the 2013 restructure, which served to reduce the core team, and through scrutiny of all TVA financial commitments (undertaken by Office Co-ordinator) TVA reduced its core costs from c£240K in 2012/13 to c£90K in 2014/15 to c£120K now in 2015/16, following our move into commercial premises (as Melrose House was closed down) - a very considerable reduction, which allows the organisation to move forward efficiently and sustainably.

TVA reserves:

TVA's financial holdings at any given point essentially divide into funds allocated to, and ring-fenced for, project

delivery, and 'free reserves' out of which core costs and any incidental organisational costs arising must be met (and some of which could be used for otherwise unfunded work or initiatives if the organisation wished).TVA thus carries a notional sum, known as 'reserves', which are the free reserves minus ongoing core costs, and this sum is identified and quoted as a figure at the end of each financial year, to allow for comparison and consideration of the organisation's 'health'.

There is no universally agreed ideal amount (proportionally to any/ all charities) which charities should carry – sometimes it is said that 6 months running costs are desirable, sometimes it's three months etc – but the reserves will be regularly monitored, and must of course be greater than any notional sum which it would cost to wrap up the company, should things go badly.

At March 31st 2015 TVA reserves stood at c£90K, which is clearly very healthy compared with an annual core budget of c£120K; however,TVA is in a period of rebuild and redevelopment following both the restructure and the relocation, so we need to be realistic about potential draw on reserves in the shorter term, as financial plans for the longer term are implemented, and given the reality of the time scales necessary for the recruitment of larger grants and commissions.

TVA as value for money:

As outlined throughout this document,TVA offers a bespoke service to its partners and beneficiaries, so it is not possible to make a global indication of cost per participant head, as costs per head for all given interventions will vary with the nature and scale of that intervention.

Some interventions might be one activity with 20 participants for one afternoon, whereas others might be an activity with 10 participants once a week for six months – clearly the cost per head is very different, but so will be the aims of the intervention and the outcomes for participants, and, doubtless, the needs and nature of the participant groups themselves.

Our creative activities will have defined aims, which will include the art outputs or products, but also increased learning, positivity, engagement and happiness; it is TVA's skill, imagination and expertise which is included in the set up and management of the projects – this doesn't always 'come cheap'.

We also pay artists reasonable sessional rates, in line with best current regional practice – again, a lot is expected of the artists - they are being expected to share and impart all sorts of creative skills, but also, and crucially, to help people improve and rebuild their lives.

When these excellent outcomes are achieved,then the price must be reviewed in that light.





Strategic objectives 15/18:

- Sustain and invigorate TVA
- Maintain, refresh and enhance strategic partnerships and positioning particularly in the light of the intended 2025 City of Culture bid.
 - Deliver existing projects and develop new ones, especially those of larger scale
 - Strengthen measurement and demonstration of impact – the difference made
 - Challenge our business model, develop some market based approaches
 - Review Board composition, enhance Board engagement
 - Support TVA staff and freelance artist professional development

a sustainable future:

Summary of aims:

For the future, TVA intends to continue its general mix of activity as outlined within this document, whilst enhancing some aspects of its delivery, especially through embedded partnerships such as with Teesside University, and through building up its various actions which can directly generate money for the organisation.

In September 2015 it was announced that the five boroughs of the Tees Valley intended to bid for UK City of Culture 2025, to coincide with and build on the 2025 bi-centenary of the (global) birth of passenger railways, in our region. There is also talk of Tees Valley 'combined authority' actions, including the possibility of an elected 'Tees Valley Mayor'.

The City of Culture announcement is very exciting and represents an amazing opportunity for all the cultural agencies and workers of the sub-region to work together, to grow, to aspire and to achieve great things. If the bid (the submission for which will need to be made in 2021) is to have any credibility and grip locally and beyond, it surely has to be able to demonstrate that Tees Valley residents, or at least a reasonable proportion of them, do engage with local culture and care about it, and see – at the very least – that it offers something worth having to their children. TVA is the only dedicated participatory arts organisation of any size in the sub-region, our offer (actually and/or potentially) adds to and enriches the offer of the TV venues/ galleries/ museums, and we truly work across the whole area rather than primarily in one borough, so we will be alert to all potential opportunities, strategic planning and actions. This is a great opportunity for the Tees Valley and a great opportunity for Tees Valley Arts – does what it says on the tin!

Additionally, TVA will continue to seek grant funding, to apply for tender opportunities where they arise, and will seek to partner with a business mentor/ challenger, exploring the potential for sustainably achieving, measuring and monetising social and educational impact/s.

Intended actions:

- • TVA will be alert to and engaged with all actions re intended City of Culture bid
- • TVA will maintain and enhance key partnerships, such as with Teesside University, mima, the five local authorities and other strategic bodies
- • TVA will review its business model (potentially with a business mentor) and endeavour to expand its direct generation of income
- • TVA will explore and enhance its understanding of/ implementation of/ delivery of social impact measurement and potential income
- • TVA will maintain its links with various departments of the five Tees Valley local authorities: Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton
- • TVA will seek to maintain and enhance its relationship with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which at time of writing is our only core funder – ie the Foundation makes TVA an annual grant to help us exist and meet core costs, rather than to deliver a particular project or programme
- • TVA will involve itself in sub-regional and regional initiatives bidding for large-scale targeted funding eg for NEETs or jobless adults
- • TVA will maintain its contacts and partnerships with key local strategic agencies such as the Voluntary Development Agencies;
- • TVA will maintain its links with key local voluntary agencies such as Barnardo's, MIND and Groundwork NE and many others, often developing partnership projects, tenders and bids;

The restructured organisation (as of 2013) allows us to be nimble and cost-effective, but does also inevitably reduce the capacity for project and partnership development, so identifying possible sources of funding such as the Lloyds TSB Foundation, which has allowed us to expand the core team in a time limited, fully funded way by contracting an Adults Projects Officer part time for 18 months, will optimise our ability to focus our energies profitably.

Projects in delivery/ development throughout the period of this plan, which are identifiable now, include:

- • Work in diversity: our WiderWorld project, using the arts to support refugees and others newly arrived, is funded by the Northern Rock Foundation at time of writing (previously by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Bering Foundation), and this programme and grant will finish August 2016; we will continue to seek funding to continue this work after that as it has been significant and positive for the organisation.
- • River Tees Rediscovered (Groundwork NE project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund): TVA will continue as arts partner 2015 – 19.
- • Thorntree Roses: work with women on the Thorntree Estate in Middlesbrough, funded by Health Improve through the Health Lottery, 2015 – 16.
- • Musicmix (funded by Youth Music Foundation): music making with young people of diverse backgrounds, begun 2010, third cohort 2015 – 2016.
- • Inner Space: TVA is developing an intended bid to Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, in partnership with agencies providing housing and support to young homeless people and those leaving prison, to help beneficiaries develop personal, social and psychological strengths and skills alongside more practical ones, so that they are better able to build successful adult lives. Delivery would be approx 2016 -19.
- • Forward Assist: TVA is developing a partnership with this regional organisation which supports veterans and ex-service personnel.
- • Sexual and domestic violence: TVA is developing partnerships with agencies which work with victims of these crimes, and with the Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner, aiming to provide supportive creative expression, and advocacy materials around these issues.

Other partnerships, projects and opportunities will undoubtedly emerge from expected and unexpected quarters, as they always do!

Additionally, as a way of stabilising the organisation, of making a substantial public cultural offer where this may now be scanty, and as a potential source of income, TVA will seek to explore the potential for developing a venue/ base – essentially a community arts centre. This would, in all likelihood, be done in partnership with another agency (ies), but could offer TVA a permanent home and base for some of its activities, maybe plus rentable workshop and office space/s for other creative agencies, thus generating regular income.

TVA SWOT:

strengths:

- Reputation, track record and history
- Established partnerships
- Expertise
- Innovation and creativity
- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Flexibility of organisation and approach
- Visibility and communications
- Understanding of local and regional context
- Robust financial management
- Active Board

weaknesses:

- Perception/ reality of financial insecurity
- Capacity of core team
- Events such as re-location and/or asset transfer take time and energy
- Time scales of partnership development and of securing larger grants
- Continuing need for advocacy

opportunities:

- • Intended 2025 City of Culture bid
- • Greater use/ potential for monetising social and educational impact
- • Enhanced business skills/ approaches
- • Re-invigorated and/or new partnerships
- • Greater sub-regional coherence of cultural bodies/ actions
- • Greater sub-regional alliances for seeking major grant and government funding
- • Need for eg health commissioners to seek and commission delivery partners
- • Enhanced communications through social media; potential for artist membership scheme/s

threats:

- Financial risk as funders/ funds diminish
- Risk of loss of key personnel
- Apparently cheaper alternative providers/ ways of working
- Tees Valley cultural fragility
- Commissioner/ partner aversion/ unwillingness to use arts
- Investment of time in unsuccessful funding bids/ tenders
- Key partners may leave/ change alliances
- Asset transfer, if undertaken, may go wrong, and drain finances and capacity

thanks:

As will be clear from this document, TVA works with an enormous number of partners (funders; national, regional and local organisations; councils; statutory services; schools and colleges; artists; community groups and individuals) and it is impossible for us to list them all – thus we will not attempt to name every agency and every person that we have worked with over the last three years.

If you have funded us, hosted us, collaborated with us, worked with us, informed us or entertained us – we salute you!

So – we can't name everyone to whom thanks are due, but we will endeavour to name some key players, and apologies to each and every one whose name doesn't appear.

We look forward to working with you all in the future.

Funders (at time of writing):

Northern Rock Foundation; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Heritage Lottery Fund; Big Lottery Fund; Comic Relief; Youth Music Foundation; Lloyds TSB Foundation; Health Improve through the Health Lottery; J Paul Getty Jnr. Charitable Trust; Awards for All

Trustees and patrons:

Patrons: Steph McGovern, Mark Benton

Trustees (as at February 2015): Richard Anderson (Chair), Councillor Jim Ainslie, Tony Campbell, Councillor Ken Dixon, Eyv Hardwick, David Jeffery, Michael Lavery, Councillor Josh Mason, Mike McNulty, Doff Pollard, Councillor Geraldine Purvis

Strategic organisations:

Arts Council England, Trinity College London, Platforma Refugee Arts (at Counterpoint Arts, London); Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums

Partner and host organisations:

Teesside University; East Street Arts, Leeds; individuals and individual departments within and across the local authorities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton; schools, colleges and academies across the Tees Valley; Voluntary Development Agencies across the Tees Valley; Synergy Consortium; Barnardo's SECOS; Community Campus 87; Stages Academy; Prefer Homes; My Sister's Place; Arch; Groundwork NE; Middlesbrough Environment City; Tees Valley Wildlife Trust; RSPB Saltholme; Tees Valley Rural Community Campus; North of England Refugee Service; Justice First; Regional Refugee Forum; Crossings; Forward Assist; Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation

Artists:

We work with a wonderful range of artists – some repeatedly year on year, some less frequently – who invent unlikely and unexpected creative approaches to visual arts, sculpture, photography, film-making, dance, digital arts, music, song-writing, textiles, creative writing and some art-forms that don't quite exist yet, to help people of all ages (0 to 103!), from all backgrounds and with a massive range of aptitudes and abilities to engage, enjoy and make progress in learning and living.

These freelance artists come from across the North East to work with us and our beneficiaries, and contribute their skills, imagination, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, flexibility, vitality and positivity – and we are grateful!

We also thank all the performers and musicians who make our events exciting, diverse and hugely enjoyable. The artists and performers are the people who design and deliver the great work that TVA does - without you all, TVA would be nothing!

thanks:

Participants:

As will be seen throughout this plan, our participants and beneficiaries vary enormously – we work with young people in nurseries, schools, special schools, special units, youth clubs, sixth forms, colleges, young offenders groups, specific health and/or social initiatives, and with those who choose to engage with activities that we have to offer; we work with adults who face any and every problem or misery known to man, including those who have come to the UK in search of peace and freedom; we work with members of the public who may attend an event that we have put on, or who may engage with an activity at e.g. an environmental outreach day; and we work with students and early stage artists through targeted career development sessions and opportunities.

Some participants may only engage with us for one session – such as a music event or a public engagement activity; some participants may take part in a structured creative programme of say 8 or ten sessions; some school classes may contain 30 pupils or so, and thus present high numbers of participants but at what may be fairly 'light touch' levels of engagement; and some participants – such as those involved in our Wider World project which supports people who are newly arrived in the UK – may meet with the Refugee Arts Worker once or twice a month over several years.

This is why for our organisational monitoring we tend to say that 'TVA delivered 6000 participant sessions in 2014' or something like that.

To all our participants we say thank you – we hope that participating in a TVA activity has been positive and enjoyable for you, and you are what gives our work meaning.

Volunteers:

Last but not least we thank everyone who has volunteered for us, whether that is regularly in the office, or assisting with a particular project, or humping music equipment about at events – big thanks to you all!



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